



## ONE MORE NAIL

### Introduction

I keep having a vision, but Eccles says it is really a nightmare.

In it I am still a Member of Parliament and I, with other MPs, accompany our ruler, King Mal, to the beach where he sits on his throne stopping the tides coming in and going out. On the last occasion, his task was to stop the employment tide in the textile, clothing and footwear industry from going out.

When the announcement was made as to which tide the King was stopping this time, a whole retinue set off for the beach. Lesser back benchers had the honour of carrying the throne.

Then came the cabinet courtiers who formed a solid phalanx around his majesty, guarding him against people who might tell him things he wouldn't want to hear. Then came the grave and responsible civil servants.

They kept two paces to the rear, and wore pinstripe suits and expressions of heavy responsibility. Then came the SS brigade. At first I thought these were a security force to protect the good and great, but I was told the SS stood for "smart sods" and that they were there to make certain that other smart sods did not snitch their import quotas.

I noticed that the SS were particularly attentive to the civil servants who are the people who actually allocate the quotas. They clearly did not hold Members of Parliament in high regard and were only distantly respectful to the cabinet courtiers, but they clearly fawned on the civil servants.

And they continually expressed their gratitude for past favours, which I thought was very generous until Eccles reminded me that gratitude can be regarded as a lively sense of favours to come.

When we reached the beach we put the throne down with proper reverence and we all gathered round, with the distance from the throne being in accordance with our station in life. The cabinet courtiers were closest, then the civil servants sitting on little camp stools that the SS people had brought for them. The back benchers were next and then the SS. They weren't worried about their position in life as long as no one pinched their quotas.

Before the ceremony began, there was a performance by some of the natives of the district. There were from the ACAM (Australian Confederation of Apparel Manufacturers) tribe and they danced on the beach, and turned head over heels and that kind of thing. They made queer threatening noises and beat their breasts and their drums.

Then the ceremony got under way. First, King Mal stood on his throne and at the top of his voice shouted advice across the seas about the wicked way other countries erected barriers against our trade. I am uncertain whether there were any answers because the winds of change

were blowing strongly and the breakers were booming. I thought I heard a mocking reply about our own barriers but, if this were so, the cabinet courtiers made sure the King did not hear it.

Then the King took his seat on his throne, drew his cloak of authority around him and told us how he was going to stop the ebbing tide of employment in the textile, clothing and footwear industries and that this wasn't going to be easy as some manufacturers were wickedly using labour saving machinery.

Then he asked one of the IAC staff to mark on the legs of the throne the level of employment in those industries and we were to watch the employment rise as the measures he had instituted took effect. So we settled back with quiet confidence and for a little while this seemed justified because the tide did indeed start to come in a little.

Then the water started to creep down the legs of the throne instead of up, but when the man marked this he was taken away and beheaded which is the way of emperors.

But still the employment tide sneaked out. Some of us knew that this was because the demand for clothing and footwear was falling because they cost too much, so people were making their own clothes or making do with less. But none of us were brave enough to tell the King this after what had happened to the last bearer of bad news.

But everyone noticed that the employment tide was not doing what it was told. You only had to look at the level of the legs of the throne to see that.

Then the King explained that life wasn't meant to be easy and the tide would behave properly soon. Then a very brave person brought him a message on a piece of paper. The King read it, and then announced that he had a very important engagement overseas and disappeared in a blaze of glory.

Someone found the piece of paper that had made the King so cross. It was a table showing how employment in these industries had obeyed the law of supply and demand and not the King's commands. I suppose the next thing will be to rescind the law of supply and demand.

<i>Date</i>	<i>People employed in textiles</i>	<i>People employed in clothing, footwear</i>
March 1973	53 300	108 900
March 1974	54 200	110 200
March 1975	40 300	86 500
March 1976	44 500	92 300
March 1977	38 900	82 900
March 1978	36 700	79 700