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Political Games

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Political Games.

The maneuvering continues (This could become a regular segment!)

Before the end of last year certain persons were putting their hands up for preselection, in both House of Assembly and Legislative Council seats.

in #2324 I wrote that the government was still a legitimate government, albeit a minority government, and as such could see out its term, (i.e. until 2025), particularly because it was in the interests of the two now-independent supporters of the government so to do.

But maybe I was wrong about them. In particular, Mr. Tucker (MP for Lyons) has arisen from his hospital bed, swearing he would bring down the government on an animal cruelty matter. He originally offered support for the government, subject to a satisfactory resolution of the stadium and Marinus issues.

He has now added another, and I cannot help but think, notwithstanding the cause, he is looking for any excuse to bring them down.

Maybe it is somewhat esoteric to ask why he wants to do it, as he not only attacks the Premier – who I thought was his target - but everyone in the Liberal team. It is all rather illogical, but then, what value logic in this game?

The issue confronting the Premier is this – whether to wait for the maverick to make his move, given that he may not make it – being all bluff and bluster - or whether to take the initiative and *carpe diem*, putting an end to all this nonsense. Not an easy choice for the Premier, considering the possible outcome.

Anyway, a curved ball to start 2024.

Into the fray of pre-selections strides conservative champion Eric Abetz, announcing he will be seeking Liberal pre-selection for Franklin. A former and formidable Senator, there is no doubt he would get it, and no doubt he would be successful in any campaign. He would certainly capture much of the Liberal vote. More interesting would be any effort made by Clarence mayor Brendan Blomeley to follow suit. Rejected by the Liberals to win pre-selection for the Senate team, the Libs would be chancing their arm to once again deny this high-profile player if he chose to throw his hat in the ring.

Stepping away from these high-profile performers, the local paper recently ran an article by a Hobart councillor suggesting that there should be some form of age-based quota when selecting candidates. He makes the point that "our future" is being shaped by people many of whom were out of touch with the "needs, desires and dreams" of young people.

No doubt he regards himself as a young person, or at 36, someone "in touch" with those "needs, desires and dreams", when he calls on people to give young candidates a go.

If he believes older people are out of touch with the needs of younger people, then presumably he also believes that younger people would be out of touch with the needs of older people. But I guess not his concern.

Apart from throwing an insult out to all persons over the age of 36, he misses the point that lived experience, an essential ingredient in gaining electoral support, is not on his agenda.

Under Hare Clark, it is the electorate that decides who out of a range of candidates is elected. Party machines have little to do with it, other than provide a list of candidates aligned with party principles. I suspect his viewpoint will not align with either of the major parties. Perhaps his naiveté might find some traction with a minor party instead.

Another commentator reflected recently on whether there should be a time-limit imposed on politicians. As commendable as that may sound, it also suffers from a rather simplistic view that a polly is spent after a certain period of time. "New blood", they cry.

However, what such an argument fails to consider is that such a restriction would stop people from standing in the first place. Already, good candidates willing to cop the slings and arrows are hard to come by – why make it even harder to attract talent?

The flying of flags

Flags are symbols. On Monday, the parliament flew the Danish flag on one of its three flagpoles, in recognition of the link with the Danish crown. A symbolic gesture to be sure. To do so, it did not fly the aboriginal flag that day, which is normally flown.

Out from under the covers emerges the campaigner for the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, claiming that not flying the aboriginal flag showed "a lack of respect for Aboriginal people and culture", and that the flag should not be flown again, at least until some discussion takes place to establish some agreement to do so. Presumably this will mean on all sites where the aboriginal flag is now flown.

Is this the considered view of the entire aboriginal community? Because it is a nonsense argument, and does little to bring people together. But I guess that is the point.

One presumes that the campaigner speaks on behalf of the entire Tasmanian aboriginal community, but that is open to some debate – sorry, discussions. The government might want to also consider abandoning "Welcome to Country" and smoking ceremonies – latter day symbolic gestures to promote awareness, until those discussions are also completed!

Efforts to promote inclusion always seem to end up as an excuse to promote division. Be careful what you wish for, is my advice.

Take the decision by Woolworths to no longer promote Australia Day. I am not sure what prompted the Woolworths Board to make that business decision, but allowing themselves to become the butt of a political debate and alienating a fair proportion of their customers to make a point seems an odd way to attract business, or to promote the cause, as admirable as it may have seemed at the time. Business and politics do not mix well.

An irony, to be sure.

It was recently announced that almost 100 carparks would be removed from two major streets to reduce traffic congestion and enable a freer flow of traffic through the city. In other words, "we are going to make it easier for cars", as long as they do not want to park. So, all this money being spent on roadworks to stop people using their cars to stop and shop and work in the city.

At the same time as this is happening, "we want to make it easier for people to use public transport". In other words, transport policy is being dictated by the desire of government for the public to use public transport, and not by the needs of the travelling public. Which seems an odd priority.

And all this time, the government has been reducing public transport services and losing personnel from the bus service.

...and a second irony

Having chased away the cable car from the slopes of Mt Wellington, the Hobart Lord Mayor now states that we need to have "conversations" on new transport options for the mountain. We need "new infrastructure", including power supply, toilets and track work, she said.

And she said it with a straight face - Unbelievable!

Power

The newish Minister for Energy has stated categorically that all is OK regarding power supply issues, the system is in balance, and the government had taken "unprecedented action" to help people in need pay their bills. Nothing to see here.

It is time that the Minister stepped down from his parrot perch, and became the organ grinder, and not the organ grinder's monkey.

Because there are significant power supply issues, the system is not in balance, and the government has taken minimal action to help people in need. And in doing so has introduced bias into the marketplace.

Government policy should be determined by government and not the power entities. There is no opportunity for growth in the market, companies cannot get access to power and are walking away from the state and although the government may well talk up investment opportunities in the north of the state, but without a strong power supply, the "pipeline of investment opportunities" will be just that. A slogan.

The CEO of Hydro Tasmania has recently stated that while the state's current needs could be met, and business or industry seeking 50MW or more would have to wait for new generation.

Well, actually, that is not true, and the CEO knows it, as many existing companies have closed off expansion plans because there is no more energy in the system. Maybe his motto should be "no room for growth". Although that might change if a big user closes shop. But is that good policy? - don't think so!

The CEO went on to state that "in an average year (of rainfall and wind) we are neither importing nor exporting energy, so there is enough energy in the system today to satisfy existing demand". Whatever he might mean by "existing demand", In fact, Tasmania has been importing energy for two of the last 3 years.

Finally, he seems to be passing the buck, by relying on private windfarm generators to resolve future power needs. So, what job for the Hydro?

The previous Minister considered and then rejected placing a cap on power prices, opting instead for a "poverty claim" for persons and businesses facing hardship. Maybe that is what the Minister means by 'unprecedented', but it is far from generous. Or fair.

Infrastructure costs have ballooned. One has only to look to the financial disaster that Snowy Hydro 2.0 has become, to the fact that the Marinus project has had to be cut in half, and to the Tarraleah project (to produce some 30 additional megawatts), which will come in at over \$1b by the time all the necessary technical and other studies have been done,

So, Minister, you have sat in the seat for a while now – what is the **government's** plan to create an increased power supply? If it is to be in the hands of private operators, what is the deal with them? And with the loss of control of the Marinus project, are we simply handing our future power supply security to Victoria?

A serious reset is in order.