

**Australian Prime Ministers and Deposition:  
John Gorton and Bob Hawke Compared**

Joel Bateman

School of Political Science and International Studies,  
The University of Queensland

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This paper examines the cases of John Gorton and Bob Hawke – two popular prime ministers who were deposed by their respective parties' parliamentary representatives. It will focus on their political and personal styles, to determine if there are any qualities or attributes common to them that may have been significant in the decision of their colleagues to depose them as leader. In doing so, this paper will draw some conclusions about particular factors that might explain why some political leaders are deposed from office, whereas other, less popular leaders are not. There are significant differences between the two, not least of which was that Hawke certainly accomplished much more than Gorton in a policy sense, and led the Cabinet which modernised Labor following the Whitlam era, while Gorton's policy achievements were much more modest, perhaps a consequence of the fact that he led a party nearing the end of a long period in government. Nonetheless, it is this contrast that makes their shared political fate all the more interesting. In this paper, I will argue that there are three principal similarities between John Gorton and Bob Hawke, and that these similarities are not merely coincidental political and personal resemblances, but were factors in their depositions. The first relates to the relative inexperience and the unconventional entry to the House of Representatives shared by Gorton and Hawke. Secondly, both prime ministers had a frequently troubled relationship with the elites of their respective parties, not least because of the above factor. Finally, their personalities were also a factor in their depositions, and the similarities of these cannot be discounted. Both Gorton and Hawke sought to appeal to the Australian public over the top of their own party, and thus further damaged their relationship with the party. These factors in conjunction, I argue, explain why both John Gorton and Bob Hawke were deposed from the prime ministership despite being relatively popular amongst the Australian public at large.

Both John Gorton and Bob Hawke began their terms as prime minister in unusual circumstances, and their inexperience in parliament and lack of preparation for the position are factors in their eventual depositions. Most Australian prime ministers attain that office only after serving a long period of apprenticeship in the

House of Representatives<sup>1</sup>, usually holding a variety of Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet positions before promotion to the leadership. For instance, the last five prime ministers other than Gorton and Hawke, Billy McMahon, Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Paul Keating and John Howard, had each been a Member of Parliament for between 20 and 22 years before they were elevated to the prime ministership. John Gorton had never been in the House of Representatives before becoming Prime Minister, and Bob Hawke was elected to parliament less than three years before he attained the leadership of the Australian Labor Party and subsequently, the prime ministership. With the possible exception of Malcolm Fraser, who became caretaker prime minister following the dismissal of Whitlam and then retained his position in the general election, it is doubtful if any Australian prime minister has come into the position in more unusual circumstances than Gorton and Hawke. Gorton was elected leader of the Liberal Party following the December 1967 disappearance of Harold Holt and after some three weeks of dealings between the Liberal and National Parties. Walsh (1968, 18) notes that not only did Gorton have a far-from-clear claim to the leadership after Holt, his support came almost entirely from backbenchers, and 'Not one of the Holt Cabinet, barring the Treasurer, had supported him, and in fact some had actually opposed him'. He had to resign his position in the Senate and win a House of Representatives by-election in order to fulfil the convention that prime ministers should sit in the Lower House, from which government is drawn. Hawke, on the other hand, after a mere three years as a not particularly impressive shadow minister and Member of Parliament generally, but with a high level of popularity thanks to his previous career as president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and as federal president of the ALP, successfully convinced ALP leader Bill Hayden to stand aside for him on the same day that Malcolm Fraser, hoping to avoid facing Hawke, called an election. Thus Hawke went from well-known but undistinguished shadow minister for industrial relations to prime minister of Australia in little over a month. This paper argues that the inexperience of both Gorton and Hawke in both the House of Representatives and the upper realms of federal parliament in general was a contributing factor to their depositions.

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<sup>1</sup> John Gorton remains the only Australian prime minister who served the majority of his parliamentary career in the Senate.

As Henderson (2000, 307) notes, the 19 years Gorton had served in the Senate give a misleading impression of his experience: in addition to not having experience in the tougher and more rigorous House of Representatives, Gorton had not held any of the major portfolios, such as Treasury, External Affairs, Trade or Defence, and had only been appointed to the Cabinet when Harold Holt became prime minister in 1966. This, Hancock (2002, 150) argues, caused difficulties for Gorton from the beginnings of his prime ministership:

Gorton had never been given a major domestic portfolio. And Gorton's own mistake was not to interest himself sufficiently in issues outside his immediate ministerial domain. So he came to the office full of fresh and exciting ideas, and singularly ill-prepared for the task of implementing them.

Both Trengrove (1969) and Hancock (2002), in their generally sympathetic biographies of Gorton, argue that the Senate and the House of Representatives offer very different political experiences, and Trengrove (1969, 192-93) notes that Robert Menzies, when consulted on the leadership of the Liberal Party following Holt's disappearance, 'made it clear... that there was a risk in bringing down someone from the Senate inexperienced in the rough and tumble of Lower House procedure'. Gorton eventually moved to the House of Representatives only after becoming Liberal Party leader and prime minister, occupying the seat left vacant by Holt. As noted above, the very different characters of the two houses of Australian parliament meant that the new prime minister was in unfamiliar and somewhat bewildering conditions. In his early days in the House of Representatives, Gorton, perhaps for those reasons, remained relatively quiet and allowed Opposition Leader Gough Whitlam to dominate the chamber, and less than a fortnight after his assumption of the position, the *Bulletin* ran an article wondering whether he should be more accurately dubbed 'John the Bold' or 'Gorton the Unready' (Hancock 2002, 168). Gorton's inexperience in the House of Representatives, and in many areas of policy-making, made him a weak prime minister, and was a major factor in his deposition.

After Bob Hawke unsuccessfully ran for parliament in 1963, in the seat of Corio in Victoria, he did not stand for election again until his successful bid in 1980. For at least a year before the 1980 election, Hawke went backwards and forwards on

his decision to enter politics or not, and chose to do so in the face of advice from friends and a concerted 'Stop Hawke' movement within the ALP itself (d'Alpuget 1982, 372-89). Thus Hawke's troubled relationship with the Labor parliamentary party was already well established prior to his entry into the House of Representatives. The press conference announcing his decision to run for ALP pre-selection for Wills saw 60 journalists in attendance and carried the major headline in every metropolitan newspaper in the country, testament to Hawke's enormous popularity and newsworthiness before his parliamentary career even began (d'Alpuget 1982, 389; Pullan 1980, 217). However, once both the pre-selection and the election were won, Hawke's performance in parliament and the ALP caucus were significantly lower than anticipated, and he did not impress either Press Gallery journalists or his fellow MPs (d'Alpuget 1982, 400). Kelly (1984, 146) summarises Hawke's initial performance in parliament thus:

The striking feature of Hawke's initial year in Parliament had been the discrepancy between aspiration and reality. In neither the Caucus nor the Parliament had Hawke performed as an alternative leader. During 1981 there was grave doubt even among Hawke's own supporters as to whether he possessed the capacity and judgement to mould himself as the ALP parliamentary leader.

Hawke (1992, 107-08) himself confesses that he was not impressed by Parliament House and its practices upon joining it, and was frustrated by the lack of opportunities to actually do things afforded to him in his early parliamentary career. D'Alpuget (1982, 400) and Pullan (1980, 264) both suggest that the reason why Hawke neither fitted in nor contributed much to party room meetings or parliamentary proceedings was that he was unused to his position of relative unimportance after a decade as ACTU president. He also struggled with the conventions of parliament, such as the use of the guillotine while he was still trying to make his point, and Pullan (1980, 264-65) observes that

His speeches were generally well-reasoned, his case well supported by statistics, but there was a predictable sameness about them. He was trying too hard to impress and went on for too long. People were wondering what had happened to the wit and sparkle.

Despite this, he was still convinced after just over a year in the House of Representatives that he would be the ALP leader within six months – one of many

indications of Hawke's sense of self-worth and purpose (d'Alpuget 1982, 401). As Kelly (1984, 106) notes, Hawke was the first person to enter parliament with 'such a long-sustained popularity and with such a strong claim on the prime ministership'. His unsuccessful 1982 leadership challenge, on the other hand, Kelly (1984, 230) calls naïve, demonstrating Hawke's lack of political awareness and experience.

When Malcolm Fraser, anticipating a change in the ALP leadership from the respected but not especially popular Bill Hayden to the charismatic Hawke, called, an election on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1983, for the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, he was unaware that the ALP's leadership transition had occurred just hours beforehand. It was felt by many in the ALP that while Hayden would more likely make a better prime minister, Hawke's popularity both overcame his short-fallings and made him more likely to win the election, and that he would be a leader with a strategy for long term electoral success (Pullan 1980, 265-66). When Hawke did become prime minister, d'Alpuget (1982, 408) noted that, 'With only two years in Parliament and three weeks as Leader of the Opposition, his rise to power is the most spectacular in the history of Australian politics'. Combined with this lack of parliamentary experience was Hawke's unwillingness to admit the importance of parliament itself:

Hawke regarded Parliament with the sort of disdain that the self-made businessman has for an MBA course at a university. For most of his career, Parliament was an irrelevance for him; as ACTU leader he'd already had far more power than he could have had as a mere MP or Opposition spokesman. Unlike Whitlam and Fraser, unlike Hayden whom he overthrew, and unlike Keating who was to overthrow him, Hawke needed Parliament neither as a power base nor as a forum for his ideas (Mills 1993, 38-39).

It is, therefore, entirely appropriate that Freudenberg (2003, 89) should identify Hawke's greatest success in the House of Representatives as being his April 1983 Economic Summit, and not actual parliamentary proceedings. Hawke's interest in parliament was merely one of a means to an end (the prime ministership) and this attitude was central to his deposition.

In addition to their relative inexperience in the House of Representatives and their unconventional arrivals at the leadership, is the fact that both Gorton and

Hawke had frequently-tense relationships with the elites of their parties. In Australia's political system, where the prime minister is elected by their own party, and not by the public at large, maintaining good relationship with one's party is a key element to succeeding as a leader. Yet, as this paper will demonstrate, it was a task beyond either Gorton or Hawke for significant periods of their careers, and this can be directly linked to their ultimate depositions. For both leaders, a key element of their party problems was their insistence on reversing traditional party policies and ideology.

As discussed above, John Gorton had a long career in the Senate yet was not appointed to any high positions within the party until the mid-1960s, just a few years before he became prime minister. At least part of the reason for this is that Liberal Party founder, and prime minister for the first decade and a half of Gorton's career, Robert Menzies, was suspicious of Gorton. Henderson (2000, 306) suggests that Menzies may have ignored Gorton's performance in the Senate because of his larrikin personality, and that his lack of awe of Menzies's own standing. Menzies, according to an interview he gave some ten years after retiring, considered Gorton a 'mischief maker' (Henderson 2000, 306). For a new and ambitious politician, displeasing the party's founder and leader was not a wise approach, and he was warned as such by friends and colleagues, yet Gorton regularly opposed Menzies in party room discussions (Tregrove 1969, 117-18). Gorton's approach is described by Hancock (2002, 62),

Gorton also thought it was perfectly normal, and desirable, for backbenchers such as himself to question the necessity or wisdom of particular pieces of legislation. He would even raise objections when he was in full agreement with a particular proposal. It was not an approach calculated to appeal to Menzies or to the individual ministers who were under scrutiny.

Menzies's lack of enthusiasm for Gorton can also be seen in his public support for Paul Hasluck for the party leadership in the contest after Holt disappeared, going so far as to ring members of the parliamentary party and discourage them from voting for Gorton (Tregrove 1969, 197).

Gorton disagreed with traditional Liberal Party values and policies in several different areas, including foreign affairs, especially concerning Malaysia and Singapore; opposing foreign investment in Australian companies; federalism, by being considerably more centralist than the party usually was; and on the need for a National Health programme (Tregrove 1969, 201). Hancock (2002, 70) notes that Gorton also failed to communicate with members of his party, so that sometimes the party did not understand or appreciate Gorton's own policies, and thus was surprised by his public positions. Even a year into his prime ministership, this was causing problems for Gorton:

Never before had an Australian Prime Minister been subjected to such a hostile campaign among his presumed political allies and supporters (with the possible exceptions of Billy Hughes after 1918 and Menzies in 1940-41). Seeking to change his party's direction, the maverick who thought but did not plan strategically had alienated the traditionalists on his own side of politics (Hancock 2002, 202).

Gorton's tendency to act without consultation and by ignoring the processes of Cabinet on certain issues also served to turn colleagues against him (Hancock 2002, 195, 266-72). His period as prime minister was marked by a general instability in the ranks of the Liberal/National coalition, but it would not be fair to blame Gorton for all of that. Yet, part of a prime minister's role is to control and stabilize their party, and on this measure Gorton failed, and in the end suffered the consequences. Hancock (2002, 162) notes that, from his earliest days as Prime Minister, Gorton paid insufficient attention to maintaining party discipline and unity – most particularly by not dealing firmly enough with his greatest opponent, McMahon. Rather than persuading McMahon to take a diplomatic posting, as he should have done, Gorton allowed him to remain in Cabinet, constantly undermining his authority (Hancock 2002, 162). Gorton also erred in his early dealings as prime minister by appointing Ainsley Gotto and Lenox Hewitt to important positions within his office and department – thus affronting both his Cabinet colleagues and the Public Service (Hancock 2002, 162-65). Even after a slender victory in a leadership challenge by both David Fairbairn and McMahon in late 1969, Gorton refused to approach his party colleagues more diplomatically, and continued to cause problems for himself unnecessarily (Hancock 2002, 246-48, 251-54). Indeed, after the leadership ballot,

Gorton 'declared he was not "of, or in, the Establishment" . Any future changes were "unlikely" to be in "a conservative direction"' (Hancock 2002, 248). Gorton's eventual fall came after the ranks of party members opposed to him were boosted by the addition of a senior minister, Malcolm Fraser (Hancock 2002, 311-13). Fraser, who resigned citing Gorton's disloyalty to him over a relatively minor matter, delivered a stinging attack on the prime minister during parliamentary debate (Hancock 2002, 320-22). As Hancock (2002, 230) notes,

The Prime Minister was blissfully unaware of the extent of Fraser's disenchantment and, although he was annoyed by Fraser's behaviour over civic action and towards the army, and may have taken some pleasure in witnessing Fraser's embarrassment, he had no intention of dismissing the Minister for Defence. Together, Fraser's deceit and Gorton's failure to sniff the wind left the Prime Minister totally unprepared for what followed.

The following day, 67 of the 68 members of the Liberal party room<sup>2</sup> held a vote on the leadership, and the tied result (one vote was cast informally) led to Gorton's announcement that he would use his casting vote to depart the leadership - a power which he did not actually hold under Liberal Party rules, but by the time this technicality was considered, his leadership was effectively over anyway (Hancock 2002, 325-27).

Bob Hawke, like John Gorton, entered the House of Representatives for the express purpose of becoming prime minister. Unlike Gorton, who had at least some experience in the Senate, Hawke was completely unused to parliamentary conventions upon election to the Lower House. As discussed above, this weakened him and was a factor in the unusual position Hawke was in, and eventually made him vulnerable. However, it had further-reaching consequences for Hawke, in that his relationship with the ALP caucus was based not on their respect for a long-serving and proven performer, but on a man of enormous popularity who would bring about electoral success. Hawke's preference for dealing with the public at the expense of forming relationships with his Caucus colleagues will be considered later, but the strains this placed upon his political relationship were significant. Indeed, Pullan's (1980, 36) statement that Hawke was 'interested in changing the world more

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<sup>2</sup> The missing member, 'Duke' Bonnett, was unwell and thus absent.

than he was interested in understanding it', applies equally to Hawke's attitudes towards parliament and the Labor Caucus. Despite the ideal training ground it might be considered, Hawke's earlier roles of ACTU president and then federal president of the ALP itself in fact meant that he had already had an occasionally rocky relationship with the ALP parliamentary wing prior to his entrance to it. Hawke remains the only person to lead the union movement in Australia (as president of the ACTU) and both the organisational and political wings of the ALP. When he accepted the ALP presidency in the early 1970s, over objections and warnings from many, he proceeded to use that position, as he had done with the ACTU presidency, to further his own ends, sometimes at the expense of party unity (Kelly 1984, 17). D'Alpuget (1982, 227, 243) and Hurst (1983, 147) point out the difficulties Hawke had in trying to balance his presidencies of two organisations that were at times pursuing mutually exclusive goals, and that Hawke's prioritisation of union objectives resulted in tension in his relationship with Whitlam and the ALP Caucus. By 1973, d'Alpuget (1982, 244) writes, 'The Caucus was beginning to hate Hawke, to reject his criticisms of its actions as wilful embarrassment, even traitorous'. Hawke gave an indication of troubles to come when, in 1977, he publicly announced that Whitlam had spoken to him about entering parliament and becoming the leader, and that in his own judgement, he could beat Fraser if he chose to accept Whitlam's proposal (Kelly 1984, 9). As Kelly (1984, 9-10) argues, Hawke's public statements 'showed that he lacked either the maturity or stability required for leadership,' and Caucus did not lose its hostility to Hawke until his electoral success in March 1983. Indeed, during Hawke's first 12 months in parliament, the key ALP parliamentarians, including Hayden, Bowen and Button, were 'not just anti-Hawke, they were passionately anti-Hawke' (Kelly 1984, 118).

Like Gorton, Hawke alienated elements of his own party both through seeking a new direction and by sometimes acting without consultation – Mills (1993, 73-74, 55) cites airline deregulation, telecommunications policy, uranium sales to France and tertiary education policy as some areas where Hawke overturned longstanding ALP policies, and the cases of Hawke allowing the US to test their MX missiles in Australian borders, the Tax Summit of 1984 and the 'ambitious' treaty with Aborigines as

examples of his disregard for Cabinet procedures and consultation. Graham Maddox's *The Hawke Government and Labor Tradition* (1989) details Hawke's deviation from traditional ALP policies and the effects this had on his relationship with sections of the party. As Day (2003, 407) notes, 'Hawke and his ministers can count many achievements to their credit. But remaining true to Labor's tradition was not one of them'.

Part of Hawke's problems with the ALP was based on his own personality and the projection of this to the public – Hawke was closer to the charismatic Whitlam persona than to the quietly respected Hayden one, and in the years following the dramatic Whitlam period, messianic leaders were not popular within the ALP (Hurst 1983, 262). Hawke's appeal, therefore, was that he was seen as a leader guaranteed of electoral success, and, 'The power-brokers of Australia's oldest political party had convinced themselves that Bob Hawke was their only hope: the saviour who could turn despair into triumph' (Kelly 1984, 1). Kelly (1984, 110-12) also notes that Hawke was never a strong tactician, and relied on others to do the planning and vote-counting so necessary to leaders, and that while his public image was very much that of the 'ordinary bloke', he was noted within the party as being distant and unapproachable, especially from the rank-and-file members – a sharp contrast to Hayden. One of the Hawke government ministers, Neal Blewett (1999, 74, 216; 2003, 79) demonstrates that Hawke's eventual deposition had as much to do with Hawke's own poor management of Cabinet colleagues as it did with Keating's ambition to be prime minister – by paying insufficient attention to his allies in Caucus, Hawke made enemies of them and thus sealed his own fate. Of course, Keating's actions to undermine Hawke cannot be overlooked as a factor in Hawke's deposition. The 'Kirribilli pact' struck between them, stipulating that Hawke would hand over the leadership following the 1990 election, and Hawke's later attitude towards that deal, are good examples of his failure to handle Keating's ambitions well. By trying first to placate Keating's aspirations and then to renege on that, Hawke managed only to increase Keating's determination to replace him as prime minister (Gordon 1993, 150). By the early 1990s, Hawke's concerns about his leadership stability, in the face of ongoing undermining by Keating, distracted him

from making an adequate response to the Liberal opposition's *Fightback* policy, and thus weakened him further within the Caucus.

John Gorton and Bob Hawke had many similarities in their personalities, and this paper argues that these personal characteristics were factors in their depositions. To an extent, these factors influence areas such as the previous one, of relations with their parties, but it is worth considering this issue separately. I will look at two components of their personalities to demonstrate that these had an effect on their political styles and how that impacted upon their careers. The first is that both Gorton and Hawke had tremendous popularity within the Australian public, and that they based their leadership authority on that, rather than on their dominance of a political party or of parliament. The other personal characteristic shared by these two prime ministers is that each of was a well-educated, highly-intelligent person who preferred to relate to people and present themselves as an 'ordinary bloke' somewhat scornful of the system.

A good summary of Gorton's personality and the inherent contradictions of it is provided by Hancock (2002, xiii): 'Far brighter than most of his contemporaries in politics, he was inquisitive and attracted to new ideas, an unassuming and well-read intellectual behind the exterior of the lovable larrikin'. A similar comment is made by Henderson (2000, 305), who notes that,

After he became prime minister, John Gorton maintained that he was 'not of or in the establishment'. But his *Who's Who* entry suggested otherwise: MA Oxon.; educated Geelong Grammar and Brasenose College, Oxford; orchardist; pilot RAAF 140-45; president Kerang Shire 1949-50; Melbourne Club.

Trengrove (1969, 54) notes that as early as his days as a student at Oxford, Gorton adopted an informal, off-hand manner that caused colleagues and acquaintances to consider him shallow and not serious about his studies or future careers. To some extent, this reputation stayed with him for the rest of his career. Gorton's attraction to a political career was based mainly on his dislike of, and intentions to prevent, the spread of communism both internationally and in Australian politics – the federal Labor government's legislation to nationalise banks being the issue that most heavily

influenced his decision to run for the Senate (Trengove 1969, 97, 109; Hancock 2002, 51-52). Once in parliament, Gorton on occasion made anti-intellectual, populist speeches, such as calling for more 'low-brow' television programmes, and disliked the arrogance of intellectuals who made public comments on policy issues (Trengove 1969, 161-62).

As with Hawke's leadership claims as discussed above, Gorton made his appeal for the leadership position based on gaining the support of the public – in the campaign for the Liberal Party leadership Gorton successfully used television interviews to portray his character to the public, and thus convinced the party of his leadership credentials (Trengove 1969, 194-95; Hancock 2002, 142-43). A virtual unknown to many at the time of his leadership election, the media made early notes of his style as being informal and friendly, honest, sometimes to the point of being abrupt, unpredictable and a good speaker and television performer (Hancock 2002, 168). The early opinion of him from colleagues centred on the appearance he gave of being somewhat lazy about reading briefs and other preparation, and his media advisor Tony Eggleton did note subsequently that Gorton was a 'Monday to Friday prime minister' (Hancock 2002, 169). Gorton himself liked being amongst ordinary people – he was energised by them and they in turn recognised his enjoyment and responded to that (Hancock 2002, 171-72). One of Gorton's principal beliefs was that being prime minister should not alter the way he lived his life, and he continued to drink, by his own admission, more than he should have, and also later confessed to having at least one extra-marital affair while prime minister (Hancock 2002, 170). This belief certainly set him apart from many of his colleagues, and earned the resentment of several of them – one complaint frequently levelled against Gorton during his term was that he did not behave in a manner appropriate to a prime minister (Hancock 2002, 219). This was another factor that caused tension between Gorton and his Liberal Party colleagues.

Bob Hawke was also known as much for his behaviour as he was for his policies. As discussed above, he was very popular prior to his entry to parliament, yet his career had been written off by journalists and others many times because of his own actions. Like Gorton, Hawke was educated at Oxford, but unlike Gorton, he

planned to continue his academic career – after returning from Oxford, Hawke enrolled at the Australian National University to gain his doctorate, in arbitration law, and it was from there that his work as a research officer for the ACTU began (Hurst 1979, 25-26). Even at that early stage of his life, Hawke's behaviour had an impact on his career – whilst holding a position as student representative on the University Council, he insulted a professor during a party, and was forced to resign that position (Hurst 1979, 25). In later years, as ACTU wage claims advocate, Hawke was admired as a strong and intelligent debater, but was also regularly reprimanded for insulting the judges he was arguing to, calling them 'stupid' amongst other things (Hurst 1979, 43).

Yet if Hawke is remembered for one thing, it is for his self-proclaimed 'love affair with the Australian people'. Bramston (2003, 59) argues that Hawke 'radiated warmth, empathy and intelligence... His rapport with the Australian people involved more than just popularity; he seemed to possess a visceral connection with the electorate'. In the early months of his prime ministership, Hawke retained the popularity he had enjoyed in the past, and in early 1984, he became the first Australian prime minister to have over 70% approval, by late March up to 75%, and as Mills (1993, 62) comments, 'This was more than respect, higher than esteem, more intense than popularity; it was the love affair. Hawke was an ardent lover and in those days the object of his passion, the Australian electorate, returned his affection with fervour'. As Mills (1993, 4) argues, 'Like the President of a Republic, Hawke derived political legitimacy and strength from his direct relationship with the people who elected him'. This, of course, is a leadership authority at odds with both the Westminster system of accountability and the ALP Caucus, and 'Hawke's political demise came about when Caucus reasserted – took back from the people as it were – the right to choose who would be leader' (Mills 1993, 4). The inherent conflict of Hawke's leadership style is summarised by Mills (1993, 78):

the means by which Hawke won elections – his "love affair with the Australian people" – could only operate at the expense of his relationship with the Caucus. Appealing to the "people" over the heads of the Caucus, he had more difficulty with his supporters within the Party. A would-be President, he forgot that Prime Ministerial leadership derives in the first instance from the party room, not the electorate.

The reason Hawke was able to enjoy this relationship with ordinary people is at least partially related to his ability, despite his university training and qualifications, to present himself as a man of the people, an ordinary guy. When asked after being deposed how he wanted to be remembered, Hawke answered:

I guess as a bloke who loved his country, still does, and loves Australians, and who was not essentially changed by high office. I hope they still think of me as the Bob Hawke that they got to know: the larrikin trade union leader... who in the end is still a dinki-di Australian (Hawke 1992, 560).

Once he made the transition to parliamentary politics, however, Hawke (with the help of ALP strategists) transformed from a popular larrikin into a more mature and consensus-seeking politician, but the focus remained on his close identification with the ordinary Australian. According to Buckley (2003, 31), who argues that the 'love affair' was distorted and elevated beyond proportion by the media, 'To the annoyance of his political advisers, Hawke continued throughout his prime ministership to believe in an almost mystical union between himself and his people'. To a large part, the occasionally exuberant past Hawke had led was a political asset, rather than the reverse. As his Cabinet minister, but never supporter, Neal Blewett (2000, 386) notes, Hawke's 'extraordinary popularity was abetted by the public perception of him as a repentant prodigal'. Pullan (1980, 165) argues that Hawke's confession that he drank too much, 'revealed a flaw which many Australians could identify in themselves or their friends, making Hawke seem as they were, human and flawed'.

As the only two post-World War Two prime ministers to be deposed by their parties, John Gorton and Bob Hawke provide a unique insight into political leadership practices in Australia. This paper has argued that these two prime ministers shared several key qualities, both political and personal, and has argued that these similarities were characteristics that help explain their depositions. Both Gorton and Hawke became prime minister with very little experience in either the practices of the House of Representatives or senior ministry positions to their credit, and this weakened their leadership. Both of them failed to maintain a strong and working relationship with their respective parties and by deviating from traditional

party practices and policies alienated themselves from significant portions of the party. This was furthered by their personalities, which in some ways were very similar – both preferred to reach the public over the top of their party, rather than through it, and communicated an image of themselves as ordinary Australians. These factors all, I have argued, contributed to the deposition of both John Gorton and Bob Hawke.

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