



## A MODEST MEMBER

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### **Did the VFL really kick up inflation?**

One of the things one quickly learns in politics is to smartly pass the blame. I learnt this soon after I became a member.

A nasty drought arrived at about the same time as I burst on the political scene and so all my angry electors blamed me for it.

But within two weeks I had learnt to pass droughts off as a State matter. Only when seasons were good did I let it be known that I had some influence on high.

Even Mavis, who usually asks for really fast footwork in these matters, was not displeased with my performance.

But she says there is still plenty of room for improvement.

She was most impressed with Mr Cameron, Minister for Labour, who, when the Ford strike with its accompanying blood-chilling violence was at its worst, smoothly sat down in a London studio and blamed it all on the evil machinations of overseas business in New York.

He has, of course, too much sense to believe this — he knew that the main cause of the trouble was the inability of the union leadership to control the agitators in the rank and file of the union.

But Mavis says that the minister's footwork was a credit to all concerned and I could well learn from him.

But there are also others who can teach me. We have recently been told of the fierceness of the inflationary fires that threaten to engulf us.

Many of us have been concerned for some time that these were getting altogether too big for comfort and that if they were not dampened down they may very well burn us out.

But now the last quarter's figures have come out and show that we have now an annual rate of inflation of about 13.2 per cent and that is likely to get worse unless something heroic is done.

I know it is easy to suggest facile solutions to the problem of inflation but I do not pretend that there are really any easy answers.

But clearly one of the main things that has inflamed the problem is the Commonwealth's action in supporting the unions' claim in the recent Arbitration Commission hearing.

This, coupled with the way the Commonwealth cow cheerfully gives its milk down whenever any group rattles the bucket, are but two factors that have encouraged inflation to get out of hand.

So Mr Cairns, Minister for Trade, would have had plenty of people to blame for the inflationary mess we are in.

He could have blamed the strikes and their devastating effect on productivity. Or he could have even blamed Mr Cameron.

But he did none of these things.

I quote from his recent press release which dealt with the problem of rising prices:

Only today the Victorian Football League has given the public another shock. There will be no televising of the final, and now there is a 50c increase (50 per cent) in admission costs.

Not only this, but the price of many services on the ground is considerably higher than in the shops outside.

Is this justified? It is time Mr Hamer and his Government were asked — what are you going to do about prices?

Now that is really footwork. Not everyone would have been able to think quickly enough to blame it all on Mr Hamer, the Premier of Victoria.

That was indeed a splendid stroke that made Mavis green with envy.

But even more impressive was getting football into the act. Prices are soaring all round us, forced inevitably upwards because money wages are rising far faster than productivity.

The whole country is naturally most perturbed about what is happening. So Mr Cairns comes out in a ministerial statement and points out that the football final will not be televised.

Cripes, that's serious indeed! I can imagine my farmers whipping themselves into a lather of rage about this.

And admission to the match is going to be dearer also! That's terrible, that is.

Fred says he wouldn't go if he was paid to go, not because he doesn't like the game but because people tread on his feet and he doesn't like it.

And pies at the match will be dearer also. How absolutely awful. Things are really serious.

So, with the fires of inflation threatening to engulf us, Mr Cairns wanders round with a wet bag, fretting about football and blaming it all on Mr Hamer.

As Mavis says enviously, "That's really footwork!"