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PRIME MINISTER

MEETING WITH THE PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND

You are to have a brief meeting with the Premier of Queensland, Mr Ahern, tomorrow afternoon. He was your host in Brisbane last year.

Mr Ahern's political position is not looking too strong. There have been revelations of corruption under his predecessor's government. He himself is not involved but is perceived to have been slow to act against some of his Ministerial colleagues who were. As a result, his personal popularity is well below that of the Labour leader in Queensland. Even so, the most likely outcome of the State election leader this year is a coalition between the Liberal and National Parties. Mr Ahern no doubt hopes that his visit to Britain - and meeting with you - will enhance his standing for the election campaign.

The Queensland economy continues to grow fast, with exports concentrated on Japan. Mr Ahern concentrates on creating a good climate for business. EXPO was a great success with 18 million visitors, twice as many as expected.

On the national scene, Bob Hawke is widely expected to call an election later this year, even though last week's State elections in West Australia showed a 10 per cent swing against Labour (with Labour nonetheless just hanging on to power).

I think a brief discussion on Australian issues is all that is required. You will, of course, want to thank him for his hospitality last year.

C.D.P.

C. D. POWELL

14 February 1989



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

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14 February 1989

no
Sir Charles

Call on Prime Minister by Premier of Queensland

The Prime Minister will see Mr Mike Ahern, the Premier of Queensland at 1630 on 15 February. She met him in Australia last August. Mr Ahern is visiting Britain as an FCO sponsored visitor. I enclose a copy of his programme, together with a personality note.

General

Queensland, at 1,727,000 sq km, represents 22½% of the area of Australia. It is seven times the size of the United Kingdom. Over half of the State lies within the Tropics. Nearly all of the population of 2.7 million live in the rich coastal plain or in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range. Over half of the population reside in Brisbane which is the supply and export outlet for southern Queensland and northern New South Wales.

Political

Queensland is governed by the National Party which has been in power since 1957. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen was Premier from 1968 to late 1987 when he was succeeded by Mr Ahern. The State's Parliament is the only unicameral one among the Australian states. State elections are due later this year.

Sir Joh, a maverick figure, returned to prominence in December when he gave evidence to the 'Fitzgerald Inquiry' set up to investigate corruption in the State. The inquiry uncovered systematic abuse of public office over a period of many years at the highest levels. Mr Ahern himself has not been implicated but the Queensland Government continues to be dogged by political problems. Lack of action by the government against disgraced former National Party Minister and self-confessed tax cheat, Mr Lane, and the messy sacking in mid-January of then Family Services Minister, Mrs Harvey, over the appointment of members of her family to her personal staff, have been notable low points for the

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Queensland Government, in particular Mr Ahern. Mr Ahern's claim to be 'cleaning out the stable' was made to look rather thin. He has been accused of being soft, and portrayed as a weak leader.

Mr Ahern reshuffled his Cabinet on 16 January but dropped no-one despite expectations that he would want to take a new, rather than inherited, ministry into the state election later this year. Opinion polls following the reshuffle and sacking of Mrs Harvey show that Mr Ahern's and his Government's popularity rating have slumped and that Labor leader, Mr Goss, is by far the most popular party leader. Nevertheless the polls indicate that at present the likely outcome of the next state election will be a coalition government of Liberals and Nationals, because of the bias in favour of rural constituencies.

Mr Ahern is looking for a high profile visit to Britain to help boost his credibility with the Queensland electorate.

Economic

Queensland is now the fastest growing State in Australia and worth our special attention. She is a major primary producer of sugar, beef, wool, coal, copper, lead, zinc, nickel and aluminium. While mineral production, especially coal, has expanded rapidly, low commodity prices in the early 80's slowed down the development of other parts of the economy. Prices have now strengthened and Queensland is therefore looking for higher levels of industrial investment. The Lord Mayor of Brisbane Sallyanne Atkinson, a charismatic Liberal politician tipped to become prominent in national politics, led a delegation promoting inward investment to a number of European cities including London in December. Mrs Atkinson will return to Britain as an FCO sponsored visitor in October.

Queensland has relatively high unemployment at over 9% (national average 6.9%) but this shows signs of declining. Per capita output remains above the national average.

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Queensland exports to the United Kingdom in 1987 were valued at over £200 million, UK exports to Queensland at almost £70 million. Japan is Queensland's dominant trading partner followed by the European Community.

The rapid growth of tourism and coastal development is having some unpleasant side-effects with a marked increase in anti-Japanese sentiment brought about by Japanese investment in property.

The government has set out its strategy for the future economic direction of the state in a document entitled "Quality Queensland Building on Strength", which was published in December. Its essence is to create a positive business climate through more direct government support to the business community and diversification of existing primary industries.

EXPO '88

The Prime Minister will recall her own visit to EXPO in Brisbane. EXPO was a major success of the Bicentenary with 18 million visitors, more than double the anticipated number. Thirty-seven countries contributed pavilions and a large number of Heads of State and Government visited Brisbane for it. The Queensland Government must take the credit for this as they pushed ahead with it when other states and the Federal Government declined to be associated with an event whose value they doubted.

National Politics

The next national parliamentary election must be held by mid-1990 but Federal Prime Minister Hawke is widely expected to call it sometime later this year if possible. He has a reasonable chance of being re-elected although increases in the rate of inflation and a sizeable current account deficit will make it tricky for his Government to fulfill promises to the trade unions to introduce tax cuts this year in return for earlier wage restraint. The State elections in Western Australia last week showed a 10% swing against Labor with Labor just holding on to government.

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The Prime Minister will wish to impress on Mr Ahern our commitment to modernising our relationship with Australia, based on many common interests. The UK and Australia are important markets for each other. We want to increase trade and investment both ways. We have common objectives for agriculture in the GATT round.

Yours ever

R N Peirce

(R N Peirce)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
PS/No 10 Downing Street

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Honourable Mike Ahern, M.L.A.
Premier and Treasurer of Queensland and Minister for the Arts

Mike Ahern became Premier in December 1987, following the downfall of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Held several Cabinet portfolios previously including health, industry and small business.

At the age of 25 he entered Parliament in 1968 as the National Party Member for Landsborough in a by-election following the retirement of the then Premier, Sir Francis Nicklin.

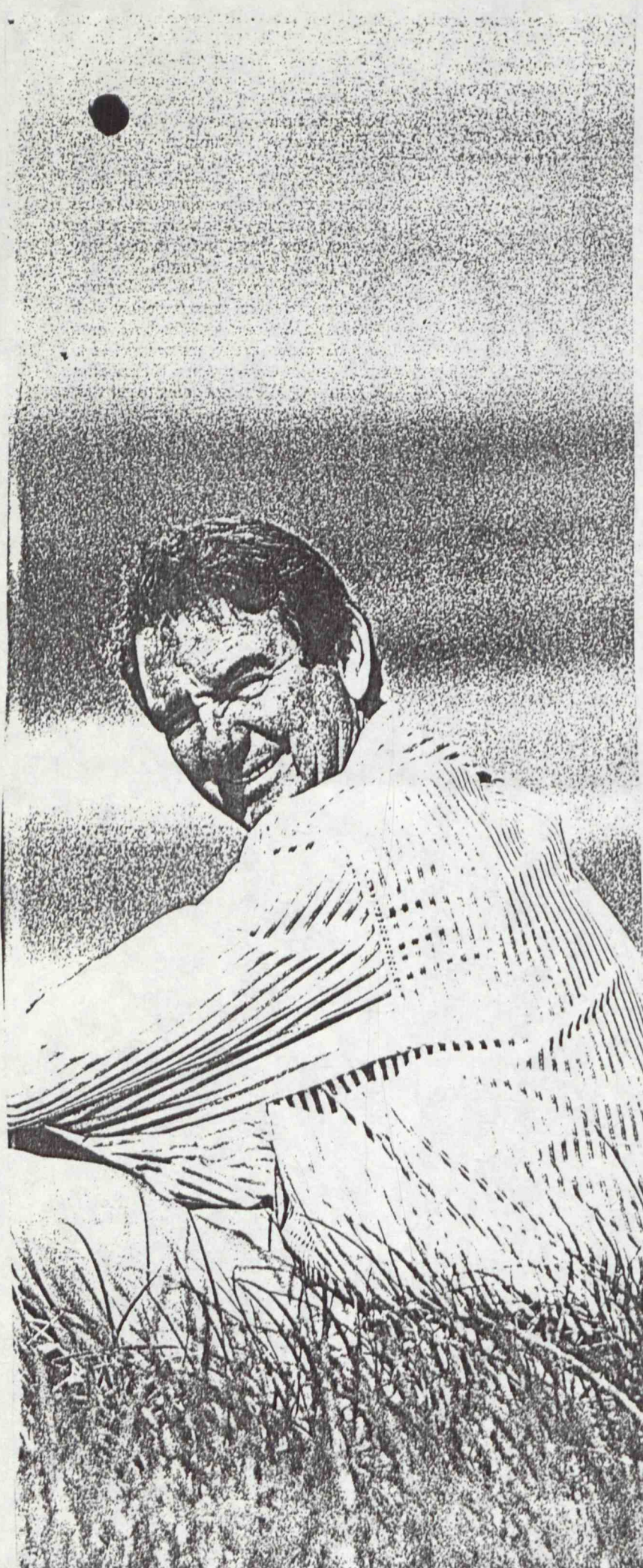
Ahern was raised on his father's dairy farm and grazing property at Conondale near Maleny. He attended Downlands College in Toowoomba, and went on to the University of Queensland where he gained his Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree in 1963.

On graduating, he returned to the family farm and developed an interest in politics. He became Federal Chairman of the Young Australian Country Party, or National Party, as it is known today.

During his twelve years as a back-bencher, he served on several Parliamentary Committees, including the Select Committee on Education, which he Chaired. In 1977, he attended a Parliamentary conference in Canada and studied Canada's primary industries. In July 1981, he visited Japan and took part in discussions on long term sugar contracts with sugar industry leaders and Government officials.

Ahern was a quiet but effective Minister whose progress was delayed by Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. As the party leader chosen to succeed the legendary Sir Joh in a situation where the Premier virtually refused to stand down even though he had lost the confidence of the Party, Ahern had a very difficult baptism of fire. He has weathered the first 2 years reasonably well, despite the opposition of those still supportive of Sir Joh and some disappointing by-election results. He is by nature a consensus politician but in the past year has shown himself to be increasingly decisive and firm, not last in his handling of the delicate Fitzgerald Commission on police corruption. He is honest, straightforward and idealistic, but not a particularly effective speaker, though he is improving. Although the next State election will probably see the end of the National Party Government - a coalition with the Liberals appears likely - there is no effective challenge to Ahern's position, and he is likely to remain Premier.

Married to a former Dutch air hostess, he has 5 children and is very much a family man. For this reason he tries to restrict his overseas travels. Very friendly and well disposed towards Britain.



MIKE AHERN

Slow rise, fast fall?

He sat on the backbench — and sat and sat. Now he is campaigning desperately to hold on to the hot seat.
By **ADRIAN MCGREGOR.**

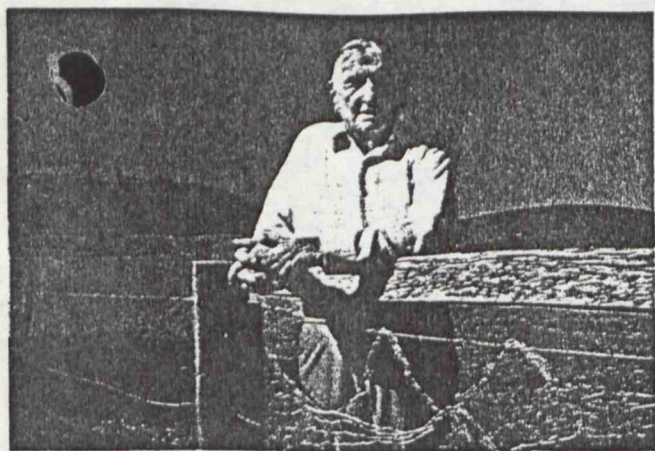
PREMIER MIKE AHERN, anxious, distracted but optimistic, is off and running. Where? In the steps of his masters — his father, John Ahern, his mentor, Sir Francis Nicklin, and his tormentor, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen.

Mike Ahern: his personal approval rating has slipped since April.

John Ahern, now 83, is the complete pastoral man: tall, God-loving, quick-witted, humorous, an innovative and highly successful cattle breeder. He remains a shrewd National Party tactician but never won public office. Mike Ahern would go one better.

"Honest" Frank Nicklin was Country Party Premier of Queensland from 1957 to 1968. He had no children, was close to the Aherns and treated Mike like a son. When he retired, Ahern won his seat. Mike modelled himself on his patron.

Johannes Bjelke-Petersen nailed Ahern ▷



The Ahern family. Left, the Premier's mentor, John Ahern. Below, with his wife, Andrea, and their children.

to the backbench for 12 long years, twice as long as Premier Nicklin kept young Joh waiting. Sir Joh promoted Ahern to Cabinet partly in exchange for Ahern backing Flo Bjelke-Petersen to become a senator. For being long suffering, Ahern promised himself the premiership.

But no man can serve three masters and, though Ahern speaks admiringly of the first two, it is the power of Bjelke-Petersen (never mentioned by name) that he sorely needs to emulate.

He retains the euphoria of December 1, 1987; Premier at last, a memorable day on the Government House steps. "I have a fire in my belly about this job," he enthused, echoing Martin Luther King. "This has been my career, my whole life. I really believe in government for the people, by the people, of the people." (Gettysburg, 1863.)

But that's the problem really. On latest polls it's government only for the 23 per cent who in June would have voted for the National Party in Queensland. Twenty years of corruption, cronyism, favouritism, nepotism, disenfranchisement and political perversion of the democratic process in Queensland is turning on the Nationals at the ballot box. In one month, last April, Ahern saw a safe National Party Federal seat in Toowoomba collapse to the Liberals and then, the unthinkable, the party lost Sir Joh's seat in Kingaroy. The losses did not surprise because the party was forewarned by private market research. But the private research damn well shocked them.

So, currawong to curlew call, Ahern fills his diary with appointments, gladhanding, posing and campaigning statewide. The weird aspect is that because he is not Uncle Joh, because his every pronouncement is not doted upon by the media, his exhausting schedule goes comparatively unreported.

Ahern became Premier amid cyclonic party disturbances. The tail has dealt him an eight-month, unceasing battering. Rumours from north Queensland: letters circulate predicting a Bjelke-Petersen comeback. Former Local Government Minister Russell Hinze, retired, unhappy, snipes;



dropped Transport Minister Don Lane — an Ahern numbers man during the great overthrow — is dangerously embittered.

Disappointed pro-Joh parliamentary disciples foment discord; a backlash led by the League of Rights is sweeping the plains. Ahern's private secretary, privy to much government intelligence, left to become the Liberals' State director. The perfect spy.

Ahern's personal approval rating has slipped from 63 to 52 per cent since last April.

Distant nimbus accumulate. On August 20 the government faces a by-election for Russell Hinze's vacated seat of South Coast. In September, Ahern must fight to preserve the party's gerrymander against the Federal Government's referendum on one vote-one value. If the party loses South Coast, even Ahern the Positive will be shaken. So he's running hard. It took me three weeks to obtain an hour-long appointment. Supporters said I had got in early.

He seemed spent, red-eyed (perhaps from his contact lenses; it was the end of the day) and fixed me with a disinterested, unblinking gaze. He often appears not to be listening, seeing into

some unknown dimension. Even his aides fear, "Uh, oh, we've lost him." But he hears all and answers politely. Occasionally, he divides his answer with a pause into which the unwary tread, as he begins again.

His myopia, combined with his introspection and his height (193 centimetres) can make him seem aloof. Senior party nobs complain that he has snubbed them in public when, in fact, he has not seen them, even though they might be waving for attention.

An hour is precious to the Premier these days. He soon grew impatient with recounting his past and rendered unto me a campaign speech, the product of so many public engagements. Then, after 20 minutes: "We're not going to get very far today, are we?" No, Premier, we're not. "We're not?" he said, surprised. When I persisted with his early years he prompted: "Are we getting around to the present day, which is relevant . . .?"

But Ahern's childhood and antecedents are important because, unlike Bjelke-Petersen, who was pure country and sold Brisbane his theatrical, Arcadian character, Ahern is the classic convert, the embodiment of the Country Party revolution which changed the party's name and then Queensland politics.

Ahern is a culture shock for Queensland. He doesn't drive tractors for relaxation, he attends the opera. Sir Joh's garbled homilies perfected the 30-second electronic news grab. Ahern gives sensible answers which take too long. Ahern is an agricultural scientist, Bjelke-Petersen was an agro-politician. The ex-Premier's strength, his unmistakable identity, is Premier Ahern's dilemma. He is from the country, he lives provincially. But he looks city, he sounds city.

So how's he going to win them in Expo city, as well as hold them back on the farm?

AHERN COUNTRY was Maleny, a pretty, English-green village on a ridge of wet, eucalyptus forest ranges, 110 kilometres north-west of Brisbane. It is 50km inland from the seaside resort of Caloundra, where Ahern now lives.

He was born there in June, 1942. His paternal side leads back to County Cork, and maternally to County Clare. His grandfather was the first settler in the upper Mary Valley, in 1891. Michael was born by caesarean and given the second name of John as was the custom for the eldest Ahern boy. The family property, 404 hectares, (1,000 acres) is Connemara, in those days the last house on Ahern Road about 19km from Maleny, but 240 metres down the ranges, below the village.

Connemara is "the promised land", according to old John Ahern. He set up a jersey cattle stud and dairy farm and was▷

among the first to practise artificial insemination in Queensland. But John is selling Connemara. He's too old and his is too busy.

Mike rode a horse 9km to Conondale State school, fording the Mary's tributaries twice each way, staying home when the river rose. He went fishing with his father on Fraser Island and pig-shooting out-past Thargomindah, 1,200km west of Brisbane. They camped in shearing sheds, lit fuel stoves and kero fridges, shot foxes and rabbits by night, pigs by day, but never kangaroos. "Shooting 'roos is like murdering hens," said John Ahern.

Though they were a good Catholic family — John, wife Gwen, eldest daughter Marie Antoinette, Mike, then Gabrielle Anne (the brightest, a university medallist in science) — John Ahern taught the kids to distrust people who wore their religion on their sleeves. John had a bullock team, cause for the occasional volley of confessionable language, which Mike heard and uses when he wishes to be privately, politically expressive.

Mike boarded at Downlands College, Toowoomba, run by the Sacred Heart missionary fathers. He is remembered as an outstanding marksman in the school cadets and was quite musical. As a prefect, his idea of punishment was 50 lines of the Bard, and his final-year report, in 1959, mentions that he was runner-up in Lyceum (oratory). It does not mention that he played prop forward in the Rugby Fourth XV, a ludicrous position for such a tall lad. "I was a bit slow on my feet. I've improved a bit since then," he laughed.

He won a Commonwealth scholarship to study agricultural science at Queensland University, a memory saddened, in his final year, by his mother's death from cancer. Ahern saw it at close quarters and he spoke feelingly about the current euthanasia debate. "The law is pretty clear but, where there is a supportive environment between doctors and people, decisions are made and no one is going to interfere with them," he said. He was unsure if the legislation had a role. "The law is a very blunt instrument."

Ahern's Catholicism plays no part in his political decisions. "I don't ring up the Church and ask what their view is," he said. Thus abortion, a tough issue — the toughest — was a conscience issue, as was capital punishment. "About 70 per cent of the population believe in it [capital punishment]. I don't and it won't happen," he said.

Similarly his views on IVF programs are based on his scientific training, not on Papal fiat. He lectured me at length, which I abbreviate to: IVF is bypassing a blockage in the fallopian tube, and doing in a Petri dish that which normally happens in the fallopian tube. Now I

can't see that creates a moral dilemma. But there are moral issues because to unite the male and female gametes, they have to do more than one and after they take the healthy one back and implant it . . . what happens to the others?

While at university, Ahern joined the Young Country Party. YCP farmers uniformly remember him as cautious, and not one for giving stick, however well-deserved. Or seizing thrones. Don Cameron, Federal member for Moreton, led the Young Liberals at the time. He said: "That he went for Joh's throat in the end didn't surprise me — but it did surprise me, you know."

Ahern graduated in 1963, returned to Connemara, and for four years nurtured his career through the YCP ranks, eventually becoming, in 1967, their first Federal president.

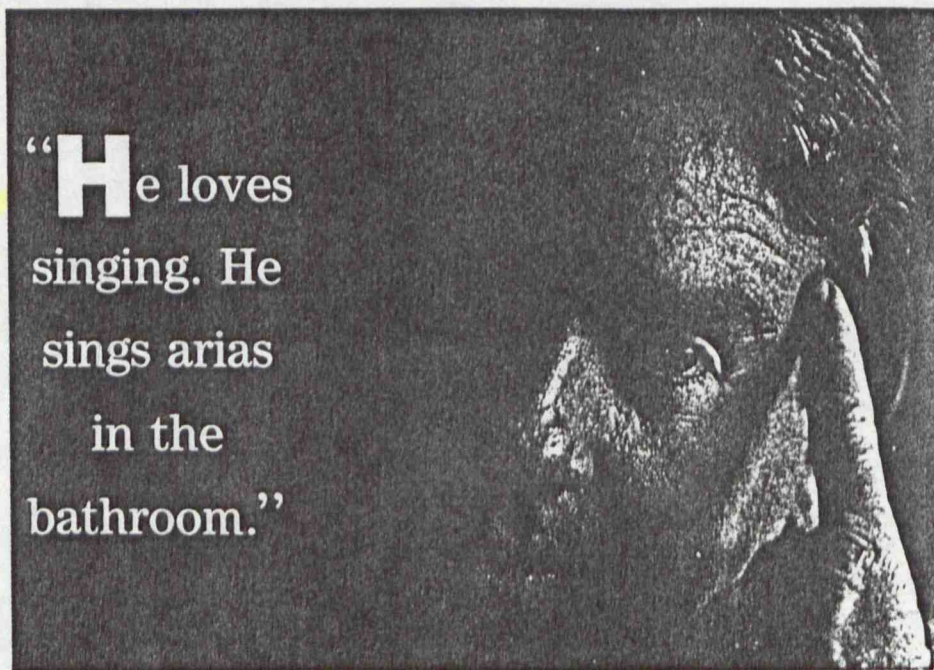
Throughout his school years, political conversations filled Connemara. John

country split. Beausang had criticised fruit-growers for not controlling the noxious weed groundsel. That finished him. Given the choice between town chemist Burnett and young "grazier" M. J. Ahern, country members trusted their own and Ahern slid through on Beausang's preferences. It was a safe Country Party seat and the Conondale Kid, just 25, duly entered Parliament.

His election vote fell 20 per cent from Nicklin's but, Ahern explained, "Nicklin was the nearest thing to a political saint. He was held in awe by all people, large and small. When he attended functions he never left without poking his head into the kitchen and thanking the cook. After 10 years in politics he was still known as 'Honest' Frank Nicklin. Not a bad model."

IT WAS 1968. Ahern's election preceded Bjelke-Petersen's elevation to

“He loves singing. He sings arias in the bathroom.”



Ahern was chairman of Frank Nicklin's local electorate council, and Mike recalls, aged 15, great excitement in the house as Labor split in 1957 and Nicklin became Premier. One drought ended, another began.

John Ahern was State president of the senior party from 1964-67, was nominated for the Senate but missed Country Party endorsement by one vote. When Nicklin retired through ill health in 1968 Mike went to his father: "You'll take this?" Said John, "No, my time is past . . . and you're too young."

But Mike nominated for endorsement against two most formidable opponents — Jack Beausang, long-time chairman of the local Landsborough Shire Council, and Wally Burnett, later Sir Walter, chairman of the Royal National Agricultural Association which runs Brisbane's annual show.

Ahern won in a classic town-and-

Premier by several months and when, two years later, a challenge was mounted against Joh's leadership, Ahern voted against him.

The family has long disagreed with Bjelke-Petersen. Said John Ahern, "I was head of the party's finance committee and Joh would burst out sometimes — he wasn't a man who studied or read much and he took strange advice. We'd have words and he'd back off a little."

John Ahern attended the party management committee meeting which, during the Lindeman Island furore, called Bjelke-Petersen in to discuss the government's plans to develop the island's national park. The committee warned Sir Joh the party could lose an election over the plan to sell the island, and extracted an agreement from him to let the matter cool. Waiting reporters asked Sir Joh, "Did the party back you?" ▷

The right to march?

Ahern rolled out the old cliché about holding up the city at peak hour.

Sir Joh: "To a man." John Ahern, close behind, heard that. Eventually, Sir Joh refused to attend management committee meetings.

Mike Ahern bridled. "Look, it has been reported that problems of conflict between myself and my predecessor were due to my father's conflicts. That is all overstated. It is factually completely incorrect." But it was reported his father had once said that Sir Joh carried a Bible in one pocket and a revolver in the other. Was that apocryphal? Ahern burst unexpectedly into closed mouth mirth, "No, no, he certainly did say that."

So for whatever sins, and because he was so young, and talented, Ahern began his long wait on the backbench.

IN 1971, aged 29 and no lady-killer, Ahern accompanied parliamentary colleague Vic Sullivan to a restaurant with friends, one of whom was Dutch-born Andrea Myer, a beautifully serene, blonde TAA air hostess. Said Sullivan "Mike got this look in his eye the moment he saw her, and Andrea, she did too. Then about five weeks later Mike called me and said, 'I've got news for you. Andrea and I have been seeing a bit of each other. We're going to be engaged'."

They built a double-garage, two-level, pale-brick home at Caloundra, a storm's spray from Shelley Beach, a non-swimming stretch full of rips and undertows produced by the steep fall of the sand shelf. Andrea named the house Galilee — place by the sea. The front garden grows geraniums, palms, ferns and a small naked cherub holding a pot plant. The small backyard is almost entirely a swimming pool with brown concrete surrounds.

It is remarkably unpretentious — determinedly middle class. Its position marks its value up to about \$250,000. Inside there are five children, nanny, dog (Prince the corgi), cat, budgie, and Andrea's interior decor of objets d'art — a profusion of carved chests and tables, vases, statuettes, sculptures (La Pieta), dolls, prints (D'Arcy Doyle's cricket match), dried flowers, family snaps, portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Kent (signed Katherine and Edward) and five clocks, not including the video digital.

Mike's input is identifiable: a plaque "Nothing in Life is to be Feared, it is Only to be Understood", 40 volumes of Queensland parliamentary debates, a dozen volumes of Modern Eloquence including 500 best anecdotes, famous lectures, 14,000 quips and quotes, etc. He likes to read the latter, enjoys their old-English style. No fiction. "I'm a bit intolerant of fiction," he grimaced. "Don't have the time." Yet he loves the opera. This year he has seen *Carmen*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Aida* and *Madama Butterfly*. Now it was my turn to wrinkle my nose.

"You know why you don't like it?" he asked. "I'm prepared to guess you haven't seen it for many years. Modern opera, though still traditional, is presented in a most exciting way. If it's in German or Italian, there is a translation flashing across a little screen. You can participate and know what's going on."

Andrea unveiled a gem: "Mike loves singing. He has a ▷

beautiful voice. He sings arias in the bathroom." Mike burst forth: "Tor-ea-dor", a tolerable tenor which thoroughly embarrassed the children. There are four girls, aged 16 to 7, and in the middle a boy named John, in keeping with the tradition.

Mike joshes the kids affectionately. They are a close family. Mike seeks Andrea's opinion, calls her during the day. Supporters aver that because of Andrea and John Ahern, Mike has never needed deep, dependent friendships outside his family.

FOR AN impotent decade Ahern supported, objected to and tolerated the excesses of his Premier and his party. He had no trouble with Vietnam, supported the state of emergency to break the electricity strike, had no difficulty with the Cedar Bay drug raids.

The midnight demolition of the Belle Vue? "It would have been enormously expensive to restore," he said carefully. "I stayed there; it was the residence for Members of Parliament, but I soon moved out. I thought it would burn."

Police Commissioner Whitrod's resignation? "That did cause me some concern. At the time I was quite junior and didn't have a great deal of influence. It was the symptom of a much wider problem, as we now know."

The right to march? Ahern rolled out the old cliché about holding up the city at peak hour. His true mode was seen when Queensland Aborigines marched from the city to Expo and decidedly stopped traffic. "They said they were going to take it further and disrupt Expo," Ahern says. "I said 'It's not on, you've made your point, it's finished', and we haven't heard from them since." Ahern made that sound tough but, of course, Bjelke-Petersen would have rolled out 500 coppers and the Aborigines would not have set foot on Victoria Bridge.

Ahern was seeking to portray himself as more publicly decisive, more iron-fisted, than was his previous, reasonable image.

For a decade, the media resorted to Ahern as the rational voice of the National Party. A former National MP, Earle Bailey, an Ahern backer, saw it as wrong to label Ahern a small "n" National. "He's not going to legalise prostitution, he's not getting into bed with homosexuals," he said. "In many areas he's as right-wing as anybody. It is true that compared with some of ours he sounds the voice of moderation."

AHERN'S BREAKTHROUGH came in 1980 when he chaired a two-year, all-party review of education in Queensland. Though committee member Lyn Powell and Christian zealot Rona Joyner combined to kill the sex-education content, it established Ahern in the van of the minority, alternative Nationals.

In 1982 Bjelke-Petersen felt compelled to offer Ahern a ministry. On his way to the executive suite Ahern troubled over whether he would sign an undated resignation note which the Premier usually demanded of new appointees. Sir Joh did not request it, a rare error. Five years later he had to sack Ahern. For those five years, having taken an oath of secrecy, Ahern was bound by Cabinet solidarity. He did not blow himself out of the leather by confronting an increasingly erratic Bjelke-Petersen.

"I could have got out of Cabinet if I didn't like what was being done but I didn't," said Ahern. "I chose to stay and fight another day and that's proved best." For adopting that strategy he was dubbed a "wimp".

Last year, condom-vending machines became the cause célèbre for the party forces gathering against an antediluvian leader. Premier Bjelke-Petersen rolled Health Minister Ahern on the issue. Said Earle Bailey: "Of course, Mike had to wear it. Imagine resigning over condoms. You'd look a fool forever." Bjelke-Petersen prevailed, for the last time.

EVENTS have conspired to dub him, however unjustly, the Minister for Stopping Things — the world's tallest building▷

GOOD WEEKEND

and the original Expo development. Because he demanded thorough Cabinet reviews, cartoonists tabbed him as heading "The World's Most Vacillating Government". Having never asked to be deified, the media denunciation bemused him. Stories abounded about how the Cabinet satchels had to be swapped for airline bags to carry the increased bureaucracy, committee papers, red tape.

Developers, who in the past could sell big Russ Hinze an idea and have him fast-track it through Cabinet, are being referred back to councils. Faced with sane administration, disgruntled developers spread the word: "Ahern ain't Joh." He was a wimp to them, too. Ahern belatedly dealt cronyism its first telling blow when he carpeted party crony Sir Frank Moore, chief of the Tourist and Travel Corporation quango, to finally reject Moore's Expo bid.

Amid it all Ahern has pursued his promises — public accounts committee, anti-corruption legislation, foreign lands register, to implement future Fitzgerald inquiry recommendations. All that the ALP Opposition Leader, Wayne Goss, could ask for. Initially.

WE WALKED from Galilee to the sea. Neighbours called, drivers waved. They are still excited that their Mike Ahern finally made it. He told me how the Queen and Prince Philip had eased nervous moments opening Expo. "This is your first time, isn't it?" said Her Majesty to the virgin Premier.

That's tinsel. Ahern enjoys the real power. "You just put the paper into the system, argue it over with friends and supporters, and if it's logical and consistent, they'll agree and say, 'Yes, let's do it.'" That unalloyed freedom may last only until late 1989. It is unrealistic to presume that Ahern in one term can hold the heights to which Bjelke-Petersen raised the party over 20 years.

Would he regard coalition with the Liberals as a failure? "That prospect would be extraordinarily difficult given all the personal rancour, not with me, but within the government," he says. "Competition with the Liberals is immense." He crossed the road to the sand. "I guess the ultimate answer to that is, yes."

If Queensland, under the Nationals, is to metamorphose from the most to the least corrupt State in Australia, it could occur under Ahern. He sees as his strength that he talks openly and honestly. "That's what our polls show and that's how I am anyway," he said. The only flaw there is a variation of the John Ahern dictum: beware those who wear their honesty on their shirt sleeves. It may be faint praise but, until proved otherwise, Mike Ahern is the next best thing to a normal democracy's healthy change of government. □

GOOD WEEKEND



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Programme of arrangements made by the
Central Office of Information for the
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Honourable Michael John AHERN MLA
Premier of the State of Queensland
Treasurer and Minister for the Arts

Accompanied by

Mr Gary DIGGLES
Principal Private Secretary

and

Mr Findlay McKECHNIE
Press Secretary

Brisbane

AUSTRALIA

14 - 20 and 27 February 1989

Accompanied by a representative of the Central Office of Information

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Tuesday 14 February

ARRIVAL

0650

Arrive at the Spelthorne Suite, London Heathrow Airport, Terminal 4, on British Airways flight BA 10 from Brisbane.

Greeted on behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by Mr I H May MBE, and met by Mr Peter Rea, Overseas Visitors and Information Studies, Central Office of Information.

Mr Tom McVeigh, Agent General for the State of Queensland, and Mrs McVeigh will be present.

Continue in car to the Montcalm Hotel, Great Cumberland Place, London W1 (Tel: 01-402 4288) where accommodation has been reserved for nine nights.

The remainder of the day is free.

Wednesday 15 February

PROGRAMME DISCUSSION
AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE OFFICIAL LUNCHEON
TRH THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF KENT
THE PRIME MINISTER

0930

Joined at the hotel by Mrs S Geddes, Head, Australia Group, Overseas Visitors and Information Studies, Central Office of Information.

Jennifer Gordon will discuss the programme arrangements.

Mr M Peart LVO, Assistant Head, South Pacific Department, will represent the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

1000

Leave hotel by car with Mr Rea, Central Office of Information, who will accompany Mr Ahern to his official appointments.

1030

Arrive at the Australian High Commission, Australia House, The Strand, WC2.

Met by Mr David Evans, Acting High Commissioner.

1130

Leave The Strand by car.

1215
for
1245

Arrive at Lancaster House, St James's, SW1, to attend the official Foreign and Commonwealth Office Luncheon.

Host: The Lord Glenarthur
Minister of State for Foreign and
Commonwealth Affairs

1400

Leave Lancaster House by car for return to hotel.

Wednesday 15 February cont'd

1430 Leave hotel by car.

MR AND MRS AHERN

1500 Arrive at York House, St James's Palace, SW1.

Received by Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Kent.

1530 Leave St James's Palace by car.

MR AHERN

1630 Arrive at 10 Downing Street, SW1.

Received by the Prime Minister,
The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher FRS MP.

1700 Leave Downing Street by car for return to hotel.

The evening is free.

Thursday 16 February

DTI - THE DEPARTMENT FOR ENTERPRISE
HOUSE OF COMMONS
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (UK BRANCH)
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION HQ SECRETARIAT
OFFICIAL LUNCHEON

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME
THE RT HON RICHARD LUCE MP
THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

0900 Leave hotel by car.

MR AHERN

0930 Arrive at the DTI - the department for Enterprise,
1 Victoria Street, SW1.

Received by the Rt Hon The Lord Young of Graffham,
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

1000 Leave Victoria Street by car.

1215 Arrive at the Westminster Hall, House of Commons,
Parliament Square, Westminster, SW1.

Met by Mr Peter Cobb OBE, Secretary, Commonwealth
Parliamentary Association, UK Branch.

1245 Arrive at the Harcourt Room.

Lunch as the guest of the Commonwealth
Parliamentary Association, HQ Secretariat.

Host: Dr The Hon David Tonkin, Secretary-General

Thursday 16 February cont'd

1425 Watch the Speaker's Procession.

1445 Attend proceedings in the House of Commons from the Commonwealth Gallery.

1515 Prime Minister's Question Time.

Later Leave Westminster by car.

1700 Arrive at the Office of Arts and Libraries, Horseguards Road, SW1.

Received by The Rt Hon Richard Luce MP, Minister of State, and Minister for the Arts.

1730 Leave Horseguards Road by car for return to hotel.

1835 Leave hotel by car.

1900 Arrive at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, WC2.

Met by Mr Ewen Balfour, Director of Press and Public Relations.

Attend performance by the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet Company of 'Sleeping Beauty'.

There will be a light supper in the Crush Bar in the 1st Interval.

In the 2nd Interval, joined in the Crush Bar by Miss Karen Donovan, Principal Dancer, and her husband Mr Nigel Bates.

Later Leave Covent Garden by car for return to hotel.

Friday 17 February

LONDON - CAMBRIDGE
KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL
ST JOHN'S INNOVATION CENTRE
CAMBRIDGE - LONDON

0930 Leave hotel by car.

1115 Arrive at King's College Chapel, Cambridge.

Met by Mr Arthur Mundell, Administrator of the Chapel, and Mr Richard Ellis, COI, Eastern Region.

Tour of the Chapel.

1215 Leave the Chapel on foot.

Friday 17 February cont'd

MR AHERN
MR DIGGLES
MR McKECHNIE
MR ELLIS

1230

Arrive at the St John's Innovation Centre,
St John's College, Trinity Street.

Met by Dr Chris Johnson, Senior Bursar and
Director, and Dr Bill Bolton, Director, for a
discussion on the organisation and philosophy of
the Centre.

Lunch in Hall as guests of Dr Johnson.

1400

Visit the Centre.

MRS AHERN
MR REA

1230

Lunch and sightseeing in Cambridge.

WHOLE GROUP

1500

Leave Trinity Street in car for return to London.

Saturday 18 February

LONDON - WARWICK
WARWICK CASTLE
WARWICK - STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

0830

Leave hotel by car with overnight luggage.

1030

Arrive at Warwick Castle, Warwickshire.

Met by Mr Paul Barker, Curator.

Tour the Castle.

1230

Leave Warwick Castle.

1300

Arrive for lunch at the Shakespeare Restaurant,
Chapel Street, Stratford-upon-Avon.

1430

Leave Chapel Street in car.

1500

Arrive at the Welcombe Hotel, Warwick Road,
Stratford-upon-Avon (Tel: 0789 295252), where
overnight accommodation has been reserved.

Afternoon

Sightseeing in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Evening free.

Sunday 19 February

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON - OXFORD
SIGHTSEEING IN OXFORD
ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM
ORIEL COLLEGE
OXFORD - LONDON

- 0845 Leave hotel by car with luggage.
- 1000 Arrive at 68 Observatory Street, Oxford.

Joined for coffee by Mr Brian Smith, Post Graduate St Anne's and Captain of the Oxford University rugby team, and his Vice-Captain, Mr Troy Coker, Post Graduate, Lady Margaret Hall.
- 1050 Leave Observatory Street on foot.
- 1100 Arrive at the Lodge, St John's College, Oxford University, St Giles.

Met by Miss Rosemary Flanders, Art Historian and Educationalist, for a tour of Oxford Colleges and Buildings.
- 1230 Arrive at the Randolph Hotel, Beaumont Street.

Joined for lunch by Miss Rosemary Flanders, and Dr Gerald Vaughan, Fellow of Wolfson College, Art Historian and Private Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University.
- 1400 Leave the Randolph Hotel with Dr Vaughan for a visit to the Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street.
- 1615 Arrive at the Provost's Lodge, Oriel College, Oriel Square.

Tea as guests of Sir Zelman Cowen, Provost, and Lady Cowen.
- 1730 Leave Oxford by car for return to London.

Monday 20 February

BRITISH COAL CORPORATION

- 0915 Leave hotel by car.
- 0930 Arrive at the British Coal Corporation, Hobart House, Grosvenor Place, SW1.

Met by Mr W E Hindmarsh, Head of Planning and Major Projects.
- 1030 Leave Grosvenor Place by car.

Monday 20 February contd

1130

Arrive at the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, Stationers Hall, Ave Maria Lane, EC4, for commencement of the official programme organised by the Office of the Agent General for the State of Queensland.

Tuesday 21 February)

) Official programme organised by the Office of the Agent General for the State of Queensland.

Wednesday 22 February)

Thursday 23 February

DEPARTURE

0630

Leave hotel by car, with luggage.

0800

Depart London Heathrow Airport, Terminal 1, Desk 73, in Charter Jet for Zurich, accompanied by Mr Hamish Stewart-Black, Director, Client Relations, Credit Suisse First Boston Ltd.

9 February 1989

RESTRICTED



file DS
as PC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

20 December 1988

Dear Bob,

CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY THE PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND

Thank you for your letter of 15 December about the request from the Premier of Queensland to call on the Prime Minister during his visit to the United Kingdom next February. Since the Prime Minister was his guest in Queensland, she feels that she must see him and could do so at 1630 on Wednesday 15 February. I should be grateful if you could confirm if this is acceptable to him.

The implication of this is, as you will gather, that the Prime Minister will also see Mr Greiner when he comes next year.

Yours sincerely,

C. D. POWELL

R. N. Peirce, Esq.
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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