

political NEWS

On 3 October 1992 a State election was held in Victoria. The result is already well known - the Liberal/National Coalition ousted the Labor Party, which had ruled in Victoria for some ten years. While this recent election was not nearly as focused on 'law and order' issues as the previous election (1988), there were certainly many reportable comments on crime, order, policing and law. A few of these comments are reported below, with appropriate balance to both sides lest we be accused of political bias. However, it is worth providing some statistics which might help you to evaluate the statements. In the period since the last election the total number of reported crimes has decreased marginally (1%). Crimes against the person, which make up only 2.3% of total crime, were virtually stable. Crimes against property, 97.7% of total crime, decreased 2.7%. Whilst it is true that these are only the official reported crimes, it is these very same official statistics that are largely used as the basis for parties to form their policies on law and justice. The sources for the following material are the *Age* and the *Australian*. It is interesting to note that in searching for this material I found very few direct quotations from Labor politicians on their own policies.

Darren Palmer

LABOR



Victims

... 10 September ... Five per cent of all fines imposed by the Victorian courts would be directed to victim groups ... and police/victim liaison work. In addition to the \$1.2 million from fines, offenders would pay a victim levy - ranging from \$5 upwards (Mr Sandon, then Minister for Police).

... 10 September ... 'It is high time that criminals were made to compensate their victims for the cost of their crimes. It is wrong to expect the taxpayers to continue to bear the full costs of repairing the social damage these offenders inflict on their victims' (Mrs Kirner, then Premier).

Prisons

... 17 September ... 'The main difference is [their] proposal to build privately run prisons. We think the control of prisons (is) a matter of public safety and security for which the Government must take responsibility. It is too important to be left in the hands of a private company' (Mr Kennan, then Attorney-General).

Red-necks

... 29 September ... The Coalition policy was described as 'red-necked', and a throwback to the 1950s in its 'knee-jerk reaction to populist issues' (Mr Kennan, then Attorney-General).

LIBERAL/NATIONAL



Victims

... 15 September ... 'In order to create a safer environment, the present system under Labor, which gives favoured treatment to criminals, will switch to one in which victims and the law-abiding community receive the full protection of the law' (Mr McNamara, then Shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services).

Prisons

... 17 September ... Prisoners will be required to work an eight-hour day and keep free of drugs if they are to be released before their maximum sentence expires ... 'Labor has allowed the prisons to become safe havens for crime ... Victorians expect prisoners to serve their full sentences and to earn their release' (Mr McNamara, then Shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services).

Crime causation

... 19 September ... 'Labor has taken the view that a criminal is a person who has had a difficult childhood and sentencing should be something along the lines of a session with a psychiatrist ... we don't believe that is acceptable' (Ms Wade, Shadow Attorney-General).

Sentencing

... 29 September ... 'They just can't do anything about increasing sentences. Basically what they are on about is reducing sentences because they perceive offenders as people who have been disadvantaged by the social system and therefore who really don't need to be punished. Whereas I think we see a situation where, yes, people are disadvantaged by the social system, and some of them turn to criminal activity and some of them don't, and the ones who don't need to be protected from those who do ...' (Ms Wade, Shadow Attorney-General).