

The Hon. B. Unsworth,
Premier
State of New South Wales

A strategy to win political support from ethnic communities

I will be using the outline below to present some of my thoughts in our discussion today. It is concerned with a winning strategy to gain political support from ethnic communities at the next State election and/or to neutralize some of the support the Opposition may enjoy at the present time.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY.

- 1.1 To gain entry into as many significant ethnic communities as possible.
- 1.2 To regain the support lost among traditional Labor-leaning communities.
- 1.3 To lock in as many new communities as possible.
- 1.4 To arrest the support the Opposition is gaining in a number of communities

2. THE PEOPLE : ETHNIC COMMUNITIES.

- Mainly concentrate in Labor seats.
- Their votes are more important next time, in an election expected to be close and because of reported unhappiness among traditional Labor voters with Labor Governments.
- Group behavior is generally influenced by home and community politics & own perception of how much respect/contempt accorded them by the society (governments, political parties, neighbours, unions, workmates ...). This is more marked among those who are identifiably visible (Arabs, Muslims, Turkish, Spanish speaking, Yugoslav, Vietnamese, Chinese...) than among established communities who can and will take into account mainstream issues (economy, education,.....) a good deal more.
- At individual level, vulnerable to personal approach and respond well to respect, friendship and altruism. Reacting very negatively towards treatments perceived to be degrading or indicating contempt from others.
- Symbolism is extremely important. The Premier's presence in communities' functions can be used to a great advantage. Rhetorics can be used effectively for this reason.
- Welfare not as important as many think. Social status is; e.g. the act of funding (a form of recognition) is more important than the nature of the services offered.

3. SUGGESTED ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED STRATEGY.

3.1 Bypass welfare issues and workers when possible, aim for community leaders and issues related to social status/recognition . Let bodies like the Ethnic Affairs Commission and YACS handle welfare issues and community workers. (Comment: No Government can win, in welfare; there tend to be frustrations for all concerned: workers, funding bodies and clients unless a bottomless source of funds is available).

3.2 Co-opt resources and power/influence of the Commonwealth who are much better resourced and who have power in immigration & foreign affairs, some aspects of which are concerns of some ethnic communities in some situations . This can be achieved by timing the State's offers of support (which the Commonwealth always appreciates) in some key ethnic affairs decisions & directions. Examples: we may want to have some say in the entry of some religious leaders. We may want to be seen to be influential in some foreign affairs decisions (some are quite petty matters but they are politically useful). It will be to your advantage to be influential with whoever are the Minister for Immigration & Ethnic Affairs and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

3.3 Preventing the Opposition from undermining your capacity to take full advantage of being in Government . This can be achieved by not provoking or allowing a public debate on ethnic affairs to take place unnecessarily. I do not see the advantages of a public debate at least until after the next election. Other than the Opposition, we may have some conservative and racist elements of the mainstream public to contend with. A public debate will take away much of the freedom of action . The situation, if allowed to happen, will then have the effect of letting the Opposition to neutralize your advantages in Government. The Opposition can do so by questioning your motives publicly of all moves you may initiate and present them as politically inspired.

3.4 Form a informal group of, say, 20 significant people who know and work their own community networks (who may have some ambitions themselves, not necessarily political), give them access to you, through it, status. They will then be motivated to not only give advice on how but actually work to gain support and in some cases, raise funds for you. To have this group formed and working in three months is achievable.

3.5 Use a lot of rhetoric in statements by questioning some attitudes of the society, dreaming of a better day, demonstrating comfort with diversity, calling for solidarity among ethnic communities for the common struggles against prejudices & injustice, imploring the reversal of many past achievements pointing out visions you have for Australia and New South Wales in terms of justice, participation and diversity etc. This will help shape your public image as a visionary and committed leader. By doing this, you also help give the Ethnic Movement something it is looking for: excitement & vision, the very things many ethnic leaders feel have been lost by the Federal Government.

3.6 With the exception of some finetuning, it may not be wise to initiate real reforms between now and the election. Prepare the program for the period after the election (risks can be taken for a 4 year term).

3.7 Use different approaches in achieving objectives among targetted communities:

- To regain the support lost among the Lebanese Muslims, Macedonians, Turkish, Spanish speaking communities
- To lock in with Labor as many individual leaders as possible among the Vietnamese, Chinese communities and others (Filipino, Laos, Khmers, Koreans). This can have far reaching electoral implications for many years to come. These communities could be a great source of financial support.
- In order NOT to make the Italians, Greeks and Yugoslavs unhappy. (The Maltese can be taken care of by Mr. Aquilina!)
- To arrest the existing support and divide it with the Opposition among the Eastern Europeans and Croatians, using your public image of being a right-wing and anti-communist leader.

3.8 These approaches consist of one or a combination of the following:

- The group of people mentioned in 3.4 above.
- Ethnic newspapers (editors, journalists, contributors..)
- The community networks (umbrella organisations, individual associations, ethnic churches, sport and cultural activities)
- Take advantage of decisions on funding, advertisements in newspapers, attendance at functions, private meetings and visits (SBS, ethnic newspapers...), status giving.
- Create a winning bandwagon by having some articles in mainstream media, T.V. about the success of our strategy in winning back ethnic communities, toward the end of 1987. This can have the effect of attracting more onto the bandwagon and dampen the increasing self-confidence of the Opposition.
- Be aware of home country politics but avoid getting personally involved except when we are certain that the absolute majority of a community has a united opinion about the political situation in their native country (El Salvadoreans, Vietnamese.....)

4. SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW WE CAN WIN PEOPLE OVER

4.1 Lebanese Muslims :

- Help them retain the Iman in Lakemba Mosque. This has to be done with style and must have the effect of ingratiating ourselves with the Muslim leadership.
- Have the Chairman of the Islamic Council of N.S.W. join the group mentioned in 3.4 above. There are also others to be invited.
- Use some public opportunities to express the view that you see the concerns by some about the Muslims to be no different from that of the Non-Catholics toward the Irish Catholics in Australian history etc.
- Become a good friend of the two Imans in Lakemba and Arncliffe & give them access. This again has to be done with style. Otherwise it may backfire.
- Be aware of their difficulties with local councils in applying for permissions to build mosques; but not to promise things if we won't be able to do much.
- Support the construction of many mosques (from a Government's point of view, this is important so as not to have too much influence and power concentrated on the existing mosques). This should be done with a strong sense of good timing and style.

These and other moves will result in the Muslims feeling good about themselves, perceiving them having status and knowing who has helped make the situation possible: you. Being emotional people, they will work for you more than you ever ask. Remember, they are a people with a siege mentality, therefore appreciate all forms of recognition.

4.2 Vietnamese:

- Using your public image of being anti-communist, deplore the Vietnamese Government for its violation of human rights.
- Find opportunities to lock the leaders in . An example might be to have them prepare the list of names to be invited to the Reception you will have for them and to have some key leaders among the group of people mentioned in 3.4
- Have some of the newspapers on side by talking about advertisements and some access for news and interviews.
- Promise to take up their concerns about foreign affairs at the appropriate time, possibly when there is a new Foreign Minister !

4.3 The Turks

- Visit their mosques, Imans and some community associations. This Community lacks recognition in NSW. They will feel very proud if we give them status.
- Make extensive of the Islamic network since there is no effective alternative.
- Have access to some of the newspapers.

4.3 The Eastern Europeans & Croatians:

- Here we can play the role of a spoiler to destabilize the natural support the Opposition may enjoy.
- We can argue with some selected leaders (newspaper editors) of the Croatians & Estonians that they would not want their communities to be locked in with one political party who has or is likely to take them for granted, while the other party has no incentive to listen to your political views & other aspirations. "Would you like to take advantage of the new Premier, being a very anti-communist leader, to have a foot in the other camp, just to give your community some alternative?"

5. ADVICE & COORDINATION.-

5.1 The strategy will have a greater chance of achieving what is intended if there is a continuing source of advice and coordination based on a proven understanding of ethnic structure, ethnic communities mentality and proven ability to have access to key communities leadership. The adviser should have the ability to hide political objectives behind what are clearly aspirations of ethnic communities or their spokespersons. What will be achieved will be mutually beneficial as the Labor Government gains political support and ethnic communities have their aspirations supported politically through statements, actions with real and symbolic significance of the Governments of the day.

5.2 As I look around, the only body with some expertise on ethnic affairs in the State sphere is the Ethnic Affairs Commission. However, my belief is that the Commission is ill-equipped to give you political advice on ethnic affairs. Firstly they are publically accountable, therefore they have to watch themselves carefully. Secondly, the Commission, up until now, has been tied down significantly by concerns about welfare and services, or never have enough time to sharpen their skills to take into account community dynamics & political considerations.

5.3 I believe the availability & recruitment of a person with a sharp sense of politics and good creditability in the "ethnic industry", good access to ethnic network will be very critical for the success of your intention to win political support from ethnic communities at the next State election.

5.4 Having a good adviser to implement the strategy will leave you with a fallback position which will give you protection. It allows you to benefit from the success but still let you step in to smooth out feelings of aggrieved ethnic leaders if things did not happen as planned.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 All I am saying is that political support from ethnic communities is winnable by carefully and subtly implementing a modest strategy to make ethnic communities & their spokespersons feel recognized and perceive having status & access to the political leadership. The critical factor is to have an knowledgeable & effective advisor on ethnic affairs who is respected by and has access to ethnic networks to coordinate the implementation of the strategy.

6.2 As you can see, the implementation of this strategy is not expensive; because it emphasizes the style, manner and timing of your contacts with selected leaders and communities. The general intention is to make people feel good about themselves & about you. The focus is on relationships & styles, yet it give you protection & flexibility in deciding when to be visible & when not. This approach will also fit in with the aim of having a harmonious society. Indeed, the outcome will be ethnic minorities feeling secure, assured, accepted & confident resulting in more predictable behaviour. Their resentment & frustrations, if any, do not have to go underground which can be detrimental at the ballot boxes.