



## A MODEST MEMBER

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### **To pelt or pat the new Government?**

Mavis is certain that I have a great opportunity to make my political reputation by beating the new Government over the head all the time. She advised:

Hit them hard and often, dear, even if some of the things they are doing are good.

Before long you'll find you have a fine reputation as a bonny fighter and the newspapers will love you because you are stirring up strife and muddying the water.

They like that — it's good for the circulation. Besides, it saves them the trouble of thinking up criticisms themselves.

“So get stuck into the sods, dear,” she cooed, using language she has learnt since reading books about women's liberation.

Fred, however, takes a different view. He is surprisingly uninterested in party politics.

I don't think he even cares which party is governing the country — he is only interested in whether it is good at it.

His advice to me is to wait and see how the new Government performs.

If it makes bad decisions, I am to hit on the head as hard as I can. But if it makes good decisions, he wants me to pat its head instead.

MPs are, by definition, very interested in party politics and we often make the mistake of thinking that other people are also. But Fred's view is much more typical of the community.

And Fred also says that if I go round continually making loud opposition noises just to get my name in the papers, then he and other people will soon get sick of me and what's even worse, will ignore me.

Eccles agrees with Fred, but uses longer words to do it.

He is very please with some of the things that the Government has done, particularly the decision to put the Tariff Board under the authority of the Prime Minister, instead of its previous location in the Trade Department.

Eccles thinks that this is a big improvement as it may prevent some of the log-rolling that has occurred too often in the past.

And Eccles was delighted with the new Government's decision to refer the question of colour TV sets to the Tariff Board. He was fearful that we were going to have another exercise in instant economic wisdom by the Department of Trade.

He always reminds me about the mess we have made of the car industry and he was fearful that we were about to do the same thing with colour TV, namely, encourage the establishment of another uneconomic industry for too small a market and then we would have to prop it up forever.

So Eccles went quite pale when he heard that Mavis wanted me to belt into the new Government for everything it did, good or bad.

I have an uneasy suspicion that Eccles, like Fred, is more interested in the well-being of the country than in my political progress!

The Government has suggested that it is going to change the name of the Tariff Board to the Protection Commission and that the new body is to inquire into the problems of rural industry as well as of secondary industry.

As you know, Eccles has always advocated a Rural Industries Board to give expert advice to the Government on rural problems.

He says that he would still prefer the Tariff Board to continue to advise on secondary industry and the RIB to concentrate on rural industry problems.

But he admits that he would rather have the suggested new Government machine, whatever it is called, than nothing.

And he thinks that there may well be some quick changes of attitude by some of the rural industry groups.

The more thoughtful and responsible of these have always accepted the RIB as basically sound.

Others, however, have posed the idea — afraid, I presume, that they may lose their preferred position with the Minister for Primary Industry.

Well, I guess they have lost this now and perhaps they now wish they had a Rural Industries Board on which to rely.

Although Eccles is pleased with the new Government about some things, he's getting in an awful sweat about inflation.

Still, the old boy's always perspiring about something and as far as I am concerned, he can go on sweating for a week or two now while I have a holiday.