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...and they re FREE!

State election stunner

North Coast swings to Nats

by Gerald Taylor

The wheels been spun and the little black ball fallen once more into its accustomed niche, and once again it's a Labor niche, but not in our seat of Lismore. Lismore, also known as the Nimbin industrial estate, remains blue ribbon National country, which makes Nimbin village National territory by default. Thomas George is still our flaccid member so, here in Nimbin, we can expect more of the same turkey-slapping for the next four years.

The Lismore Greens did well, increasing their overall vote by three percent from 15% to 18%, well done Andy and team, although this was never going to be good enough. To cause change the Greens would need a further three percent and for Labor to achieve an increase of six percent as well and even then the change would be to Labor with the help of Green preferences.

As it was, Labor lost ground and Georges' hold on power was never threatened. Peter Lanyon worked hard in the electorate but didn't do well, and to be fair it wasn't Peters fault. Labors' been stuffing up badly with the running of the state on all levels; health, transportation, water and never mind the environment. It's been a bad run and Labor only remains in power because the opposition is so incompetent. So Labor lost a couple of percent instead of gaining half a dozen, and has only itself to blame, not its candidates.

Neither Labor nor Greens polled well in the new territory of Mur'bah, and the polling booths from Goonellabah were a total disaster. To unseat George, both opposition parties need to target these two areas, as they have the largest chunks of unfriendly votes now that Casino is out of the equation.

So basically there has been no change at all in the state, and no change either in our seat of Lismore, steady as she goes and damn the environmental brick wall we are about to slam into.

A couple of points of interest that came out of the election process for me were the realisation that the Lismore Greens are made up predominantly of Nimbin folk. Most of the voting booths in the electorate were manned by the greater Nimbin tribe and at the Green wash-up party, two thirds of the revellers came from either the Nimbin or Rock valleys. This makes sense when you consider Nimbin, although National Party territory, is also Green heartland and that The Channon, Cawongla and Nimbin were all winning booths for the Greens.



Optimism. Greens candidate Andy Gough casting his vote at the Nimbin polling place.

Now if we could just infiltrate that bloody industrial estate between Nimbin and Byron Bay with a dose of Green common sense... but I'm just dreaming.

The second interesting lesson I took from the election is that political change, no matter what we might change to, is so slow and ponderous that politicians and policy will soon become irrelevant. Before we can make the politicians' act sustainable, our planet will change around us and we will be buffeted along by events that we haven't yet foreseen; seemingly unimportant side issues like the displacement of flood refugees and the global demand for arable land to be used as carbon sinks instead of carbon emitters. It's called tree planting and will soon, because of carbon trading, be worth more than growing beef or cotton or wool.

The good news, and you should always have a happy ending, is that in the State electorate of Lismore the Greens are strong and getting stronger. While the global good news is that the message is finally getting through; we can cool the planet by planting more trees and that we can stop heating the planet by using solar power instead of fossil fuels, and thank Christ the Chinese are finally making solar panels.

A glimpse from the brink tells me it's going to get worse before it gets better but as soon as you see the loggers chaining themselves to their plantation hardwoods you'll know there is a good moon on the rise. I guarantee it will happen but don't hold your breath, make yourself comfortable, relax and enjoy the ride.

Stopping the cyanide: "Next time by stealth"

Contrary to other news reports, the small band of Cyanide Watch protesters did stop the Pacific National cyanide freighter on the rail south of Kyogle last Thursday evening.

"But only briefly," reports Cyanide Watch campaigner and Peacebus.com captain, Graeme Dunstan.

"Well-warned by both the police and us, the loco driver approached the level crossing very cautiously, paused to make sure we we clear of the track and then came past slowly so that we were able to count the containers of Orica cyanide on board."

"By lantern light, we counted eight 20 tonne containers," he reports. "Each of them with enough cyanide to poison every Australian man, women and child at least once over."

"That's 160 tonne of secret cyanide on just one Pacific National freight train on just one night of the year," said Dunstan. "Do the sums and be alarmed."

The protest action attracted national and international media attention because it represented a new tactic in challenging the toxic practices of the multi national gold miners who are presently poisoning Australian water on huge scale and who, greed enflamed by the record price of gold, aim to poison much more in the near future.

"The action showed how vulnerable rail transport is to blockades," reports Dunstan.

"This time we informed the police and the freight company of our intention and our location and attempted to negotiate a safe win-win for all parties," said Dunstan.



Determination. Cyanide Watch activist Graham Dunstan at the Kyogle blockade site on Unesco's World Day of Water.

"But once again the NSW police proved they can be trusted only to be untrustworthy."

"At the last moment the Duty Officer, Inspector Scott Bingham, reneged on all agreements he had made, stopped talking to us and marched in a squad of Local Area Command of Operations Special Group police (anti-terror/riot busters), who muscled us and attempted to suppress the blockade," said Dunstan.

"We held our peace but gave them a clear warning," he said. "Next time by stealth."

Dunstan envisions blockades all along the toxic trail from Gladstone where Orica makes the poison down the line to Brisbane and Sydney, across Sydney and across the Blue Mountains and on the western line too.

"I would like to see cyanide freight blockades become a sporting pastime for eco-warriors young and old and prizes offered for the most picturesque blockades," he said.

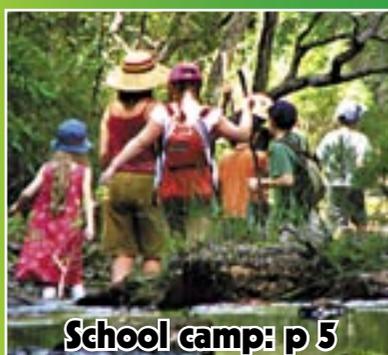
"Imagine a freight train stalled on the Grafton Bridge or over the Hawkesbury or in the middle of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park, source of most of Sydney's water: something utterly alarming and appalling."

Our aim is to alert people of the cyanide hazard and mobilise local grass roots resistance, he said. "We are determined to drag the NSW Government into accountability, ban the transport of bulk cyanide and the practice of cyanide-leach gold mining forever."

For further information: <www.peacebus.com/CyanideWatch>



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School camp: p 5



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