The Hon. Member for Wannon - Malcolm Fraser

The election in Bass which takes place later this month is an opportunity for the people of Northern Tasmanian electorate to give a lead to all Australians.

Over the last 2½ years we have seen economic mismanagement and inefficiency by the Government develop into unemployment, inflation, industrial unrest, and interest rates at record levels.

These problems affect Bass and the people of Launceston, Scottsdale, and St. Helens, as much as they affect all other Australians.

There is unemployment in Bass in the textile industry, just as there is unemployment in the textile and clothing industry on the mainland.

There is unemployment in engineering and manufacturing industry, just as there is on the mainland.

There is economic depression among farmers in Northern Tasmania just as there is in the rest of that state and in the rural areas on the mainland.

I have just spent two days in Bass and I will be going back again next week and the following week to tell people there that they will have the chance to vote against the Government and against the Prime Minister, who is responsible for this state of affairs.

The Prime Minister, a few days ago, claimed that Australians had never been more prosperous.

Australians know that the dollars in their weekly pay packet have never bought less and that the taxation which is deducted before they see it has never been higher.

They also know that the Prime Minister of Australia cannot accept responsibility when things go wrong by blaming his underlings for the mismanagement over which he presides.

Collapse and Decay

There has been evidence this week of the collapse and decay which afflicts this Government.

Most alarming of all, it is spreading further through the public service.

The Government has much to answer for over its handling of the bureaucracy.

At the beginning, it experimented in industrial relations by giving the public service better terms and conditions than the rest of the community.
The public service was one of the first of the Government's scapegoats for the mistakes which it made.

While their salaries were being jumped ahead of those of other Australians, they were being abused for allegedly inadequate economic statistics and for allegedly providing the wrong sort of advice.

Now the Government is trying to fasten on the Treasury as much of the blame as it can for the developing scandal over the Government's petro-dollar loan raising activities in the Middle East.

**CONNOR’S INFLUENCE**

The Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Cairns, has been sacked as Treasurer, not for his handling of the economy, but because of his unorthodox attempts to borrow money abroad, using a private intermediary with whom he has been friendly.

Both Dr. Cairns and now the Prime Minister appear to be aiming at the head of the Treasury, Sir Frederick Wheeler, as their next target in this affair.

The question that needs to be asked is why the Prime Minister wants to limit the enquiry which he has grudgingly promised into these matters.

Is it to protect the Minister for Minerals & Energy, Mr. Connor, who survived the blood letting when other senior ministers who have not succeeded in their portfolios were downgraded by the Prime Minister.

The first of the Arab Oil Loans to come to public attention were those which Mr. Connor was trying to raise, also through an unorthodox private intermediary.

What hold does the Minister for Minerals & Energy have over the Prime Minister, which not only keeps him immune from the fate which Dr. Cairns suffered, but which also permits him to go ahead with sterile empire building.

Since Mr. Connor made himself high priest over the nation’s resources of oil and minerals exploration has come to a standstill and sales contracts have been switched by the Japanese to Brazil and Swaziland.

The latest coup in the Labor Government's favourite sport of political infighting is the announced decision that the 500 scientists and other staff from the C.S.I.R.O. should be taken over by the Department of Minerals & Energy.

The C.S.I.R.O. is one of the world's great scientific institutions.

Those divisions concerned with solar energy and minerals research are now to become political footballs under Mr. Connor's immediate and unpredictable control.

How is Mr. Connor able to exercise this sort of influence on Mr. Whitlam at the expense of Australia's mineral development, at the expense of Australia's reputation abroad, and at the expense of the Treasury and the C.S.I.R.O.
These are the questions that need to be answered, and by something better than the departmental enquiry which the Prime Minister is offering.

Nothing is more certain than that we are going to hear more about Mr. Connor's loan raising activities and those also of Dr. Cairns, and more about the Government's assault on the Treasury, the C.S.I.R.O. and the Public Service.