



## A MODEST MEMBER

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### **Even Canute couldn't stem political tides**

New Year resolutions in our family are made by Mavis — all I have to do is keep them.

But Fred and Eccles are also both interested, so between them I don't lack guidance. All I lack is determination.

Fred has one firm resolution for me. He wants me to press for a Minister for Meteorology so that he can have someone to blame when the weather goes wrong.

But I doubt if I will succeed in this, as no one would want the job — there would be too many changes in the portfolio.

The Minister for the Navy used to change after each collision; think how many changes there would be with our unreliable climate if we had a Minister for Meteorology!

Fred also wants me to keep the price of wool down where it is, keep inflation down, prevent strikes, stop parliamentary salaries from rising and numerous other odd things.

Eccles wants me to resolve to keep bashing away at high tariffs.

He thinks it will be more important than ever, with this new round of international talks formally beginning next year, but which are already informally proceeding.

He is fearful that, if the US becomes disillusioned with the insularity of the EEC, then she may go isolationist again as she did before the war.

If that happens, Eccles fears that there will be an irresistible surge of economic nationalism as we had then and almost which made the war almost inevitable.<sup>1</sup>

Eccles says that our ability to influence these negotiations is limited, to some extent, by our own high protectionist policies, so for this reason, as well as for the well-being of our domestic economy, he wants me to keep fighting.

I will too, and perhaps it will be easier than it used to be. I know that there are many Liberals who now see the sense of Eccle's arguments.

And there are some of the more intelligent members of the Labor Party who agree with him in private but who are, of course, unable to say anything in public.

And perhaps now there will be some Country Party members besides Mr Maisey who may revert to their traditional and logical policies of low protection. So perhaps it won't be as lonely as it was.

Mavis wants me to resolve to be more attentive to the electorate, to agree with every person, to attend every function and to pea in every pocket.

“Be more subservient, dear,” she said. “Let them order you around and then you are sure to win the 1975 election.”

I’m not too sure. Fred says that I delude myself if I think that people love me.

He says that the reason they vote for me is they think my party’s policies are better than other parties’.

This made me said because I like to think I have a large personal following. But I’m afraid Fred may be right.

I notice that a particular town which I have visited assiduously voted solidly against me. Fred says they got to know me too well.

In any case, a member’s personal following would disappear like morning mist if the political tide is running against his party.<sup>2</sup>

December 2 taught this lesson yet again. Some of the members who were beaten were thought to have big personal followings; they had served their constituents with dedication.

Yet they were washed up on the political beach by a political tide running strongly against their party, not against them.

Mavis also wants me to resolve to get rid of Eccles. She once thought he would help my image because he used such wise-sounding words like “horizontal and vertical integration” and “produce differentiated oligopoly” and so on.

She once got him to write out a speech for me, heavily larded with phrases of this kind. But it didn’t work.

All went well for the first page, then I got drowned in a sea of words which I couldn’t understand, let alone pronounce.

So I sat down to everyone’s surprise and gratification, except Mavis who cried quietly in the Speaker’s gallery.

But I couldn’t get rid of Eccles. He is only used to living in his ivory tower in Canberra and he might starve outside.

And I don’t think the Labor Government would employ him as he isn’t misty-eyed enough.

The real trouble with Eccles is that he is usually right and that’s what makes him so unpopular.

Mavis gave me some “Brut” shaving lotion for Christmas. It is very nice, but it doesn’t seem to have done anything for me. Not yet.