

Political 'Blokes World' threatened

By Don Pagé, 11 Feb 2019

Women are threatening upheaval in the cosy 'Blokes World' of politics. Amid eternal gang wars among party factions, tactical resignations are pushing the Federal Government to the edge, like Humpty Dumpty.

The Labor Opposition chuckles in the wings, and watches them "lurching from crisis to crisis", observed leader Bill Shorten gleefully, while watching his own back carefully.

As Federal and State elections loom, a Yes-Minister comedy now looks more like a Greek tragedy. Moderate female Liberals are talking 'independent', but they stopped short of bringing down the minority Morrison Government.

'BULLYING, INTIMIDATION'

Whatever pieces remain after the election, they are hoping to rebuild Humpty to better suit themselves.

Melburnian Julia Banks (Liberal, Chisholm) loudly condemned "bullying and intimidation" in party ranks last year. She has just quit the Liberals to challenge as an independent in a nearby seat, Flinders.

But she has refused to name and shame the abusers among her party colleagues. A brave gesture is one thing, but burning all your bridges was not on.

High-profile ex-Olympian Zali Steggall is challenging as an independent against the former PM and right-wing plotter, Tony Abbott, for his safe Liberal seat of Warringah. Her privileged upbringing on Sydney's northern beaches is an ideal fit for this well-to-do seat.

She hopes for an upset victory as had Independent Kerryn Phelps, who took the safe Liberal seat of Wentworth in a by-election, when former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull resigned after last year's right-wing party coup.

The fault lines from the Turnbull coup are still rumbling and go very deep.

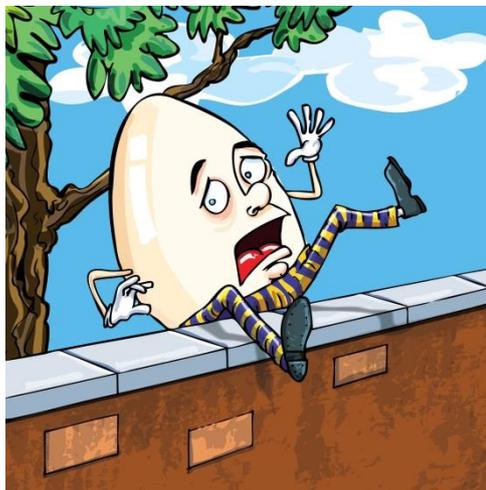
PARTY 'STOOGES' LIKELY

Recent polling has highlighted the public's distaste for big parties, and its willingness to flirt with 'independents' – whether real ones, or the usual party stooges who deceive naïve voters.

Local right-wing MP Craig Kelly (Lib, Hughes) was among the first to promote the coup against Turnbull. MP Kelly saw Ms Banks' decision as weakness -- to quit the Liberals and her marginal seat for a better prospect elsewhere as an independent. He excused politics as a "rough-and-tumble game."

Another drop-out was the Federal Minister for Women, Kelly O'Dwyer, who will not be standing at the next election, as she announced in January. Nor will Liberal MP Ann Sudmalis.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/australasia/article/2182871/shock-resignation-kelly-odwyer-rocks-australias-embattled>



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