

The Research Director
L.C.A. Review Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE 4000

R.C. Sadler

re: Truth in Political Advertising.

23/6/96

Dear Sir,

Having just read the Issues Paper #1 on 'Truth in Political Advertising', and the arguments presented, I came to the conclusion that the wrong question had been asked.

It should have been 'Is political advertising necessary'?

The joint standing committee (3.1) dissenting comment by Senator Meg Lees "...the community's view of politicians is that they cannot be trusted to tell the truth" is justified, for it is a general public perception, even though perhaps a majority of politicians, at least initially, are persons seeking to further the common good.

Regarding the issues listed under item 8 'Issues to be addressed', it would seem that the answers to 1) is no, 2) is yes, 3) is yes, 4) is none, 5) it should not, 6) see below, 7) if proven, eviction from office of the guilty representative, 8) see below, 9) penalties high enough to completely discourage acceptance of such materials, 10) the legal system, and per 7&9, 11) should be banned, see below, 12) per 11.

It would seem to me that if the public attitude is disbelief, then all political advertising is a waste of public time and money. If all the candidates were restricted to a simple statement of fact, e.g. "J. Bloggs is a member of xxxxx party and offers him(her)self to be the parliamentary representative for xxxxx district" then there would be no controversy or deceit.

Political parties have almost succeeded in converting Democracy into Oligarchy, and therefore political party advertising should be restricted to statements of fact. The governing party would be able to state positive facts concerning its achievements, whilst the opposing parties would give facts concerning the negative side of the government record, all verifiable from Hansard; together with statements of promises to which the public would hold them accountable. If limited to factual material presented in understandable form, the public should be able to decide for whom they vote.

When things become too complex, a good basic rule is to reduce everything to its simplest elements and retain only that which is truly necessary.

Voting cards should be banned, for they are an unnecessary expense caused by the need to compete. They clutter polling booths, waste resources and reduce campaign expense funds, as well as helping to eliminate some candidates by reason of cost. How to vote instructions for voters who are uncertain of the process could be plainly stated in non-political terms in each polling booth, together with a list of candidates and their party affiliation. That should be sufficient.

I should perhaps conclude that I have no party affiliation or desire to be a politician, but I do take a keen interest in good government and have often been a scrutineer for federal, state and local body elections.

I hope that all such submissions such as this will be viewed by the JC&AR committee members, and I thank you for allowing me to comment.

Yours sincerely,

