



A MODEST FARMER

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The language of power

Because I've had many opportunities to see how well the representatives of big business get along with Governments, I feel I should let the ordinary citizen know what goes on in the corridors of power.

It is impressive to see how well the representatives of big companies and civil servants get along together. And, indeed, when you come to think of it, why shouldn't they?

The first are working for their big and powerful firms and the civil servants are working for the big and powerful Government.

And both groups are well aware that it pays to be known as a person who knows his subject and, most important, as one who does not rock the boat.

Rocking the boat makes it uncomfortable for your mates in the boat, but it also means that someone even more powerful and important further up the ladder will have something else to worry about. So rocking the boat is frowned on.

There are other reasons why both groups get on so well together.

Not only are they all organisation men, but in these days they are all on about the same salary range.

The private enterprise people may get a bit more money, but the civil servants have the priceless possession of permanent employment, which is not to be sneezed at these days.

And they have an overgenerous superannuation scheme that few private firms can match.

So both groups are about equal in status and this is very important in Canberra.

They are also about equal in knowledge of their subject.

They mostly are administrators, people who make decisions rather than things.

You would expect that the servants of big companies would know their stuff, but so do the civil servants.

These are mixing with big business all the time and it doesn't take long to learn the common language.

And both groups knock around a lot, and travelling together makes for intimacy.

There are seminars and conferences without end and even an overseas trip with a little bit of luck.

There is always the expense account to smooth over the rough places.

After toiling at a seminar all day, what could be more natural than having dinner with your opposite number?

If tongues are loosened towards the end of a fine expense account meal and a few confidences are exchanged and a few corners cut, well, what harm is there in that?

Doesn't everyone else lubricate the machinery that way?

The representatives of the bigger firms can rightly claim that they have a bigger stake in the industry than the small man who really doesn't amount to much and doesn't know his way around either.

The big people would probably point out that they are the ones who employ most of the labour, so should first cut the sake.

Fortune may indeed favour the brave, but Governments tend to favour the big, not because civil servants are crook but because even they are human.

If you are not worried about this, then you should be.

We should remember the warning of the great philosopher, Von Mises, in his book *Economics and the Revolt against Reason*. He said:

The rich, the owners of already operating plants, have no particular class interest in the maintenance of free competition.

They are opposed to confiscation and expropriation of their fortunes, but their vested interests are rather in favour of measures preventing new-comers from challenging their position.

Those fighting for free enterprise and free competition do not defend the interests of these rich today.

They want a free hand left to unknown men who will be the entrepreneurs of tomorrow and whose ingenuity will make the life of coming generations more enjoyable.