

THE CAMERON DIARIES

Clyde Cameron's diaries for the years 1976/77 cover the period of tumult within the Australian Labor Party's Federal parliamentary section after it had been dismissed from office.

One might perhaps expect recrimination and worse, but in the 866 pages that detail the actions and reactions not only of Mr. Cameron and his Party confreres, but also of those who had supplanted them in government, his every criticism is accompanied by a generosity of praise. For sheer humanity it rises far above the ordinary, and the volume is worth the reading for that alone.

Entry after entry breathes of an ingenuous patriotism, of a deep concern for the truth and for ideals even if this means admitting to personal error. It shows also a sterling practicality. For instance, towards the end of the volume, a Labor Party senator comments that the Australian electors had been a lot of greedy pigs. The Cameron response was to say that this was what the Party was all about – "accommodation for more pigs at a Labor trough than at the Liberal trough. In fact, that is what socialism is all about – the greatest good, or greed, for the greatest number".

How fortunate that when the thieves stole the rest of the diaries these two were the ones they missed. Why these in particular? Because at the very opening an entry records that in 1974 he had been urging the Caucus towards the taxing of the profits that arise from speculation in land price.

The diary note then continues "one . . . reintroduced as a principle, it could be extended later". Although short-sighted confreres rejected the thought, it shows that Mr. Cameron was aiming as Henry George had aimed – at a process whereby the *ideals* of socialism might be achieved.

A deep usefulness lies ahead for the Diaries. They are a first rate exposition of how a truly patriotic but fun loving parliamentarian should behave – responsible to his electorate and in charge of, rather than subservient to, the Department of government that he comes to serve.

More than that, the Diaries are a textbook that future students of the political art will study with joy and that grandfathers whose memories go back to the 1931 Depression will quietly draw to the attention of their grandchildren.