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PEOPLE AND PARLIAMENTARIANS: THE GREAT DIVIDE

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Most candidates for federal elections hold values on economic and social questions that are unlike those of most voters. However, Coalition candidates are much closer to the people who vote for them than Labor candidates are to Labor voters. Labor's electoral base is divided between a relatively small number of new-class social professionals and a relatively large number of people in traditional working-class occupations. These two groups often hold different values on political questions, such as border control, the size of the immigration program, cultural pluralism and so on. Labor candidates in federal elections are more likely to sympathise with the social professionals' values than with those of their traditional supporters.

THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE POWER ELITE

Many commentators refer to Australia's new-class intellectuals as a cultural elite. This invites confusion between them and the power elite (Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, CEOs of major companies, heads of government departments, vice chancellors and so on), people who exercise power over national affairs on a daily basis¹ and can be unhelpful. However there is one arena where the two groups now mingle: the field of candidates in federal elections. It is now likely that an increasing number of Parliamentary candidates are drawn from the new class and survey data exist which allow us to compare candidates' social and political attitudes with those of the electorate.

Since the 1987 election a team of researchers based at the Australian National University have regularly carried out the Australian Election Study (AES), sending questionnaires on voting behaviour and political and social attitudes to a large random sample of voters after each federal election, and a similar survey to candidates who stood in that election. (See Appendix A for details.) Thanks to their work we now have comparative data on the attitudes of voters and candidates to a range of questions in the period just after

five federal elections over a 14 year period (1987, 1990, 1993, 1996 and 2001).²

Candidates who already hold seats and who retain them at the election in question are members of the national power elite, especially if they are Ministers or shadow Ministers. Others are aspirants and, while the survey questions for candidates provide scant data on their social background (in order to preserve confidentiality), they do show that candidates are more likely to be highly educated than the people they represent. In 2001, 69 per cent of the candidates had three or more years of tertiary education compared to 33 per cent of the voters.³

In 1998 Simon Jackman analysed the two sets of files for the 1996 AES and concluded that there was a gap between the attitudes of candidates and voters, particularly on questions touching on race (those concerning Aborigines, immigration and immigrants), and that this gap was wider between Labor candidates and Labor voters than it was between Coalition candidates and Coalition voters.⁴

LEFT AND RIGHT TAKE A NEW TURN

Jackman's study began with the traditional left/right economic questions which have long been the focus of electoral contests.

For example, he analysed questions tapping the respondent's own identification of their position on a left/right continuum, their beliefs about trade unions, and their attitudes to the redistribution of wealth. But he also analysed questions on Aborigines and immigration and initially assumed that these, too, would map onto the same left/right continuum. But he found that voters who said that they were left-wing seemed to see no inconsistency in rejecting a 'left-wing' position on race: on the contrary they offered 'relatively conservative opinions on government assistance for Aborigines [and] levels of immigration'.⁵ He concludes that, for voters, the second set of questions tap a different dimension. Rather than measuring attitudes on the traditional left/right continuum, questions about Aborigines and migration tapped a dimension that he labeled racial liberalism versus racial conservatism.

Since the late 1960s Australia has confronted new challenges. Social movements (often led by new-class enthusiasts), such as women's rights, Aboriginal rights, ethnic rights and gay liberation have assailed many taken-for-granted values about family life and the national community and, since the 1980s, these social challenges have been joined by cuts to tariffs, the floating of the dollar, deregulation of the banks, and the growth of economic globalisation. The labels *left* and *right* used to mean support for government intervention in the economy and social welfare (on the left) and support for free markets (on the right). During the mid 1980s Labor embraced economic neoliberalism and these labels lost most of their old meaning. De facto bipartisan support for free markets meant that Australia no longer had a traditional left-wing party.

Despite these changes we didn't drop the words and, by some linguistic alchemy,

they have morphed into a different set of meanings: today, for many commentators, *left-wing* means being a cosmopolitan anti-racist while *right-wing* means holding national loyalties together with attitudes that, to outsiders at least, look racist. The terms now have little to do with economic classes and the fight for equality, and a lot to do with moral positions on causes dear to supporters of the new social movements, especially causes concerning race.⁶

This linguistic shift can be partly explained by Labor Governments' conversion to neoliberalism. This change had little to do with new class values: it appears to have been an outcome of how members of the power elite and their immediate economic advisers interpreted the nature of Australia's economy and the newly competitive international environment it confronted.⁷ The cultural changes were different. They stem from the philosophical transformations wrought within the Labor Party by Gough Whitlam and the men and women he inspired during the 1960s and 1970s. But had it not been for the rise of the new class since the mid 1960s, and the way in which they came to define themselves as anti-racist cosmopolitan internationalists,⁸ there would have been fewer people to be inspired.

Whitlam's support for anti-discrimination, the end of the White Australia policy, more attention to Aboriginal welfare, and a new focus on Asia and internationalism in foreign policy drew the new class to Labor rather than the Liberals. His particular variant of cultural nationalism had its attractions too, with its support for Australian artists and film makers. Australia's creative intellectuals could be a new breed of nationalist, ones who combined a laconic attachment to their country (and new career opportunities) with an openness and commitment to the world of overseas.

Whitlam won Government for Labor in December 1972 and was dismissed from office in November 1975. His dramatic departure cemented the loyalties of Labor's new converts, a story well told by Judith Brett.⁹ Indeed some of the intelligentsia interpreted the dismissal as a Liberal Party coup and Brett argues that, because of it, many of Whitlam's new converts were lost to the Liberal Party for good.¹⁰

This history means that the rise of the new class affected the Labor Party more profoundly than the Liberal or National parties. In the past the middle class (broadly defined) had been the backbone of the Liberal Party; after 1975 many of them, and most especially the highly educated new-class intellectuals, were firm supporters of Labor and, as they deepened their involvement in the party and promoted the causes that they cared about, the meanings of *left* and *right* began their metamorphosis.

NEW CLASS, NEW LEFT, AND NEW LABOR

After the 1975 constitutional crisis, it was not just that many intellectuals remained Labor supporters, most of the pre-Whitlam generation of Labor politicians retired, and the parliamentary wing of the party was almost completely transformed.¹¹ At the first AES in 1987 52 per cent of people who saw themselves as middle class continued to vote for the Coalition,¹² but only 24 per cent of these self-described middle-class people were professionals (and 21 per cent managers and administrators). The rest were a mix of semi-professionals, clerks, sales people and people in working-class occupations.

At the first AES in 1987, 46 per cent of professionals voted Labor but this general figure doesn't capture the significant contribution to Labor politics made

by prominent individuals, people who were sufficiently shocked by the events of 1975 to declare their public support for the party. Intellectuals whom Brett identifies as being so moved include: Harry and Penelope Seidler, Donald Horne, Patrick White, Manning Clark, David Williamson, Lloyd Rees, Kate Fitzpatrick and Frank Moorhouse.¹³ She concludes:

[The Liberal Party], which for most of its history had been able to rely on a sympathy between its underlying values and those of the articulate and educated could no longer do so. And worse than this, when another Labor government was elected [in 1983], it became clear that they were now in Labor's camp.¹⁴

The old left had organised and protected the old Australian working class; the new left was more interested in ethnic and other minorities, and in international human rights, than in improving conditions for lower-income people in Australia's suburbs and rural areas.

Whitlam's reformers had had a case; there was much about the old Australia that needed to be changed but, as the 1970s wore on into the 1990s and Hawke, and then Keating, continued the cultural themes that he had introduced, the tone grew more sour. It was not just that the times were changing and Australia had to develop a new vision of its future. Some intellectuals, including many lesser figures than those named by Brett, believed that the old Australia had been a third-rate place, built on a racist immigration program and brutal Aboriginal policies. As higher education expanded these people became more numerous. They had a strong voice within the Labor Party and outside it and, in their hands, the national story became one suffused with shame and guilt. The old story based on pride in pioneering a continent, the ANZAC spirit, mateship and

courage, was not eclipsed in the hearts of old Australians,¹⁵ but it almost vanished from the public arena.

In 2001 federal candidates for the Coalition and the Labor Party were almost equally likely to have had three or more years of tertiary education.¹⁶ But not only has the rise of the new class helped change the meaning of *left* and *right*, the effects of this change have been mainly concentrated on the Labor Party. Thus these changes may have affected Labor's political base, including the temper of the men and women prepared to run for office, more than they have affected the Coalition parties.

CANDIDATES AND VOTERS: SHARED AND DIVERGENT VALUES

We can test this proposition by asking three research questions. First, do most candidates for federal elections in Australia hold similar values on economic and social questions to those of most voters? Second, do candidates from the two major political groupings (the Australian Labor Party and the Coalition of Liberal and National Parties) hold similar values to the people who vote for them? And third, if there is a gap between voters and candidates, is it wider for Labor than it is for the Coalition?

Answers will be sought from the five sets of AES surveys. As far as possible, the analysis will be restricted to questions relevant to economic redistribution and to the social values raised by the new social movements, and to those questions which were asked in the same fashion in at least four of the five sets of surveys. But it is important to remember that the candidates' surveys measure the respondents' personal values; these may or may not gel with the official policy of their parties. The surveys are about what individuals think: they are only indirectly about party policies.

Table 1 sets out answers to three survey questions relevant to the domestic redistribution of wealth, the conventional economic left/right divide. These show that, overall, voters are more likely to think that high taxes make people less willing to work hard than do candidates (Question 1),¹⁷ and that voters are less likely to favour the redistribution of income and wealth to ordinary working people than do candidates (Question 2). Overall voters do favour redistribution, but not as strongly as the candidates do. (On average only slightly more than half of the candidates are drawn from the two major political groupings. Candidates for the Democrats and a shifting mix of other small parties make up the remainder. See Appendix A.) The third survey question is more pointed. It asks respondents to choose between lower taxes or more social welfare and here voters are much more likely than candidates to choose lower taxes. Both questions 2 and 3 suggest that, for voters and candidates as a whole, the proportion favouring redistribution towards social services over lower taxation has grown (but the recent dramatic changes in this direction dating from 2003 are not captured in these data).¹⁸

From this we could conclude that, on questions of redistribution, voters are rather more right-wing (in the old-fashioned sense of the term) than candidates. But when we compare Coalition voters with Coalition candidates and Labor voters with Labor candidates the situation changes. Coalition candidates are more right-wing than the people who vote for them while Labor candidates are much more left-wing (in the old-fashioned sense) than Labor voters. This is unlikely to mean that the old working-class-based politics still linger among Labor politicians; it is more likely to represent the new symbolic

Table 1: Three questions on economic redistribution: voters and candidates, 1987 to 2001, per cent

	All voters	All candidates	Coalition voters	Coalition candidates	ALP voters	ALP candidates
1 High income tax makes people less willing to work hard: agree and strongly disagree and strongly disagree						
2001	69.0	47.0	72.4	87.1	66.7	18.2
1996	74.1	45.6	81.3	88.2	66.1	25.2
1993	73.8	49.6	80.0	93.1	68.9	18.5
1990	81.5	57.3	90.3	96.9	73.1	30.7
1987	79.7	63.9	88.1	97.5	71.9	19.6
2 Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary working people: agree and strongly agree disagree and strongly disagree						
2001	55.4	65.9	42.8	14.1	68.6	81.8
1996	47.0	60.1	38.7	16.2	56.2	75.2
1993	50.7	60.2	34.9	20.4	66.3	83.2
1990	41.5	60.4	28.6	6.3	53.2	86.0
1987	45.4	53.8	30.9	14.8	57.6	89.0
3 If the Government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more on social services, which do you think it should do? Mildly or strongly favour spending more on social services Mildly or strongly favour reducing taxes						
2001	30.2	62.4	20.5	7.1	35.6	85.2
1996	16.8	52.8	10.3	3.4	24.0	63.9
1993	17.3	47.2	10.4	1.4	23.4	69.5
1990	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1987	14.9	35.6	7.9	1.5	20.1	62.0
2001	41.6	22.6	50.7	65.5	36.5	3.4
1996	57.2	25.5	65.7	68.9	47.4	13.0
1993	55.9	32.6	66.6	74.8	46.8	11.9
1990	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1987	65.1	46.6	76.6	89.4	55.4	10.6

Sources: AES voters' and candidates' files, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996 and 2001.

For details see Appendix A.

Notes: Questions have been numbered for convenient referral in this article; they had different numbers in the original questionnaires. People who did not answer the questions are excluded from the analysis.

All of the questions included a central neutral category ('neither agree nor disagree' in Questions 1 and 2 and 'depends' in Question 3); this is not shown in Table 1. See Table A1 in Appendix A for base numbers for each of the surveys and for the subcategories by party support.

The wording of the questions was the same in all of the surveys except that question 3 was not asked in either the voters' or candidates' survey in 1990.

politics that have captured the hearts of the new class, making redistribution to the poor (where ever they may be) part of a

package of desirable ideals. Among these ideals taking care of the disadvantaged retains an honoured place, but this does

not necessarily mean a commitment to improving the welfare of the Australian working and lower middle classes; as relatively privileged groups they may have to make way for more deserving minorities.

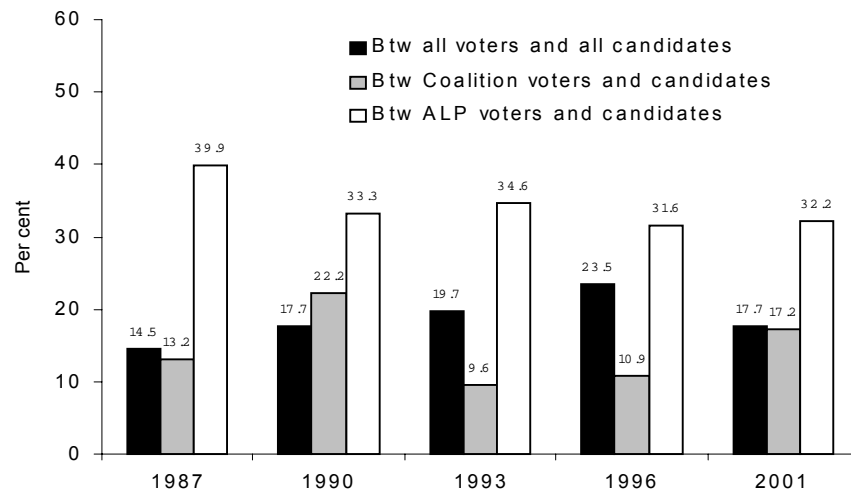
In fact both main groups, voters and candidates, are probably seeing question 3 more in terms of welfare payments to marginalised groups rather than as support for health and education, a set of policies that we now know enjoys considerable electoral support.¹⁹

It is hard to get a feel for the size of the absolute gaps between voters and candidates from Table 1. Figure 1 sets out the mean absolute difference in percentage points between voters and candidates on the three economic questions taken together in each of the five election years.²⁰ It shows that in all instances there is a gap, but that this gap is much wider between Labor candidates and Labor voters than it is between Coalition candi-

dates and Coalition voters. If we sum the absolute difference between all voters and all candidates for the three questions over the five years added together, there is a mean difference of 18.6 percentage points. (This result was calculated from the data in Table 1 but is not shown in Figure 1.) Figure 1 also shows that the views of Coalition voters and candidates are relatively close to each other (there is a mean absolute difference of 14.6 percentage points over the five election years) while the gap between Labor voters and candidates is high (a mean difference of 34.3 percentage points over the five election years).

Given Labor's public commitment to economic rationalism during the period under review it is curious that the difference is in the direction of Labor candidates being more favourable towards higher taxes, greater redistribution of wealth and income, and more spending on social services than their constituents. This

Figure 1: Mean absolute difference between (Btw) voters and candidates on the three economic questions, 1987 to 2001, percentage points



Source: Derived from Table 1

Note: Question 3 was not asked in 1990; the data for 1990 represent mean differences on responses to questions 1 and 2 only.

underlines the fact that the candidates' surveys are not tapping official party policy positions but the personal values of each individual candidate. The Labor Party's official position has espoused neo-liberalism, a factor which has almost certainly cost it votes, but most Labor candidates do not endorse the low-tax, low-redistribution tenets of this philosophy.

Table 2 shows the positions of voters and candidates on a range of social questions. These questions have been chosen because they are the relevant to issues raised by the new social movements. If 'equal opportunities' for women and migrants is read as support of affirmative action, these questions may also tap the issue of group rights. Some voters may endorse affirmative action as an appropriate recompense for disadvantaged groups while others could see it as undermining a social cohesion based on the equal treatment of individuals. The question on immigration measures attitudes to one of the main factors driving social change in Australia in the post-war years. The question on the death penalty is included because it is a classic progressive-liberal versus social-conservative question and because it appears in all five surveys. Again a key constraint in selecting the questions for analysis has been: were they asked in at least four of the five sets of surveys? In two cases they were asked in all five; in two others they were only asked in four. Table 3 shows two questions which are unambiguously about group rights for Aborigines, one asked in all five sets of surveys, the other in only four.

Table 2 suggest a broader gap between all voters and all candidates on the social questions than on the economic questions set out in Table 1, and a mixed picture of change over time. For example, in 2001 Coalition candidates were more positive

about equal opportunities for women than they had been in 1987, a trend which is general across the board. The Coalition candidates were also less inclined to support the death penalty in 2001 than they had been in 1987 but this trend was not shared either by their constituents or by the electorate as a whole.

The overall trend in attitudes to the numbers of migrants that should be allowed into Australia mirrors that of public opinion during the period; high opposition in the early 1990s and much less opposition in 2001.²¹ Nevertheless the gap between the voters and aspiring elites was wide in 1990, especially the gap between Labor candidates and Labor voters. By 2001 the gap had become a chasm. In 2001 a full 84 per cent of Labor candidates wanted an increase in the intake compared with only 24 per cent of Labor voters.

Table 3 shows an increase in support for Government help for Aborigines over the period. Despite this, amongst the electorate as a whole, in 2001 people who thought that such help had gone too far still outnumbered those who thought that it has not gone far enough by more than two to one. In contrast, voter opposition to land rights for Aborigines remained high over most of the period. It fell in the last five years between 1996 and 2001, possibly reflecting the question's reduced political importance. Nonetheless, such opposition still encompassed fifty per cent of the electorate. On both these questions the gap between voters and candidates as a whole is marked, but it is particularly large between Labor voters and Labor candidates. Coalition voters and Coalition candidates are in fairly close agreement.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the mean absolute difference between candidates and voters on the questions set out in Tables 2 and 3 respectively. Figure 2

Table 2: Four questions on social values: voters and candidates, 1987 to 2001, per cent

	All voters	All candidates	Coalition voters	Coalition candidates	ALP voters	ALP candidate
4 Equal opportunities for women have: gone too far or gone much too far						
2001	11.0	8.2	12.1	9.4	10.0	1.1
1996	17.5	13.0	20.9	32.2	12.7	4.6
1993	18.4	10.9	22.2	22.4	15.7	1.7
1990	20.9	8.8	25.0	22.4	17.0	2.6
1987*	25.6	27.2	30.7	47.9	20.6	4.1
not gone far enough or not gone nearly far enough						
2001	38.0	61.6	30.0	30.6	43.5	70.1
1996	31.5	54.4	25.7	16.9	37.2	60.2
1993	33.9	57.7	28.5	25.2	36.6	78.8
1990	26.5	62.4	20.3	24.8	27.9	73.7
1987*	19.4	37.0	13.4	5.7	23.7	55.5
5 The death penalty should be reintroduced for murder: agree and strongly agree						
2001	55.9	20.9	62.3	27.2	53.2	4.5
1996	66.0	19.7	70.8	37.5	63.0	9.2
1993	67.8	23.6	72.4	45.8	66.2	8.5
1990	66.9	25.5	70.9	53.9	65.8	9.6
1987**	59.5	31.0	64.5	50.3	55.9	4.3
disagree and strongly disagree						
2001	27.5	71.6	21.2	60.5	30.1	90.9
1996	21.3	72.0	15.5	45.0	25.8	88.1
1993	20.2	65.9	16.3	39.6	21.6	84.6
1990	21.4	66.7	16.3	33.4	23.0	86.8
1987**	23.7	59.9	17.1	33.2	28.0	92.1
6 The number of migrants allowed into Australia at the present time has: gone too far or gone much too far						
2001	33.9	14.4	37.3	4.7	30.6	0.0
1996	62.9	33.0	69.3	37.6	53.9	15.6
1993	69.7	43.1	75.9	67.1	65.7	10.2
1990	58.1	35.9	60.9	42.4	56.7	17.5
1987	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
not gone far enough or not gone nearly far enough						
2001	19.1	53.6	11.4	31.8	24.0	83.9
1996	6.6	11.0	4.1	6.8	10.0	14.6
1993	6.0	12.0	3.9	7.0	7.2	14.4
1990	8.2	14.9	7.2	16.8	9.0	14.9
1987	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
7 Equal opportunities for migrants have: gone too far or gone much too far						
2001	34.0	14.2	36.9	11.9	32.2	2.3
1996	44.3	14.8	51.2	35.3	36.0	4.6
1993	42.3	12.4	44.8	21.1	40.6	5.1
1990	21.1	3.9	21.6	8.9	20.8	0.0
1987*	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
not gone far enough or not gone nearly far enough						
2001	11.9	41.6	5.1	7.1	16.1	52.3
1996	10.1	31.7	5.4	10.3	16.0	36.7
1993	10.5	36.1	6.4	14.1	13.5	50.0
1990	19.1	50.0	15.6	21.8	20.8	53.2
1987*	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: See Table 1.

Notes: The responses shown omit middle categories, 'about right' (questions 4, 6 and 7) and 'neither agree nor disagree' (question 5). Percentages are based only on those who answered the question.

* In 1987 there were only three response categories for questions 4 and 7: gone too far, about right and not gone far enough (and question 6 was not asked).

** In 1987 question 5 omitted the reference to murder. It just asked if the respondent favoured bringing back the death penalty.

Table 3: Two questions on Aboriginal affairs: voters and candidates, 1987 to 2001, per cent

	All voters	All candidates	Coalition voters	Coalition candidates	ALP voters	ALP candidate
8 Government help for Aborigines has: gone too far or gone much too far						
2001	46.6	25.4	58.2	41.7	30.6	4.6
1996	55.3	19.3	65.9	53.5	43.0	4.6
1993	46.8	25.4	57.3	58.9	39.2	5.1
1990*	51.5	25.4	61.8	66.9	43.7	5.3
1987**	70.0	32.6	75.0	56.5	65.8	6.9
not gone far enough or not gone nearly far enough						
2001	22.3	58.4	10.8	11.9	29.7	83.9
1996	17.0	57.8	10.0	16.7	24.5	71.3
1993	24.0	55.5	16.0	14.2	29.3	73.7
1990*	14.5	47.3	9.9	10.7	16.8	55.8
1987**	9.7	42.0	5.9	13.5	11.9	77.9
9 Aboriginal land rights have: gone too far or gone much too far						
2001	49.7	25.8	62.6	53.6	39.3	2.3
1996	60.6	24.0	75.9	71.8	43.9	5.5
1993	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1990	55.1	26.2	68.1	73.2	45.6	4.4
1987**	59.0	38.3	69.2	81.0	50.6	3.5
not gone far enough or nearly far enough						
2001	20.4	58.8	8.8	7.1	27.4	79.5
1996	13.2	51.3	4.8	7.7	21.6	56.0
1993	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1990	16.2	51.9	8.5	2.4	21.1	63.2
1987**	12.2	40.2	6.4	1.5	16.2	63.9

Source: See Table 1.

Note: The responses shown omit the middle category 'about right' and percentages are based only on those who answered the question. Question 9 was not asked in 1993.

* In 1990 question 8 had a different wording. It read: 'On the whole do you think Aborigines get too little or too much help from government, or do you think the present arrangements are about right?' Response categories: too little, about right, too much, don't know. The percentages shown in Table 3 are for those who said 'too much' and 'too little'.

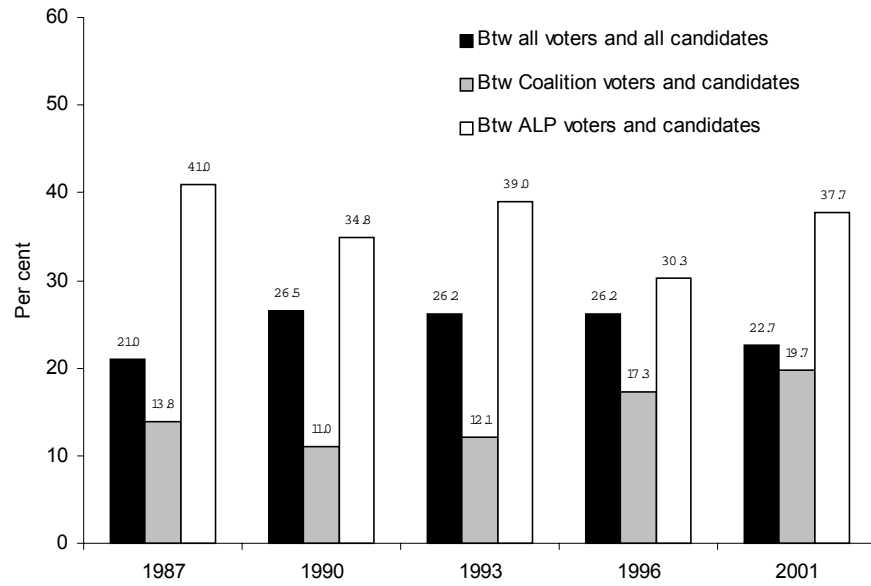
** In 1987 the response categories for questions 8 and 9 were: gone too far, about right and not gone far enough.

shows that the gap between all voters and all candidates on social questions is rather wider than that shown on the economic questions in Figure 1. The mean absolute difference between all voters and all candidates on the four social questions over the five election years taken as a whole is 24.5 percentage points (larger than the 18.6 found for the three economic questions). However the mean difference between Coalition voters and Coalition candidates over the five election years is similar to that shown on the economic questions (14.8 percentage points as opposed to 14.6). It is the gap

between the Labor candidates and Labor voters on the four social questions that is on average slightly wider here. It is 36.5 percentage points on the social questions as opposed to 34.3 on the economic questions. (The overall gap is also influenced by gaps between candidates from other parties and their voters which are not analysed separately in Figures 1 to 3.)

If all the absolute differences between voters and candidates are pooled for all of the nine questions analysed here over the five elections taken together, we find that the overall mean absolute difference between candidates and voters is 24.2

Figure 2: The mean absolute difference between voters and candidates on the four social questions, 1987 to 2001, percentage points



Source: Derived from Table 2
 Note: Only two of the four questions were asked in 1987.

percentage points. For all Coalition voters and Coalition candidates it is 12.8 percentage points and for all Labor voters and candidates it is 37.2 percentage points.²²

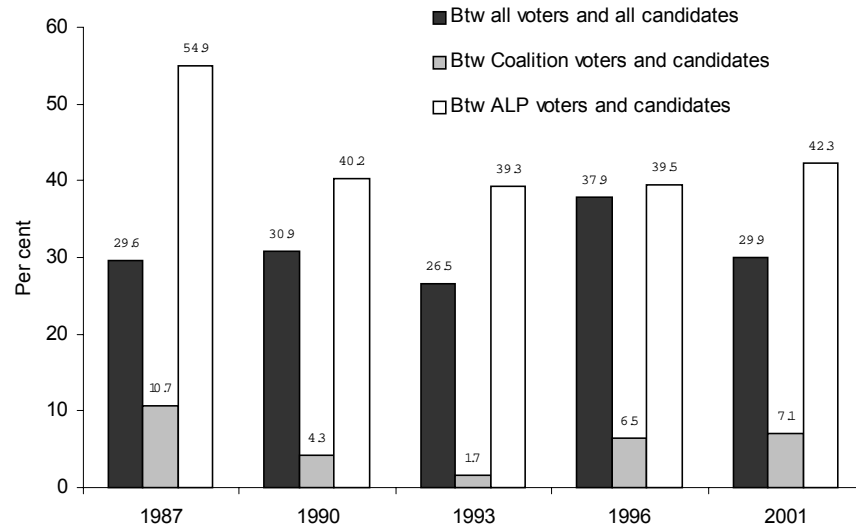
We can now answer the three research questions posed above: the views of all candidates at federal elections tend to be unlike those of all voters and the views of Labor candidates and Coalition candidates tend to be unlike those of the people who vote for them. But the gap between voters and candidates is very much wider for Labor candidates and their voters than it is for Coalition candidates and their voters. Overall Coalition candidates are quite close to their voters whereas Labor candidates are quite distant from theirs. On average the gap between Labor candidates and Labor voters is almost three times wider, in terms of percentage points, than it is between Coalition candidates and Coalition voters.

Of course these answers to the research questions are only tentative. They are based on replies to mailout questionnaires which had rather low response rates, ranging between 55 and 71 per cent (see Appendix A).²³ Also, while the questions analysed do tap a number of the concerns that have been prominent over the last 14 years, this study is necessarily restricted to questions which the AES has asked in a relatively consistent fashion. Nevertheless, despite these caveats, the patterns are quite consistent over the five different sets of surveys.

POLITICAL CONTESTS IN AUSTRALIA: CANDIDATES VERSUS VOTERS?

The overall gap between voters and candidates is largely a product of the gap between Labor candidates and voters. However, candidates from other parties not

Figure 3: The mean absolute difference between voters and candidates on the two Aboriginal questions, 1987 to 2001, percentage points



Source: Derived from Table 3

Note: One of the two questions was not asked in 1993.

analysed above make a contribution to the overall picture (Nuclear Disarmament in 1990, Democrats in all years, Greens 1993 to 2001, and One Nation in 2001). Nevertheless we can conclude that many people who run for federal parliament have strong opinions on economic and social questions and that these opinions are not shared by a high proportion of voters.

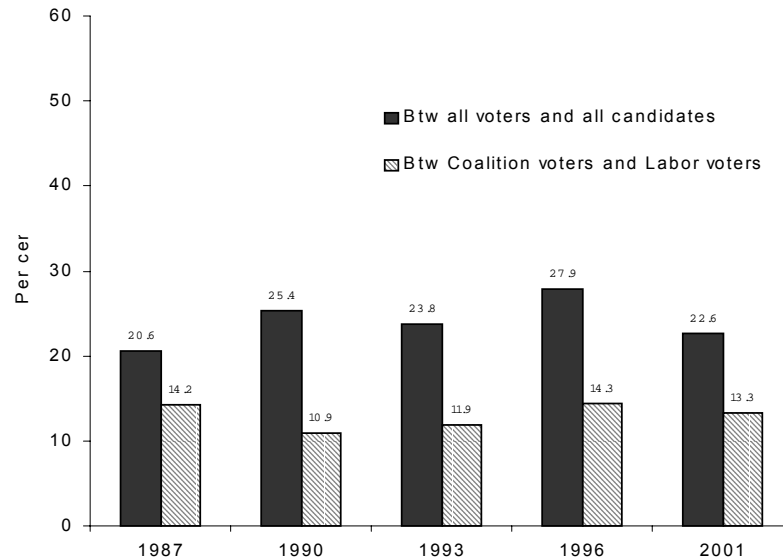
Figure 4 compares the mean absolute difference between all voters and all candidates on the nine questions analysed above over the five election years with the difference between Coalition voters and Labor voters. In some theories of democracy candidates are meant to represent real differences between their constituencies. Figure 4 suggests that, for the bulk of the electorate, differences between blocks of voters on policy questions are small. The real differences lie between the candidates and the voters. As Coalition candidates are relatively close to their voters, this means that the

differences are between Labor candidates (and possibly Greens and Democrats candidates) and the people who vote for them.

Table 4 shows the gap between Labor candidates and their support base in 2001 — both their new support base among the new class (here roughly represented by the social professionals) and their old base among the traditional working class (those working in trades, production, transport, elementary clerical work and labouring).²⁴ It shows that, not only are Labor candidates' values very different from those of the electorate in general, they are even further removed from the traditional working class. Labor candidates' values are closer to those of the social professionals but even here they are not very close.

If the main differences in Australian politics are not between groups of voters but between groups of new-left candidates as a category and voters as a category, the

Figure 4: All nine questions combined: mean absolute differences, 1987 to 2001, percentage points



Source: Calculated from data in Tables 1 to 3

men and women who come closest to sharing the views of Labor candidates should be found not so much among sections of the electorate but among candidates for other parties where new-class ideals are honoured. Table 5 presents data showing that, in 2001, Labor candidates did in fact have more in common with candidates for the Greens Party (and with Greens voters), than they did with voters for their own party.

Table 5 shows that Labor candidates' values are similar to those held by the Greens candidates while other data (not shown in Table 5) show that their values are also very close to those of candidates for the Australian Democrats. Table 5 also suggests that, on many questions, Labor candidates' values are much closer to those of voters for the Greens Party than they are to those of their own voters. Figure 5 illustrates this by showing the mean absolute difference in 2001 between Labor candidates and other groups

on the nine questions combined. On this measure Labor candidates are very close to Democrats candidates and Greens candidates. Among groups of voters they are closest of all to Greens voters, followed by social professionals. They are most distant of all from their traditional constituency, people in working-class occupations.

Labor candidates' closeness to the Greens does not derive from a shared concern about the natural environment. The 2001 candidates' questionnaire presented respondents with a range of 12 problems facing the nation: taxation, immigration, education, the environment, defence, and so on. Candidates were asked to chose the four most important national problems from this list. Fifty two per cent of Labor candidates did not rank the environment as one of these four (compared to six per cent of Greens candidates). The congruence between Labor candidates' values and those of Greens

Table 4: All questions, Labor candidates, social professionals, and people in working-class occupations (trades, production, transport, elementary clerical work and labouring), and all voters, 2001, per cent

	Labor candidates	Social professionals	People in working-class occupations	All voters
1 High income tax makes people less willing to work hard: agree and strongly agree	18.2	55.9	76.1	69.0
disagree and strongly disagree	60.2	21.0	9.1	13.7
2 Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people: agree and strongly agree	81.8	51.9	64.4	55.4
disagree and strongly disagree	5.7	17.6	18.6	18.1
3 If the Government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more on social services, which do you think it should do? Mildly or strongly favour spending more on social services	85.2	46.5	25.3	30.2
Mildly or strongly favour reducing taxes	3.4	28.8	43.7	41.6
4 Equal opportunities for women have: gone too far or gone much too far	1.1	6.6	12.7	11.0
not gone far enough or not gone nearly far enough	70.1	55.4	30.4	38.0
5 The death penalty should be reintroduced for murder: agree and strongly agree	4.5	27.6	68.1	55.9
disagree and strongly disagree	90.9	61.2	14.9	27.5
6 The number of migrants allowed into Australia at the present time has: gone too far or much too far	0.0	14.5	43.1	33.9
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	83.9	36.7	12.0	19.1
7 Equal opportunities for migrants have: gone too far or much too far	2.3	15.0	43.0	34.0
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	52.3	43.8	14.2	11.9
8 Government help for Aborigines has: gone too far or much too far	4.6	23.7	53.0	46.6
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	83.9	43.8	16.3	22.3
9 Aboriginal land rights have: gone too far or much too far	2.3	25.4	55.1	49.7
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	79.5	43.8	14.2	20.4

Source: 2001 AES, candidates' and voters' surveys. (In the 2001 voters' survey there were 172 people in social professional occupations — those coded as working in education, social professions, arts and miscellaneous in variable H5. This grouping follows the categorisation developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. There were 599 people working in trades, production, transport, elementary clerical work and labouring.)

Note: Neutral middle categories are not shown and those who did not answer the questions are excluded from the analysis.

candidates (and Democrats candidates) is more likely to derive from a shared cosmopolitan ideology with its emphasis on minority rights and international social justice, a set of beliefs common among the new-class intelligentsia but less prevalent in other reaches of society.

THE ELECTORAL CHALLENGE FOR NEW-LEFT CANDIDATES

The AES measures individual attitudes. Candidates may have views which differ from their party's policies but does the gap between their personal values and those of the electorate affect election outcomes? Even though we know that in

Table 5: All questions, Labor candidates, Greens candidates, Greens voters and Labor voters, 2001, per cent

	Labor candidates	Greens candidates	Greens voters	Labor voters
1 High income tax makes people less willing to work hard: agree and strongly agree	18.2	26.5	50.5	66.6
disagree and strongly disagree	60.2	50.0	27.8	13.7
2 Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people: agree and strongly agree	81.8	88.8	67.0	68.6
disagree and strongly disagree	5.7	6.1	10.3	8.0
3 If the Government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more on social services, which do you think it should do? Mildly or strongly favour spending more on social services	85.2	92.6	64.9	35.6
Mildly or strongly favour reducing taxes	3.4	0.0	20.6	36.2
4 Equal opportunities for women have: gone too far or gone much too far	1.1	1.0	4.1	10.0
not gone far enough or not gone nearly far enough	70.1	85.6	63.3	43.5
5 The death penalty should be reintroduced for murder: agree and strongly agree	4.5	5.2	24.7	53.2
disagree and strongly disagree	90.9	89.7	55.7	30.1
6 The number of migrants allowed into Australia at the present time has: gone too far or much too far	0.0	8.2	18.6	30.6
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	83.9	70.4	47.4	24.0
7 Equal opportunities for migrants have: gone too far or much too far	2.3	1.1	17.0	32.2
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	52.3	72.6	37.2	16.1
8 Government help for Aborigines has: gone too far or much too far	4.6	2.1	13.5	35.5
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	83.9	92.6	59.4	29.7
9 Aboriginal land rights have: gone too far or much too far	2.3	0.0	17.9	39.3
not gone far enough or nearly far enough	79.5	95.9	55.8	27.4

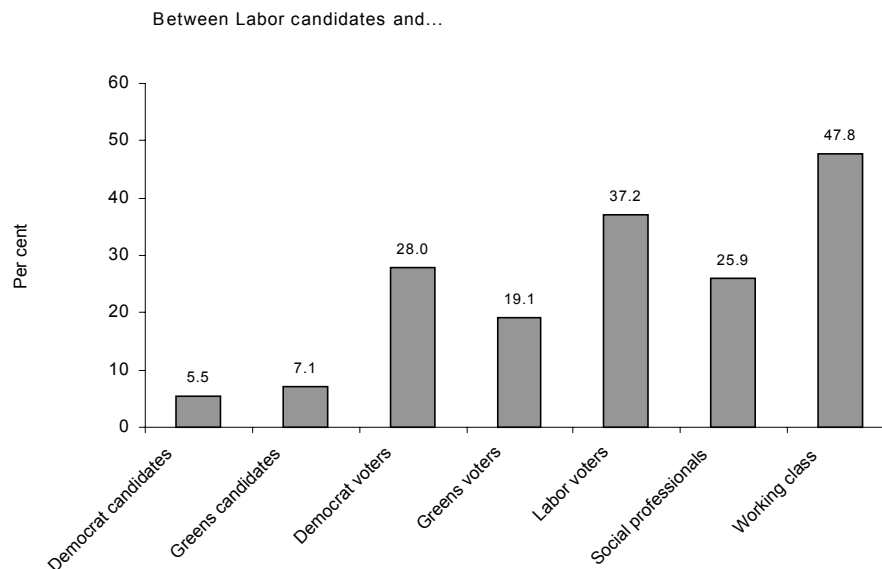
Source: 2001 AES, candidates' and voters' surveys. (There were 98 Greens candidates and, strangely enough, also 98 Greens voters in the 2001 surveys.)

Note: Neutral middle categories are not shown and those who did not answer the questions are excluded from the analysis.

1987, 1990 and 1993 Labor candidates privately held attitudes that were quite different from many of their voters. Labor still won these elections. Can they still do so now what these differences have become more obvious?²⁵ Probably. Elections are fought on policies and on the profile of party leaders. The Coalition cannot continue to win simply by sharing the social values of many voters, especially if its neo-liberal economic policies

cause pain. And on at least one important policy question, the size of the immigration intake, Coalition candidates' values are quite different from those of most voters, including its own voters. Labor has a strong potential support base among voters anxious for more spending to be devoted to health and education and, according to the opinion polls, the new Labor leader, Mark Latham, has increased Labor's support.

Figure 5: All nine questions combined: mean absolute differences between Labor candidates and other groups in 2001, percentage points



Sources: Data shown in Tables 4 and 5, together with data on Democrats candidates and voters also taken from the 2001 AES surveys. (There were 124 Democrats candidates and 103 Democrats voters in the 2001 surveys.)

But the values gap does still matter. We can see this in the role that asylum-seekers, especially unauthorised boat arrivals, played in the 2001 election. After the drama of the *Tampa* incident in August 2001 the two main party groupings adopted virtually identical policies (intercepting boats before they landed and the Pacific solution, detaining asylum-seekers off-shore in camps where their claims could be assessed, away from the appeal systems of the Australian courts). This set of policies is credited with swinging voters towards the Coalition at the November 2001 election. But why should it have done so if Labor's policies were the same as the Coalition's? One answer is that voters felt that Labor politicians were not sincere in their support for border control.²⁶ Such suspicions would have been confirmed by the

rebellion against the policy within the party after the election, culminating in the election of Carmen Lawrence, a prominent internal critic, as Labor Party President.²⁷

The AES data from the 2001 election provide further confirmation. Despite their Party's official endorsement of the Coalition's border-control policy, most Labor Party candidates were privately opposed. A key element in the policy was turning back boats carrying asylum seekers. Table 6 shows that just over 62 per cent of all voters supported this policy, including 53 per cent of Labor voters. However, fewer than five per cent of Labor candidates shared their views. Most were opposed, and nearly 56 per cent were strongly opposed.

The question of the American alliance

Table 6: All boats carrying asylum seekers should be turned back, voters and candidates, by party, Federal election 2001, per cent

	All voters	All candidates	Coalition voters	Coalition candidates	Labor voters	Labor candidates
Strongly agree	36.9	13.7	41.8	7.3	32.4	2.3
Agree	25.3	11.1	32.7	41.5	21.0	2.3
Neither agree nor disagree	17.6	8.7	15.5	29.3	20.8	5.7
Disagree	12.4	18.2	8.2	18.3	14.9	34.1
Strongly disagree	7.7	48.4	1.9	3.7	11.0	55.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	1849	461	845	82	673	88

Source: 2001 AES, candidates' and voters' surveys.

Note: Those who did not answer the question are excluded from the analysis.

is likely to figure in the 2004 election. Latham has indicated that, if Labor wins, he wants Australia to take a more independent line. If Labor candidates in 2004 have similar attitudes to those of the 2001 contingent, this policy will be popular with candidates and the problem of insincerity that dogged the 2001 border-control policy will not arise. But Tables 7 and 8 suggest that voters, including Labor voters, are likely to have reservations. Labor candidates may be comfortable with a leader who expresses distance from the alliance, but Labor voters are less likely to share their views.

Table 7 shows that, in 2001, more than half of all voters (including Labor voters) thought the American alliance very important for protecting Australia's security, but less than a quarter of Labor candidates agreed. Table 8 shows that over a third of voters had a great deal of trust that the United States would come to Australia's defence and only 16.5 per cent had serious doubts. Again Labor

candidates were much less trusting than their voters. Though Coalition candidates were more likely than Coalition voters to think the alliance very important, and more likely to trust it, the gap between them and their supporters was much less than it was between Labor candidates and their voters.

CONCLUSION

The most marked division within Australian politics is not between different groups of voters (working class versus middle class) but between a majority of voters, including the traditional working class, and candidates for the Labor, Greens and Democrats parties. The rift between the two sets of people may stem from an adherence to national loyalties on the part of most voters and an enthusiasm for international cosmopolitanism on the part of new-left candidates. While the questions available for analysis in the five sets of AES studies do not allow us to fully test this theory, the data are consistent with it.

The questions analysed do allow a test

Table 7: How important to you think the Australian alliance with the United States under the ANZUS Treaty is for protecting Australia's security? voters and candidates, by party, Federal election 2001, per cent

	All voters	All candidates	Coalition voters	Coalition candidates	Labor voters	Labor candidates
Very important	58.3	30.7	72.3	82.1	50.5	23.0
Fairly important	31.7	33.7	24.2	16.7	36.8	51.7
Not very important	8.0	25.5	2.8	1.2	10.3	19.5
Not at all important	1.9	10.2	0.6	0.0	2.4	5.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	1851	463	846	84	679	87

Source: 2001 AES, candidates' and voters' surveys.

Note: Those who did not answer the question are excluded from the analysis.

Table 8: If Australia's security were threatened by some other country, how much trust do you feel Australia can have in the United States to come to Australia's defence? voters and candidates, by party, Federal election 2001, per cent

	All voters	All candidates	Coalition voters	Coalition candidates	Labor voters	Labor candidates
A great deal	38.9	21.7	49.6	57.1	33.7	12.6
A fair amount	44.5	37.4	42.1	38.1	45.9	44.8
Not very much	14.1	31.2	7.9	4.8	17.3	35.6
None at all	2.4	9.7	0.4	0.0	3.1	6.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	1852	465	847	84	676	87

Source: 2001 AES, candidates' and voters' surveys.

Note: Those who did not answer the question are excluded from the analysis.

of the idea that Labor (and Greens) candidates are much more enthusiastic about minority rights than are voters: this is apparent in the questions on land rights and government assistance for Aborigines. It could also be shown by the questions about 'equal opportunities' for women and migrants, if these questions are taken as implying support for affirmative action. And if support for higher immigration is an indicator of a globalising internationalist view, patterns of this support also run in the direction predicted by the theory. At the heart of the rift between new-left candidates and most voters is a disagreement about the priority to be given to national loyalty in a cosmopolitan globalising world.

Labor's constituency is divided between a smaller group, new-class professionals, and a larger group consisting of the old working class. This difficulty for the Labor Party has been recognised for some time. But we can now see that it is not merely a problem of the one party trying to serve two very different kinds of voters. Most of the people active enough in Labor politics to gain preselection hold the values dear to the new class themselves, in many cases quite strongly. This means that they actually want to represent the values of the new class but they know that the relative size of the two constituencies means that they have to try to speak for the traditional

working class as well. But the old meanings of *left* and *right* have changed to such a degree that the clearest way for these politicians to see their old constituents may be not as old comrades whom they are proud to lead and protect, but as narrow-minded strangers tending towards the racist right.

With good policies and a popular leader Labor may well be able to win elections, even though most of its candidates are drawn from the smaller part of its divided electoral base and are culturally distant from most of the party's traditional supporters. There is, however, a risk that the shift from old left to new left may have hollowed out the party to such a degree that its struggles to appear both sincere and electable will become disabling over the long term.

But tensions between candidates and voters are not only a problem for Labor. On one particular question Coalition candidates are also distant from their constituents: high immigration. While Coalition support for immigration-fuelled population growth probably owes more to pressures from the growth lobby within the business community than it does to internationalism, the gulf between Coalition candidates and their voters on this matter represents a potential hazard. At present the question is low on the political agenda and bipartisanship within the power elite may

ensure that it remains there. But, should bipartisanship fail, Coalition candidates may also find themselves facing an obvious gap between their aspiring élites and popular values.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Rachel Graham and Sophie Holloway of the Australian Social Science Data Archives for their patient and courteous help with the AES files. But the original researchers who collected the material are in no way responsible for my interpretation of it. I would also like to thank an anonymous referee for their useful feedback. Any errors that may remain are, of course, my own.

Appendix A

Table A1: The studies and the samples

	Initial sample/ population #	No. of respondents	No. of Coalition supporters*	No. of Labor supporters*	Returned to sender/ out of scope	Response rate: respondents / total no. approached who were in scope per cent
1987 voters	3061	1825	754	900	156	62.8
1987 candidates	868	612	202	147	-	70.5
1990 voters	3607	2037	855	812	125	58.5
1990 candidates	631	429	120	114	-	68.0
1993 voters	4950	3023	1346	1382	137	62.8
1993 candidates	593	413	144	119	-	69.6
1996 voters	3000	1795	892	622	95	61.8
1996 candidates	672	439	122	110	12	66.5
2001 voters	4000	2010	860	690	369	55.4
2001 candidates	840	477	85	88	15	57.8

Questionnaires were sent a random sample of voters and, in 1987, to all candidates. In 1990 the candidates' survey was limited to people standing for parties deemed viable: these were: Labor, Liberal, National, Democrats and the Nuclear Disarmament Party. In 1993 the Nuclear Disarmament Party was dropped from the list and four different green parties were included. In 1996 the four green parties were reduced to one, the Australian Greens. In 2001 the list remained the same as 1996 except for the addition of One Nation.

* A supporter is a person who stood as a candidate for the party in question, in the case of a candidate, or who gave the party concerned their first preference in their vote for the House of Representatives in the case of a voter.

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Social Science Data Archives: Australian National University, 2002. Voters: Bean, Clive et al. Australian Election Study, 2001 [computer file]. Canberra: Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University, 2002.

All of the files were obtained from the Australian Social Science Data Archives (ASSDA) at the Australian National University: <http://assda.anu.edu.au>

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- ¹ See G. L. Field and J. Higley, *Elitism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980; J. Higley, D. Deacon and D. Smart, *Elites in Australia*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979.
- ² There was a survey of voters taken after the 1998 election but not one of candidates. There was also an electoral survey after the 1999 referendum on the republic.
- ³ For details about the surveys see Appendix A.
- ⁴ S. Jackman, 'Pauline Hanson, the mainstream, and political elites: the place of race in Australian political ideology', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1998, pp. 167-186
- ⁵ *ibid.*, p. 182
- ⁶ See, for example, R. Manne, 'Where are we now?' *Eureka Street*, January-February, 2002, pp. 16-19.
- ⁷ See, for example, J. Edwards, *Keating: The Inside Story*, Viking, Ringwood, 1996, for an account written by one of the neoliberal economic advisers, and Don Watson for the conflict within Keating's office between such advisers and people like Watson, concerned more with cultural questions. D. Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM*, Random House, Sydney, 2002.
- ⁸ From the mid 1960s the proportion of the electorate with university degrees began to increase. At the 1996 census just 1.5 per cent of the population aged 15 plus were graduates, in 1976 this proportion had almost doubled to just under three per cent (and at the 1996 census had increased to just over 10 per cent). Re their anti-racist, cosmopolitan values, see K. Betts, *The Great Divide: Immigration Politics in Australia*, Duffy and Snellgrove, Sydney, 1999, pp. 90-95, 156-168, 173-191.
- ⁹ See J. Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 144-157.
- ¹⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 144-157.
- ¹¹ See I. McAllister and A. Ascui, 'Voting patterns', in I. McAllister and J. Warhurst (Eds), *Australia Votes: The 1987 Federal Election*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1988, p. 220.
- ¹² See voters' 1987 AES, in Appendix A. See also McAllister and Ascui op. cit., p. 230.
- ¹³ Brett, 2003, op. cit., pp. 154-157
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 157
- ¹⁵ See K. Betts, 'Class and the 1996 election' and 'Patriotism, immigration and the 1996 election', *People and Place*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1996, pp. 38-45 and 27-38; K. Betts and V. Rapson, 'Pride and commitment: patriotism in Australia', *People and Place*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1997, pp. 55-66.
- ¹⁶ In 2001 69 per cent of the Coalition candidates had three or more years tertiary education compared to 74 per cent of Labor candidates (and 82 per cent of Democrats, 78 per cent of Greens and 42 per cent of One Nation candidates). The base for these percentages excludes candidates who did not answer the question on education.
- ¹⁷ These question numbers are used for convenience. The original numbers were different and, in all cases, the particular questions analysed here were preceded by a considerable number specific to the election which had just taken place.
- ¹⁸ Wilson and Breusch found that, in 2003, 48 per cent wanted to increase social spending (compared to the 30 per cent shown in Question 3 for the 2001 AES) and that only 28 percent opted for lower taxes (as opposed to the 42 per cent in 2001). However, the questions were different. The AES asked, 'If the government had a choice between reducing taxes or spending more on social services which do you think it should do?' The question Wilson and Breusch analysed read: 'If the government had a choice between reducing personal income taxes or increasing social spending on services like health and education which do you think it should do?' See S. Wilson and T. Breusch, 'After the tax revolt: why medicare matters more to middle Australia than lower taxes', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2004, p. 102. The term *social services* can be read as including welfare payments to the unemployed and other marginalized groups; specifying health and education makes a difference. Sol Lebovic also reports a strong shift towards a preference for social spending when health and education are specified: see S. Lebovic, 'Voters opt for public good', *The Australian*, 8-9 May 2004, p. 20.
- ¹⁹ See Wilson and Breusch op. cit. and Lebovic op. cit.
- ²⁰ For example, the absolute difference between all voters and all candidates on those agreeing (or strongly agreeing) with question 1 in 1987 is 15.8 percentage points, and between those disagreeing (and strongly disagreeing) is 19.1 percentage points. All six absolute differences over the three questions for 1987 were calculated and summed and a mean absolute difference calculated. This was repeated for the absolute

differences between Coalition voters and Coalition candidates, Labor voters and Labor candidates for 1987, and then for each of the other four election years.

²¹ See M. Goot, 'More "relaxed and comfortable": public opinion on immigration under Howard', *People and Place*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2000, pp. 46-60; K. Betts, 'Immigration and public opinion: understanding the shift', *People and Place*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2002, pp. 24-37.

²² This calculation, of course, omits question 3 1990, questions 6 and 7 in 1987, and question 9 in 1993.

²³ The question of how low these rates are in relative terms is hard to answer as commercial pollsters seldom publish theirs.

²⁴ For classification of occupations by social class see Chris Chamberlain's work cited in Betts, 2002, op. cit., p. 46.

²⁵ Watson writes that Labor Party research showed that, in Autumn 1995, 'Out in white heterosexual Australia where Labor's traditional support was, folk were dropping off like flies'. Watson, 2002, op. cit., p. 563. As the 1996 campaign was underway, Liberal Party research found that voters thought that, 'We have government by minorities now. The silent majority are ignored'. P. Williams, *The Victory*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1997, p. 52.

²⁶ See K. Betts, 'Boat people and the 2001 election', *People and Place*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2002, p. 39.

²⁷ Rifts within the Labor party on asylum-seekers policy were exposed after the election. See for example, S. Lewis and M. Saunders, 'Leader secures tough refugee plan — ALP conference', *The Australian*, 31 January-1 February 2004, p. 9; M. Riley and C. Banham, 'Crean exposed as Carmen seeks political asylum', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 December 2002 (downloaded from www.smh.com.au 6 May 2004); P. Adams, 'It doesn't matter, the true believers will lose', *The Australian*, 2 December 2003, p. 13.