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Liberal Party Organisations Before 1900

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One noteworthy feature of modern life is the rapidity with which we become accustomed to novelties. Especially is this so in the field of modern mechanical inventions—who, for instance, regards the radio as anything strange or in any way remarkable, although its real development has come within the last thirty years. If we consider any field of modern life, be it transport, entertainment, home life, or what we will, we shall find time and time again how appliances only yesterday regarded as extraordinary are now part and parcel of our everyday way of life. The result has been to provide enormous changes in our standards of comfort and of living, with sometimes even a complete abandonment of all that we once considered to be normal features of social living.

Change has come not only in the material aspects of life, it has affected the whole social organisation, and in no field is this more noteworthy than in the field of politics. We have been accustomed to speak of political parties as if they have always been with us: the party organisations that we see at work not only at election times but from day to day are accepted as essential to the normal conduct of political life, and few could tell us how long they have occupied such a position. And yet they are comparatively new. It is true that party feeling has existed in British communities for some centuries, but it was not assisted by organisation of the type to which we are accustomed until less than one century ago. Historical texts refer glibly to Whigs and Tories, with the result that we sometimes think of them as highly integrated parties of the type we know to-day. Although the names go back to the conflicts over the Exclusion Bill of 1679, it was not until some years after the Reform Act of 1867 that the concept of a nationally organised party was born, when the caucus system developed by Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham municipal affairs was broadened into the National Liberal Federation with branches throughout England. Even then, full organisation did not come until after the advent of the Labour Party.

Hence it is time that the history of our own State was examined in an endeavour to trace the development of political organisation here. The whole field is too vast to be covered in one paper, so I have restricted myself to consideration of Liberal organisations. In an earlier paper¹ I have given portion of the story of the early developments, but in order to present a complete picture, I shall summarise that development, with the addition of some material which could not be included in a paper restricted to a special topic. Traditionally, of course, we have had from the beginning a division into Liberals and Squatters, but I have already indicated in other papers that no such clear-cut division existed. To expect to find formal party organisation at that time would be to neglect the whole outlook of the time which was essentially individualistic in character, partly as a result of the opportunities offered by a new country for success in the pursuit of wealth, partly because of the almost undiluted Cobdenism served up by the principal newspaper of the day. This was the "Courier," originally controlled by a supporter of the ideas of John Dunmore Lang, but throughout the sixties by T. B. Stephens, a school-fellow of John Bright and an associate with him in the Anti-Corn League. When this journal was continually presenting in various forms a view summed up by itself in the words, "Party is the madness of the many for the gain of the few,"² it would be unrealistic to look for any formal parties.

Yet some informal organisation did exist, in Brisbane at least. There the Liberals worked hard to bring about a combination of merchants, agriculturists, and wage-earners which they could use as a weapon against what they regarded as the privileged squatter class. But this was a weapon to be wielded and controlled by a few, usually by the method of the public meeting, and the procedure became almost standardised. First a blast appeared in the "Courier," protesting at some action or omission by the government, and announcing that action was imminent. If sufficient interest was aroused, the next step was the appearance in some business premises, usually that of W. and B. Brookes, of a requisition calling upon the Mayor to summon a

1. Religion and Politics in Queensland—Journal of the Historical Society of Queensland, Vol. IV, No. 4, p. 455.

2. *Courier*, 24/6/1862.

public meeting, whereupon the document was numerously signed. Prominent among the signatories were Brisbane merchants such as W. Brookes, W. Markwell, R. Cribb, J. Hockings, G. Grimes, R. A. Kingsford and T. S. Warry. At the meeting resolutions, usually prepared by William Coote, were approved with acclaim. If the decision had been to present a petition, then signatures were collected through the same group, and finally from their ranks a deputation would be selected to present the resolutions or the petition to the appropriate person. For some time this form of activity produced the highlights of Brisbane political life, but enthusiasm waned rapidly after the riots produced by the unemployment following the crisis of 1866.

Election campaigns were conducted by committees arranged by the separate candidates, though Charles Lilley and the Fortitude Valley group had endeavoured to form a Queensland Liberal Association, but without much success.³ Accordingly the Liberals in Parliament remained a disorganised group, bound into small cliques by local interest. In July 1870 a meeting was held on the initiative of the Brisbane members, O'Doherty, Fraser and Edmonstone, in an effort to establish a Liberal party, but Macalister objected to any formal association and urged only union for the collection of funds.⁴ Some weeks later this was followed up by the Brisbane merchant group including R. Cribb, W. Markwell, S. Fraser and E. B. Southerden, who called a public meeting to form an association with the object of "the advancement of the political influence of the people throughout the different electorates of the colony."⁵ The meeting was successful in taking the preliminary steps⁶ and soon the Queensland Political Reform Association was established with a constitution largely drawn up by S. W. Griffith.⁷ Again its main strength came from the merchant group, but, in addition to Griffith, C. S. Mein also appeared in the new body.⁸ Other local bodies⁹ developed periodically claiming attachment to principles not persons, "measures not men," but none seems to have had long life.

3. *Moreton Bay Courier*, September 1859 to January 1860.

4. *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 30/7/1870.

5. *Queensland Express*, 6/9/1870.

6. *Queensland Express*, 7/9/1870.

7. *ibid.* 21/9/1870, 28/9/1870, 29/10/1870.

8. *Courier*, 28/1/1871.

9. e.g. South Brisbane Liberal Association: *Telegraph*, 7/6/1875.

In the seventies additional strength was given to the movement to establish a formal party organisation by the arrival of energetic new Nonconformist clergy such as F. T. Brentnall, who set to work to establish a newspaper to give full publicity to their views. This was the "Queensland Evangelical Standard," which sought to unite the merchants and Nonconformist clergy and laity into a formal organisation, patterned perhaps on that built up by Chamberlain. The journal was far too outspoken and did much to alienate those who did not hold extreme views, but it was successful in its pressure, especially after the defeat of the Liberals in the elections of 1878. The result was the establishment of the Queensland Liberal Association in June 1879.¹⁰ This proceeded to use the old technique of the public meeting, but it also did not hesitate to employ disruption of its opponents' meetings. Local associations began to develop throughout the colony in affiliation with the central body, but they seem to have had short lives, for they were not close enough to the figures who were providing the personal leadership. Moreover, the Liberal Association failed to lay down a definite platform, somewhat to the disgust of the "Standard" group of supporters, which steadily advocated stricter party organisation with a definite platform. Other attempts had already been made in the same direction. In February 1881 a circular had been issued by the Queensland Political Reform League, of which Charles Lilley is believed to have been largely the sponsor.¹¹ The suggested programme was printed in the "Standard"¹² but the "Courier" took no notice of it. It comprised

- (a) Triennial parliaments
- (b) payment of members
- (c) Land Reform (Land Tax, Abolition of Pre-emptives, abolition of sales by auction of country lands, Increase in price of lands with extended term of payments, Reduction of Areas of Runs, Conservation of Forests, Water Reserves).
- (d) Encouragement of agricultural and manufacturing industries by a judicious adjustment of the Tariff.

10. *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 21/6/1879.

11. *Queensland Worker*, 20/3/1919.

12. *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 19/2/1881.

- (e) Emigration — Encourage European migration, Repeal Polynesian Labourers' Act, establish Yearly Poll Tax on Kanakas, Chinese, and all other Asiatics.
- (f) Reform of the Divisional Boards Act by substituting Land Tax for rating.
- (g) Abolition of all pensions except for accidents.
- (h) Any such other reforms as may be necessary.

The "Standard" was interested and generally approved, though it suggested the inclusion of single electorates on a population basis, was doubtful of payment to members, and objected to protection. Even before the first meeting in Brisbane on 29th June 1881, a meeting of German settlers at Dugandan had approved the principles of the League and pledged support at future elections to those who would support such a platform.¹³

At the Brisbane meeting¹⁴ the chair was taken by Joshua Jenyns. A number of members of Parliament, J. R. Dickson, A. Rutledge, F. Beattie, S. Grimes and W. Rea, had accepted the invitation to attend extended to them by a series of advertisements in the "Telegraph." They all expressed general sympathy, but all found something unsatisfactory, and the remarks of Dickson showed that the platform was not going to be swallowed. As the "Courier" described it,¹⁵ "The best evidence of the initial failure of the League is the guarded and half-apologetic speech of the senior member for Enoggera at the inaugural meeting. Mr. Dickson is well known as a politician desirous of always prophesying smooth things, yet at the League meeting he managed to convey to his auditory, under cover of a flattering recognition of the "ability" of the programme, his unalterable dissent from at least one of its chief items. His agreeing "to a great extent" with the principles of the organisation is not a hopeful sign for the reformers, for it implies that the usually accommodating member for Enoggera finds the league garment has too much the look of a political straight jacket to be comfortably worn. And if this be the case of so advanced a Liberal as Mr. Dickson, what chance

13. *ibid.* 18/6/1881.

14. *ibid.* 2/7/1881; *Queenslander*, 2/7/1881; *Courier*, 30/6/1881; Pugh's Almanac 1882, p. 70; *Queensland Worker*, 20/3/1919.

15. *Courier*, 1/7/1881.

has the programme of securing that almost universal concurrence which is essential to the success of the movement?" The main issue on which Dickson had pronounced disagreement had been Protection. As the meeting had been attended by only 150, its chances of success were only slim. It had one success in the country districts with a branch at Rosewood Scrub, again among German settlers,¹⁶ and W. Brookes delivered in Brisbane under the auspices of the League an address on "Political Aspects of Coloured Labour"¹⁷, to a "rather small attendance."

The "Telegraph" had its own plan,¹⁸ urging the consolidation of the Liberal Party instead of the spasmodic setting up of local associations. Probably this was stimulated by the report of the meeting of the Maryborough Liberal Association¹⁹ which declared the programme of Liberalism to include an elective Upper House, triennial Parliaments, votes for women, competitive examinations for the civil service, European migration, the encouragement of agriculture, manufacturing, and mining, and exclusion of Polynesians and Asiatics from all employment except plantation labour, a land tax, the repeal of the obnoxious clauses of the Divisional Boards Act, and the establishment of agricultural schools. Though this platform revealed a considerable body of agreement with that of the Queensland Political Reform League, it also showed sufficient difference to preclude agreement. The "Standard"²⁰ was less definite with its proposals, seeking rather the main points on which agreement existed, triennial parliaments, revision of the tariff, payment of members and a land tax. Two other bodies had also appeared, The Working Men's Reform League—which held a meeting in Brisbane, under the patronage of Arthur Rutledge,²¹ and later others at Ipswich and Rockhampton—and the Anti-Coolie League. Both were primarily concerned with the question of coloured labour, and C. Reese, secretary of the Queensland Political Reform League also campaigned in the press on the same issue. Despite its earlier support for the Political Reform League, the "Standard" was now opposing it, and in reply to what it described as "a most intem-

16. *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 9/7/1881.

17. *Brisbane Courier*, 23/7/1881; *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 30/7/1881.

18. *Brisbane Telegraph*, 1/6/1881.

19. *ibid.* 30/5/1881.

20. *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 27/8/1881.

21. *ibid.* 24/9/1881.

perate letter from Mr. Reese," it declared that the League would never suit Liberals while it adhered to protection. Still that body struggled on.

Meanwhile, by slow and careful organisation largely by Robert Bulcock and R. P. Adams, the real Liberal Party organisation was beginning to take shape, though as yet little was known about it. Officially they were working through the Queensland Liberal Association, though this was no longer active in the way it had begun. Bulcock was concentrating on a survey of the electoral rolls and on providing the organisation necessary to ensure they were kept thoroughly checked. At the same time he was watching the appointment of such persons as Justices of the Peace²² and carrying on the sectarian conflict.²³ In the by-election for North Brisbane in January 1882 to fill the place of Sir Arthur Palmer, now appointed President of the Legislative Council, we can see something of Bulcock's activity in connection with the rolls, for he suddenly and successfully challenged the right to vote of a number of persons, who had claimed it by virtue of residence at the Queensland Club.²⁴ In the same election we can also find evidence of his attempts to build up a pre-selection system. Apparently a meeting was held at Bulcock's premises attended by a restricted number of Liberal leaders, and Brookes was selected. According to the "Observer," lately purchased by McIlwraith, Morehead and Perkins, deliberately for use as a Ministerial organ, "the respectable portion of the Liberal Party are disgusted at Mr. Griffith's autocratic disposition: Mr. Brookes was chosen at a hole-and-corner meeting because he is a blind follower of his leader; and Mr. Hockings has been slighted because he is not plastic enough to be his tool, and has never propitiated the 'Evangelical Standard.'" William Widdop, now president of the Political Reform League, was also rejected, with the acquiescence of Reese, the secretary of the League, who was at the meeting. This action was repudiated by the League which nominated Widdop, despite the danger of a split Liberal vote, Reese explaining "My action at Mr. Bulcock's was entirely ignored, as it was considered that I had assumed

22. *ibid.* 17/9/1881.

23. *ibid.* 1/10/1881.

24. Queensland Parliamentary Debates 1892, Vol. LXXVII, p. 324, A. Rutledge. *Courier*, 10/7/85, letter by Bulcock.

a power for which I had no authority.”²⁵ Widdop’s address to the electors²⁶ was even more liberal than that offered by Brookes, but strong pressure was brought to bear by Griffith, with the result that Widdop withdrew before the election. Again suspicion is cast on the genuineness of the Liberal claim to free speech, for both Widdop’s first meeting and that of the government candidate were driven into confusion by apparently organised interruption.²⁷ Brookes won the seat.

The Political Reform League held its annual meeting²⁸ in the same month, though only fifteen were present. The Report stated that its platform had been adopted by Liberal Associations in Maryborough and Mackay, and a Farmers’ Association in Rockhampton. Meetings in Toowoomba, Fassifern, Rosewood and Ipswich had adopted the platform as a rallying cry for the elections to take place in the next year. But only £7/10/- had been collected and the League was £5 in debt. Hence it did not remain in existence much longer, though it apparently had some influence on the official liberal movement, for, when asked by the president of the Townsville Anti-Coolie League for a definite statement on Liberal policy, Griffith’s reply revealed a programme very similar to that of the Political Reform League. “We proposed Triennial Parliaments; payment of members; the introduction of European migrants as fast as possible; the repeal of the Coolie Acts; pushing on of public works, railways, harbour improvements, etc.; the utilisation of the interior by securing adequate rents for Crown lands, which will provide ample means for the payment of interest on the increased debt; and the conservation of water.”²⁹

Bulcock with the assistance of Adams continued the building of an electoral organisation with special attention to the rolls, in order to eliminate roll stuffing and to prevent impersonation and double voting. His activities in this direction led to the addition of a new phrase to the Queensland political vocabulary—“Bulcocking the Rolls”—his opponents alleging that his main intention was to disfranchise, whether legally or not, as many hostile voters as possible. Naturally he

25. *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 7/1/1872.

26. *Telegraph*, 2/1/1882.

27. *Telegraph*, 7/1/1882; 9/2/1882; 10/1/1882; *Courier*, 7/1/1882.

28. *Telegraph*, 26/1/1882.

29. *Telegraph*, 17/4/1883.

came under very strong criticism from, in particular, the Catholic members of the Assembly, especially after the Liberal victory in the 1883 elections. He personally, however, appears to have been quite honest—according to one tribute written after his death in 1900, his conscientiousness was based on moral principle.³⁰ Moreover, McIlwraith highly respected him as well as two of the strongly nonconformist and liberal members of the Assembly, Henry Jordan and Peter McLean. “Though they were political enemies of McIlwraith, he had a very soft spot in his heart for them all.”³¹

The Liberals in Parliament, as was their usual habit, formed a solid group in opposition, especially when they had such major issues as the Steel Rails Case and the Torres Strait Mail Contract on which to focus their attention. But the return of Griffith in 1883 was to test severely the possibility of providing a suitable party organisation, for his party was at once too large and comprised too many elements. One group might well be described as the Old Whigs, representative of the early liberalism of pre-Separation days. A second group bears comparison with Radicals of the school of Cobden and Bright, who, having won their original objectives, now were tending to become conservative in defence of their gains. Both these groups were by conviction opposed to party organisation and to strict obedience to a leader. Some were newer Radicals, followers of Griffith himself, who in this connection bears some resemblance to Joseph Chamberlain in the British Liberal Party. A strong and solid Brisbane group, largely Puritan in character, contained men who had made much money from land speculation, and who were therefore interested most in the development of the city of Brisbane, while others were industrialists with some leanings towards protection. Some dissatisfied groups had come across from McIlwraith's party, notably the western squatters, driven by fear that the construction of land-grant railways would mean the loss of their runs. Others were suffering from personal grievances; Lumley Hill, for instance, had formed with Morehead and de Satge a cave within the ranks of McIlwraith's supporters, and when Morehead was bought off by the post of Postmaster-General, Hill considered he had been be-

30. *Courier*, 14/5/1900.

31. Spencer Browne—*A Journalist's Memories*, p. 66.

trayed and crossed to the Liberals. And the whole structure depended on the ability to retain the votes of the working and lower middle classes.

The result was inevitable, and the party in parliament split seriously, with Dickson heading the opposition to Griffithite radicalism. Supporting him were Cowlshaw, Brentnall, Unmack, S. W. Brooks and W. Stephens, and, most important of all, Robert Bulcock, who had now built up under his personal control a strong electoral organisation, though he had failed to convince Liberals at large of the need for a pre-selection system. The outcome of the election of 1888 was the sweeping defeat of the Liberals. Though the Bulcock-Dickson-Brentnall faction had little success, Bulcock himself remained very valuable, and after the coalition of 1890 he became the real party manager, though subordinated for a time by the personality of McIlwraith.

With the rise of Labour, orthodox Liberalism was becoming fearful for the future, and men such as Bulcock, horrified by the programme issued by the A.L.F. in 1890, were rapidly becoming more conservative in their outlook. This new working class organisation meant too that the old hopes of building a Liberal party with reliance on the working class vote had completely disappeared, and this was emphasised by the strikes of 1890 and 1891. But these did produce another new organisation, the Patriotic League, also dominated by Bulcock and containing his inevitable aide, R. P. Adams, both being still unpaid. Once again it failed to put forward a positive and definite programme; it was now fighting on the defensive. From its office in the "Courier" building it invited people to join by payment of a small membership fee and it stated its aims:³²

"1. To ensure to every man the peaceable enjoyment of his earnings and savings, and his personal liberty.

2. To uphold law and order and oppose organised communism and socialism.

3. To protect the interests and credit of the colony."

Bulcock was also following his old tactics of keeping a strict watch over the electoral rolls, and the

32. *Courier*, 19/11/1891—advertisement.

advertisement setting out the aims of the League contained one line "Electoral Rolls and Maps available for inspection." But this body provided something new, an office that was open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In the 1893 election following the departure of Griffith to the Bench, Bulcock worked with McIlwraith though it appears that here he had not a free hand, as McIlwraith kept a firm control. For instance, it was claimed³³ that Bulcock had wanted J. D. Campbell as the junior candidate for North Brisbane, but had been forced by McIlwraith to accept J. J. Kingsbury. However, in the electorate of South Brisbane he had been responsible for the reduction in the number of competing Liberal candidates, though the ultimate choice of the two to carry the Government's banner was made by McIlwraith. The method adopted³⁴ in the first instance was decided by a meeting called by circular.

"1. While recognising the fact that each elector has the equal right if he so wishes, to offer his services as a candidate for Parliamentary representation we also recognise that the present critical condition of the colony requires that each lover of law and order should sink all minor differences and unite to endeavour to secure representatives that will conserve that object.

2. That we the candidates for the electorate of Brisbane South, seeing that the fact of our opposing each other may—very much against our wish—lead to the election of a so-called 'Labour Candidate,' hereby agree to leave the selection of a candidate on the side of 'law and order' to a committee of gentlemen composed of five representatives of each candidate.

3. (a) That when such representatives meet each shall produce his authority to act; (b) that the names of the candidates shall be written on pieces of paper, and that each representative shall bind himself to vote as many times as necessary to reduce the number of candidates to the number required.

4. That the ballots taken shall be as follows:—

(a) each representative shall score out the name of the candidate which he thinks has the least chance of securing a majority of votes against a so-called 'Labour Candidate.'

33. *Courier*, 28/3/1893.

34. *ibid.* 19/4/1893.

(b) That each succeeding vote shall be taken on the same principle until the number is reduced to the number of candidates required.

5. That each representative for himself and for the candidate he represents hereby promises to do all he can to secure the return of the candidate chosen by this meeting.

6. That such meeting of the representatives shall be on 18th April at Town Hall, South Brisbane."

This decision produced some restiveness for the feeling was still strong in the community that the choice should be made by the electorate and not by any private committee. Meston had put the view bluntly when he wrote that "Representative legislation and party government are a contradiction in terms."³⁵ Accordingly one of the candidates refused to enter the scheme, and at least one of the others protested that by the method of balloting adopted the Bulcock group could secure the exclusion of anyone whom they did not desire.³⁶ McIlwraith then selected S. W. Brooks in place of C. J. W. South, one of the selected candidates, but other candidates put in an appearance,³⁷ so McIlwraith finally named Edwards and Midson as his two and formally asked Brooks, Luya and Hardgrave to retire.³⁸ Just before the election a circular signed C. W. Midson was circulated stating that he did not approve this choice. The result was that while Midson headed the poll, Edwards was beaten for second place by the Labour candidate, Tirley, many voting for Luya, a friend of Midson, under the impression that he had replaced Edwards as the official candidate.³⁹

The Bulcock organisation continued and gathered further strength. In 1894 it was renamed the Queensland Political Association, and in the following year it was given more permanence still by the appointment of a paid secretary—R. P. Adams. To the Labour newspapers it was "the Political Ass,"⁴⁰ and those journals objected strongly to what they described as the hole-and-corner method of selection, contrasting it unfavourably with their own rank and file plebiscites.

35. *Courier*, 30/3/1886—Letter 'Party Politics' by A. Meston.

36. *Courier*, 20/4/1893.

37. *ibid.* 27/4/1893.

38. *ibid.* 5/5/1893.

39. *ibid.* 9/5/1893.

40. e.g. *Gympie Truth*, 1/8/1896.

However, Bulcock had considerable power with the government. On one occasion requisitions for free passes to voters going from Brisbane to Ipswich were signed by him, and when it was asked of what department he was head, J. G. Drake interjected "Electoral Engineers' Department." The Premier declared the passes had been paid for by Bulcock.⁴¹ A little later Hugh Nelson became Premier while he was also President of the Political Association, and Labour was able to make much political capital out of two circulars signed by him as President of the Association, both with their main purpose the purging of the rolls. The first was printed in the "Courier" with the exception, Cross declared, of this paragraph:⁴²

"It became apparent some years ago to all thinking persons that the tactics which were at that time adopted by certain individuals professing to represent a section of the community, whose avowed object was to secure the enactment of class legislation of the most undesirable character, would, if persisted in, render necessary the complete obliteration of the old party lines, and would demand the formation of a defensive alliance between all those citizens who desire to see the affairs of the colony administered for the general welfare rather than to suit the interests of any one class. I need hardly remind you that such obliteration and alliance have since become accomplished facts, and you will doubtless concur in the opinion generally held as to the wisdom of the course then decided upon, in pursuance of which it was agreed to sink minor political differences and to unite in order to maintain good government in Queensland."

But the second was far more reprehensible — it was to be sent to Electoral Registrars throughout the colony instructing them on methods of purging the rolls. Dated from the office of the Queensland Political Association on 4th August, and signed by Nelson they were instructions how to purge the rolls—and were marked "Secret and Confidential."⁴³ Official instructions to the Registrars had been sent out by the Colonial Secretary's Office on 19th July. Glassey moved the adjournment of the House to discuss the circulars, and the resultant debate revealed the power that Bul-

41. Q.P.D. 1894, Vol. LXXI, p. 53.

42. Q.P.D. 1895, Vol. LXXIII, p. 128.

43. Q.P.D. 1895, Vol. LXXIII, pp. 531 seq—circular p. 532.

cock exercised—even Cross, one of the Labour members, had to admit that he had said to Bulcock, “in an ironical and jocose manner, that the work he was doing was worth £1,000 a year, and it would be worth £1,000 to the Labour Party if he would do the same work for them one of the pleasantries I occasionally indulge in.”⁴⁴ To the end of his life he remained a target for the Labour Party which alleged that he was using that power both to disfranchise Labour supporters and to stuff the rolls with his own adherents. His friends always maintained his honesty, and, in the debate just now referred to, Arthur Morgan, who was not one of the Bulcock group, refused to join in denunciation of him. He admitted he was an accomplished wire puller, but believed him perfectly honest, though some of his associates may not have been. Whatever roll stuffing went on was in the metropolis.⁴⁵ Some support was given to this last remark by the roll stuffing cases of 1892. Some persons were caught taking advantage of certain provisions in the electoral law, and among them were H. F. Hardacre,⁴⁶ on behalf of Labour, and T. S. Hawkins,⁴⁷ who had been a member of the Provisional Executive during the first months of the Patriotic League’s existence.⁴⁸ In addition Brentnall was charged before the Ipswich Registration Court with an alleged attempt to make a false claim for registration for Bundamba.⁴⁹ Later in the Assembly Glassey was to quote from the first Report of the League issued on 11th April 1892, describing the first ten months’ work.⁵⁰ Referring to the state of the rolls in Brisbane and suburbs, the report said, “To this the league gave early and earnest attention, and succeeded in purifying to a very gratifying extent the electoral rolls of the metropolitan electorates. From those rolls 4,700 names have been struck off and 1,700 names had been put on. The work must be continued.”

Glassey declared that many of those whose names had been removed were legitimate voters. After the coalition of 1890 there was in form an Opposition, but by 1891 any real distinctions had almost completely disappeared though a few maintained the tradition of

44. *ibid.* p. 542.

45. Q.P.D. 1895. Vol. LXXIII, p. 535-6.

46. *Courier*, 14/6/1892.

47. *ibid.* 30/6/1892.

48. *ibid.* 2/7/1892.

49. *ibid.* 8/7/1892.

50. Q.P.D. 1892. Vol. LXVII. p. 536.

a constitutional opposition "on a motion of no-confidence, probably nine-tenths of the members would be found voting with Ministers if the Government were really in jeopardy."⁵¹ The few who would be driven by personal hatreds—Morehead, Stevenson, Pattison and perhaps Hume Black being the only important figures. Groom took up his usual independent attitude, but practically the only member who sought to carry on the new liberalism was J. G. Drake. In many quarters the opinions of an old-time Liberal, William Hemmant,⁵² found some support. He "gave vent to a decided conviction that Queensland has been cursed with over legislation in the past, and that it is going to be cursed still more in the future. He would like to see a strong government put into—or shall it rather be said, remain in—power; for preference give him a Cromwellian Dictator, and Parliament abolished for the next five years."

After the resignation of Griffith and the reconstitution of the ministry some further opposition did develop, and prior to the election of 1893 a small group headed by Donaldson put forward a new set of principles which might be described as quite advanced Liberalism.⁵³ It was thought that Groom had a hand in drawing it up and Lilley was also suspected. But the main conflict in the election was between the Government and Labour, with considerable special interest in the North Brisbane Battle between McIlwraith and Lilley. Once again, incidentally, the old difficulty emerged—the opening meeting of McIlwraith and Kingsbury met with determined attempts to upset it by continuous uproar.⁵⁴ After the election the main opposition was to come from Labour though it still remained on the cross benches.

In 1895 the Independent Opposition attempted to set itself up as a definite party, the Progressive Democratic Party, with a platform of six planks⁵⁵—electoral reform, white labour, industrial development for both the home market and export, the encouragement of agriculture and mining settlement, equal opportunities for all, and democratic administration. Electoral reform meant adult white suffrage, one man one vote,

51. *Courier*, 13/11/1891.

52. *ibid.* 12/1/1893, 13/1/1893.

53. *ibid.* 5/4/1893.

54. *Courier*, 12/4/1893.

55. *ibid.* 30/5/1895.

ease of transfer of registration to assist the migratory worker, and the removal of the disabilities placed on the exercise of the franchise "by the Queensland Political Association and its big brother and confederate, the Pastoralists' Association of Queensland." The new group sought to carry on something of the old non-partisan idea, "we desire especially to enlist the support and co-operation of all men and women who are not included in any other organisation either because they are debarred by the rules or because they cannot accept the whole of the policy of any other party. It is only by joint action with all democrats and radicals, in or out of associations or parties, whether they call themselves Liberals, Labour, Opposition or democrats that we can hope to once more clear the air of the political chloroform that appears to have sent to sleep liberal principles and honour."

Some restiveness had also been shown by another group, the farmers of the Darling Downs. From the beginning the town liberals had endeavoured to bring behind them the farmers by consistently putting forward the demand for more land to be made readily available for agriculture. But as already pointed out little had been done. Earlier some attempts had been made to establish farmers' organisations near Brisbane.⁵⁶ It was believed that hitherto the agricultural interest had not had its due representation in the Assembly, and it was with a view of remedying this state of things the association would endeavour to gain further agricultural representation in Parliament, and they would also take care to keep their members well posted as to what they considered to be their interests.

Now the farmers of the Darling Downs began to combine in an effort to create a powerful pressure group in the Assembly. The idea of united action was discussed generally at the Royal Agricultural Show held in Toowoomba in August 1891, and later in the same month an informal meeting was held which drew up a platform to be the basis of a fuller discussion:

1. To secure the proper representation in Parliament of farming electorates.
2. To obtain electoral reform including one man, one vote.
3. To secure the establishment of state-aided land settlement.

56. *Courier*, 15/2/1886, 23/4/1886.

4. To obtain protection for agricultural produce, and the fostering of native industries calculated to give employment to our surplus labour.

5. To obtain a State loan bank to assist struggling selectors by advancing loans at reasonable rates of interest for bona fide settlers.

6. To secure markets in all the large towns for the distribution, exhibition and sale of farm and dairy produce direct to the consumers.

7. To help in the formation of boards of conciliation for the settlement of all industrial disputes.

8. To secure the union of all engaged in farming pursuits for the protection of their common interests both in and out of Parliament.

Meetings of farmers were held in different parts of the Darling Downs electorates to appoint delegates to a general meeting to discuss this platform.⁵⁷ W. H. Groom was the main organiser, and the plan was based on that of the Farmers' Association in South Australia.⁵⁸

The meeting was held at Clifton in September.⁵⁹ Instead of the original proposal, it considered simply the rules of the South Australian body, with some slight amendments. These were basically the same as the original proposal, but the meeting rejected the proposal for federation as laid down by the Sydney conference. The new body was known as the Queensland Farmers' Alliance. It remained within the Government party but still maintained its separate identity. In 1895 this was followed by the establishment of a separate group of farmers, members in the Assembly, known as the Farmers' Union and including S. Grimes (Chairman), J. C. Cribb, A. Morgan, W. H. Groom, G. W. Thorn, J. V. Chataway, T. Plunkett, G. Agnew, M. Battersby, J. R. Dickson and E. J. Stevens. Any office-holder in this Union resigned his position if he were appointed to a post in the Cabinet.⁶⁰

The death of Robert Bulcock in May 1900 removed from the political stage the first of the great party managers of Queensland, though his influence was still to be carried on for some time by R. P. Adams, who was to remain until his death closely identified with Liberal Party organisation, except for the years 1904

57. *Courier*, 16/9/1891.

58. *Courier*, 24/9/1891.

59. *ibid.* 17/9/1891.

60. Bernays: *Sixty Years of Queensland Politics*, pp. 47-8.

to 1909 when he was ill and for much of the time out of employment. Other figures were now to come into the limelight, for instance, A. Hinchcliffe and later C. G. Fallon in the Labour Party, W. F. R. Boyce in the Country Party, and to some extent A. J. Thynne among the Conservative group. Moreover, after 1900 the position is much altered by the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia, which was to bring forward new interests and new problems to the fore, and which was also to bring Australia-wide pressure to bear in matters previously under purely local control, such as the problem of coloured labour on the canefields.

Hence this is a good time to cease our study of the detailed history of Liberal political organisation and attempt to sum up their achievements to see if we have yet reached anything comparable with our modern political party organisations. First it must be granted that an extremely competent organisation had been developed to supervise electoral rolls and for obtaining the greatest possible vote at elections. Bulcock or one of his associates, seated in the committee room during the actual periods of polling, were able, through their able pre-election canvassing and the contacts they had established, to ensure that their own supporters had all recorded their votes, and it is frequently recorded how they were thus able to assess the actual result of the election within a few votes before the votes had actually been counted. A system of pre-selection of candidates had been established, which though it had not gained universal acceptance, was still a very considerable factor in preventing the loss of seats through the splitting of votes among a number of candidates. The strength of the attacks made by Labour on Bulcock and Bulcockism pays eloquent tribute to his political power.

But little success had been attained in any efforts to ensure real rank and file participation in the making of important decisions. Although plebiscites were arranged, those taking part were few in number, with the result that real control lay in the hands of a few. Moreover, no full policy had ever been drawn up and submitted to the party supporters for discussion or to act as an inspiration, and no party permanently on the defensive could hope to attain political supremacy. The failure to provide such a target kept the control in the

hands of a few, who came especially from the older group, and no real effort was being made to attract the younger and more adventurous minds.

Finally, the combination that the older liberalism had endeavoured to create had disappeared altogether. The working class vote had gone completely over to the Labour Party and even those holding more advanced democratic ideas who could not accept the full Labour platform were wavering, looking for more leadership than was being offered. The farmers were claiming that a wide gap existed between the interests of city and country, and were forming their own groups to force political action on their behalf, though these groups were still within the Liberal Party. Thus the Party was driven back upon its real core, the town merchants and industrialists, who were now frightened of Labour and Socialism and thus turning more and more towards conservatism.