Johannah Bevis, 'No more labour for the knight: An overview of Sir Jack Egerton's leadership'

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Sir John (Jack) Alfred Roy Egerton was a formidable figure within the Queensland Labour Movement from the 1950s through to the 1970s. Better known as Jack Egerton, he is described by political historian, Ross Fitzgerald, as 'one of the most colourful and influential characters in the history of the Labor Party in Queensland'.[1] Egerton was an active member of the Queensland and Australian trade union and labour movement in various capacities; he became State Secretary of the Boilermakers Society in 1943, and then served in contemporaneous roles as President of the Queensland Trades and Labour Council (QTLC) from 1967 to 1976 and as President of the ALP Queensland Central Executive (QCE) from 1968 to 1976.[2] Yet his leadership in these roles has largely been overshadowed by the knighthood he received in the latter part of his career. Through his dual positions, Egerton increased the influence of the QTLC within the Queensland ALP, which gained him credibility and clout on a federal level as an ALP powerbroker. Over time he created a culture of leadership within the Queensland ALP that seemed unable to relate to an increasing diversity within its membership. Further, his career raised doubts over how much control an individual should accrue through simultaneous political positions. This paper first covers Egerton's notorious ennoblement, before briefly detailing his background growing up in rural Queensland and his early career as a boilermaker. It will then describe Egerton's initial rise in political power through the expulsion of Gair and the QTLC's power struggle with the Australian Worker's Union (AWU). The paper then goes on to discuss Egerton's involvement in federal politics through the ascent and decline of his relationship with Gough Whitlam. Finally, this paper analyses Egerton's leadership through interpretations of his colleagues as contained within the interviews on the 'Queensland Speaks' website.

Jack Egerton remains infamous largely for the knighthood which he accepted in the latter part of his career. Obituaries published after his death in 1998 make little mention of his expansive career in the labour movement, instead choosing to focus on the controversy that surrounded his title.[3] In 1976, Egerton had long held powerful positions within the labour movement as Senior Vice-President of the ALP Federal Executive, as well as President of the Queensland QTLC and the

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[1] Gil Breitkreutz, "Jumping Jack takes knighthood secret to the grave", *Australian Associated Press*, 22 December 1998.
[2] J. S. Legge, ed., *Who's who in Australia* (Melbourne: The Herald and Weekly Times Ltd., 1971), 309.; Kerith Cadman, ed., *Who's who in Australia* (Melbourne: The Herald and Weekly Times Ltd., 1988), 289.
[3] Malcolm Farr, "Curse of a royal dalliance went to the grave", *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 22 December 1998; Breitkreutz, "Jumping Jack takes knighthood secret to the grave".

Queensland Labor Party's QCE. The honour was suggested by the Queensland Bjelke-Petersen government in order 'to manufacture problems within Labor ranks'.[4] It was later awarded by Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser 'in recognition of service to the government and trade unions'.[5] Fraser had only just been appointed Prime Minister in the previous year, following the dismissal of Whitlam, his ALP predecessor.[6] On 12 June 1976, the title was bestowed by Sir John Kerr, the same governor-general who had sacked Whitlam.[7] Whilst Bjelke-Petersen's motive may have been to destabilise the Queensland union movement, it seems that Fraser had chosen to twist the knife a little further by knighting Whitlam's once staunch ally.

Many within the ALP were stunned by Egerton's acceptance of the knighthood, unable to understand why Egerton went against the rules of the Labor Party.[8] Egerton, three day after he received the honours, claimed that he was 'surprised' at the criticisms levelled against him, stating 'I know of no ALP rule I have broken – I don't know what I am being accused of'.[9] His acceptance of the honour had been perceived by those within the ALP and its affiliated unions as a betrayal in the wake of Whitlam's dismissal. Furthermore, the knighthood was seen as an imperial legacy which had been replaced by Whitlam with the Order of Australia Medal. Whitlam, incensed by the matter, called it 'the most extraordinary ennoblement since Sir Toby Belch'.[10] Others called Egerton 'Jumping Jack' and a 'Labor Rat'.[11] Shortly after, Egerton was stripped of his leadership positions within the labour movement. He was banished from the ALP and his life membership cancelled. Egerton, still believing that he had 'broke no rules of either the trade union movement or the Labor Party', apparently fought to be reinstated to the party right up until his death in 1998.[12] Although his wife, Lady Moya Egerton, was later allowed to re-join, Egerton was unsuccessful in his campaign to return.[13] Despite its consequences, Egerton's knighthood demonstrated how far he had come from his origins within country Queensland.

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[4] David Solomon, "Annual release of Cabinet Minutes: Background to the 1976 Cabinet Minutes", 1 January 2007, http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/Researchers/CommsDownloads/Documents/1976CabinetMinutesBackground.pdf; Rob Chalmers, quoted in Sam Vincent and John Wanna, eds., *Inside the Canberra press gallery : life in the wedding cake of Old Parliament House* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2011), 102-3.

[5] *The Age* (Melbourne), 15 June 1976; Australian Government, "It's an honour", accessed 8 January 2013, http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honour_roll/search.cfm?aus_award_id=1083465&search_type=quick&showInd= true.

[6] Farr, "Curse of a royal dalliance went to the grave"; Breitkreutz, "Jumping Jack takes knighthood secret to the grave".

[7] *The Age* (Melbourne), 15 June 1976.

[8] Farr, "Curse of a royal dalliance went to the grave"; "Political chronicles – Queensland", *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 22, no. 3 (1976): 415.

[9] *The Age* (Melbourne), 15 June 1976.

[10] Mungo MacCullum, "Rudd making the best of available talent", Crikey, 21 September 2009, http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/09/21/mungo-rudd-making-the-best-of-the-available-talent/.

[11] Farr, "Curse of a royal dalliance went to the grave".

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.; Breitkreutz, "Jumping Jack takes knighthood secret to the grave".

Originally from a rural working-class background, Egerton later became an embodiment of the close partnership that existed between the union movement and the ALP during his lifetime. Egerton was born in Rockhampton on 11 March, 1918. His father worked as a grazier up until the 1930s Depression, which forced Egerton's family to move from the farm.[14] Egerton then began working as a boilermaker, taking up his apprenticeship in the shipyards.[15] It was here that he became involved with unionism, by taking up a position as Secretary of the Shipyard Shop Committee.[16] Egerton later progressed into the role of Queensland State Secretary of the Boilermaker's Society in 1943.[17] He worked up the ranks of the QTLC and became its President in 1957. He also served as President of the ALP's controlling body, the QCE, from 1968. Towards the peak of his career, Egerton served in concurrent executive positions within the QTLC, the QCE of the ALP and also as Vice-President of the Federal ALP. These roles meant that Egerton wielded enormous influence over party direction within the ALP. Yet, it was in his earlier career that he established this ability, through the expulsion of the Queensland Labor Premier Vince Gair in 1957, and the factional disputes which followed Gair's removal.

Preceding Gair's expulsion, a campaign to introduce three weeks' annual leave entitlements for all Queensland workers had been a long running crusade for the Queensland union movement. The issue was first mentioned at the 1953 Labor-in-Politics convention, yet it became more imperative to the Queensland labour movement in the lead-up to 1957.[18] In these four years, Gair was lobbied on multiple occasions to legislate for the entitlement, yet he remained reticent about whether he would introduce it in Parliament.[19] Finally, a motion was passed to legislate for the leave at the 1956 Labor-in-Politics convention, which was further amended to enforce enactment of the legislation by 1 January 1957.[20] Egerton remarked at the convention that 'the time for logic has passed', signifying the union movement's exasperation with Gair's refusal to act on the issue.[21] The motion was passed with seventy-five votes in its favour from the 134 delegates in attendance, which bound ALP members and electoral candidates to comply with the directive to support and introduce the leave entitlement.[22] Gair argued that his agreement to introduce it had been made on the proviso that

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[14] Mark Day, "Sir John Egerton (Interview)", *Australian Penthouse,* November 1979, 129.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.; Legge, ed., *Who's who in Australia*, 309.; Cadman, ed., *Who's who in Australia*, 289.

[18] Denis Murphy, "The 1957 split: 'A drop in the ocean in political history'", in *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*, eds. D. J. Murphy, R. B. Joyce and C. A Hughes (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980), 494; see also Manfred Cross, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/manfred-cross, 13 December 2010.

[19] Murphy, "The 1957 split", 498-9.

[20] Ibid., 500-2.

[21] Ross Fitzgerald and Harold Thornton, "The house that Jack built, 1957 to 1977," in *Labor in Queensland: from the 1880s to 1988* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989), 148.

[22] Ibid.

economic circumstances had to be stable within Queensland and that introducing the conditions would put jobs at risk.[23] When parliament reconvened, there was no mention of the leave provisions by Gair, which led to anger amongst the unions over his reluctance to adhere to the policy directive.

Whilst the disagreement over leave entitlement had not been the only factor causing tension between the unions and the Premier, the AWU and QTLC were bitterly disappointed that Gair had backed out. The AWU had been disaffiliated from the QTLC since 1939, yet the encounter with Gair as antagonist and further industrial unrest as a result of the 1956 Shearer's Strike led Egerton to cautiously re-associate the QTLC with the AWU, through an alliance brokered with Joe Bukowski, the AWU President.[24] This resulted in the AWU temporarily re-affiliating to the QTLC in 1956.[25] Together, Egerton and Bukowski believed that by not implementing the leave conditions, Gair had betrayed the ALP's stance on the issue and this exacerbated the 'Gair must go' campaign being undertaken by the union movement.[26] Manfred Cross recounts that Egerton 'commanded the numbers' in Gair's expulsion, with Egerton claiming at a Trades Hall meeting that 'Gair was never a Labor man… Queensland was a Labor state and that we should get it over with'.[27] Similarly, when Egerton was warned over the possible consequences of moving to dismiss Gair, he stated: 'We haven't got a Labor government now. They are only masqueraders and the Tories couldn't be any worse'.[28] A vote was taken, and although it was narrow, Gair did not withstand the motion to dismiss him. Following his expulsion, Gair created what was known as the Queensland Labor Party (QLP). As a result of Gair's dismissal, some parliamentary members of the ALP joined Gair's QLP, whilst others stayed as members of the ALP. The split left the ALP in ruins.

Although the AWU had re-affiliated to the QTLC, this tentative treaty between them faltered after Gair was ousted. The AWU disaffiliated from the QTLC in early 1958, and then from the ALP in 1959 after QTLC aligned ALP members voted to remove Bukowski from his post as QCE President.[29] Historically, prior to Egerton's leadership, there had been QTLC opposition to the alliance between the ALP and AWU, as unions who were represented by the QTLC felt excluded from the

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[23] Ibid., 147; Murphy, "The 1957 split", 508; Manfred Cross, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/manfred-cross, 13 December 2010.

[24] Murphy, "The 1957 split", 508; Fitzgerald and Thornton, "The house that Jack built", 144, 146.

[25] Wayne Swan, "Factionalism: the case of Queensland Labor 1959-1966" (Honours thesis, University of Queensland, 1975); Ross Fitzgerald, Lyndon Megarrity and David Symons, *Made in Queensland: a new history* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2009), 208.

[26] Raymond Evans, *A history of Queensland* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 209.

[27] Manfred Cross, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/manfred-cross, 13 December 2010.

[28] Murphy, "The 1957 split", 510.

[29] Swan, "Factionalism", 15, 24; Simon Fry, John Shields and Bradon Ellem, "The industrial and political role of the Trades and Labour Council of Queensland since 1922: a reassessment", in *Peak unions in Australia: origins, purpose, power, agency*, eds. Bradon Ellem, Raymond Markey and John Shields (Annandale: Federation Press, 2004), 104.

partnership.[30] The AWU and QTLC relationship has also been fraught due to their differing approach to industrial disputes, as well as their rivalry over membership and power within the ALP. In his honours thesis, Wayne Swan describes the AWU as having a 'moderate' approach to industrial relations, preferring arbitration over the 'militant' approach of the QTLC,[31] which was supportive of direct industrial actions such as striking. This 'militant approach', as well the QTLC's tolerance of communist affiliations within the body and opposition to any external interference within union affairs, placed it on the 'left' end of the political spectrum in comparison with the AWU on the 'right'.[32] The differences between the AWU and QTLC led to a long-held grudge; Egerton was still hostile towards the AWU during his interview with Swan on 2 September 1975:

> As far back as the 1890s, the AWU has played the role of the big arrogant union. It
> treated other unions with scant respect. They used to join the movement when it
> was advantageous and pull out when it wasn't.[33]

However, from the split and AWU rivalry, Egerton was able to gain a stronghold within the union movement and within the ALP itself. Describing Egerton's lack of 'political acumen' prior to the split, Bert Milliner, an ALP Senator and unionist, commented to Murphy, that 'the only weapon [Egerton] knew how to use was the blunt end of an axe and he used it'.[34] Whilst Egerton had been relatively inexperienced in political power brokerage prior to Gair's expulsion, he became known for his skills as a union organiser, 'negotiating deals with various regional and ideological groupings so as to secure majorities on key agenda items before party forums'.[35] The QCE itself was dominated by a faction of ALP-aligned members of the QTLC known as the Old Guard, led by Egerton.[36] Mike Reynolds described Egerton leading the Old Guard 'alongside people like Bart Lorrigan, Fred Whitby, Neil Cane and other organisers within the ETU [Electrical Trades Union]… [They] were part of the old QCE mob, they ruled the roost and they were a very strong group of people'.[37] Yet, the power and influence of the 'Old Guard' within the party proved to be the ALP's political soft spot for the ruling Country Party throughout the 1960s. In 1963, Premier Frank Nicklin, leader of the Country Party, named Egerton 'the Big Boss, the would-be Kingmaker of Queensland Labor Politics'.[38] Colin Hughes, who discusses the ALP's struggle to rebuild its image following the 1957 split, points out that Egerton

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[30] Fry, Shields and Ellem, "The industrial and political role", 103-4.
[31] Ibid., 59.
[32] Ibid., 2, 59.
[33] Swan, "Factionalism", 13-4.
[34] Murphy, "The 1957 split", 496.
[35] Fitzgerald and Thornton, "The house that Jack built", 150.
[36] Fry, Shields and Ellem, "The industrial and political role", 106.
[37] Mike Reynolds, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/mike-reynolds, 1 August 2011.
[38] Colin Hughes, *Images and issues: the Queensland state elections of 1963 and 1966* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1969), 43.

was disparaged as a powerbroker working behind the scenes of the parliamentary wing of the ALP and that by voting Labor, ALP supporters would be voting for the leadership of the Trades Hall rather than for ALP representatives.[39] Egerton had become a leading figure within the party, revered for his ability to act as a powerbroker between different sections of the membership, yet this was also a target for the ALP's political rivals as Egerton's dual executive positions within the QTLC and QCE demonstrated union influence over the ALP.

As his powerbase within the Queensland ALP grew, Egerton became more involved with federal politics. Egerton assisted in Whitlam's rise to power through supporting Whitlam at a time where he neared expulsion from the ALP. Whitlam had spoken in support of providing funding to Catholic Schools to twelve delegates at an ALP Federal Executive meeting on 8 February 1966, which had been a popular policy platform during the Liberal Party's electoral campaign in 1963, yet the Federal Executive did not agree with him, arguing that it contravened Section 116 of the Constitution of Australia.[40] In a television interview which followed, Whitlam stated that 'I can only say we've gotten rid of the 36 faceless men stigma to be faced with the 12 witless men'.[41] Joe Chamberlain, who was part of the Federal Executive, sought to have him ousted from the ALP through an emergency meeting of the Executive.[42] Whitlam's office caught word of the matter from a political ally and decided to call Egerton for support.[43] Egerton made it clear to the two Queensland delegates attending the meeting that they were not to vote in favour of expelling Whitlam and as a result, Whitlam narrowly endured the expulsion by one vote.[44] Mark Day, who interviewed Egerton, commented on their alliance as 'surprising, given the nature of the men… Egerton knew and understood the basic elements of power and believed that Whitlam was a man who could lead Labor into government'.[45] It seemed that Egerton's intervention had encouraged trust between them.

In the years following Whitlam becoming Prime Minister, various newspapers reported on the friendship between the two men.[46] Lunn went so far as to call Egerton 'Whitlam's right-hand man in Queensland'. It can be conceded that his rapport with Whitlam had some perks for Egerton. Following Whitlam's federal victory for the ALP in 1972, Egerton famously exulted: 'And to the victors, the spoils', as he went onto serve on the board of directors for QANTAS, publicly owned at

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[39] Ibid., 40-57.

[40] Chalmers, *Inside the Canberra press gallery*, 102-3, 108-10.

[41] Referring to the '36 faceless men' comment made by Robert Menzies in a controversy which had beset Whitlam three years earlier, in which he was accused of being obliged to the decisions made by the Federal Executive. Following this controversy, Whitlam led a campaign in which the Executive was reformed to include only twelve delegates, in order to be more electorally responsive.

[42] Chalmers, *Inside the Canberra press gallery*, 102-3.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Day, "Sir John Egerton (Interview)", 129.

[46] *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 20 November 1974.

the time.[47] Manfred Cross described his role on the board as being enormously helpful to the Whitlam government in a time where there were a number of industrial disputes.[48] At the same time, it has been suggested that the position also provided Egerton with various perks, leading some commentators to question whether the appointment was an example of 'jobs for the boys'.[49] Despite this, it did not take Egerton long to raise doubts over Whitlam's leadership.

Egerton seemed critical over Whitlam's ability to appeal to voters within Queensland. Whilst the ALP had been successful in returning to government following the May 1974 double-dissolution election, the vote had swung against the ALP by 3.4% in Queensland, whereas it had remained relatively stable throughout the rest of Australia. Preceding the election, the Queensland state government, led by National Party Premier Bjelke-Petersen, was critical of the Whitlam government over what was perceived as 'centralist' policies originating from Canberra.[50] Bjelke-Petersen interfered with Whitlam's plan to gain majority control over the Senate, known as the 'Gair affair', thwarting an ALP attempt to secure the supply of Bills through the upper house.[51] These events caused Whitlam to call for the double dissolution election. Egerton, commenting on the result, explained 'A big percentage of Queensland voters have country origins, including myself, and Labor's policies were not going over very well with the country interests'.[52] Egerton reiterated his sentiment in a later interview, stating that 'One thing most Australians don't appreciate – and most certainly Federal politicians – is that Queensland is more agriculturally related than any other State'.[53] Given the tension between Whitlam and Bjelke-Petersen, it can be surmised that Whitlam probably did not appreciate Egerton echoing National Party sentiments.

Yet, Egerton's own leadership is not immune to criticism. Under QTLC leadership of the QCE, many voiced concerns about representation within the ALP Queensland branch. Jim Fouras, a retired Labor state politician, recounts an incident where he raised concerns in a letter to the Federal Executive, stating that he and other members of the Garden City branch felt that the Labor Party was not being representative by reaching across to enough groups in society. Fouras claimed that Egerton pulled him aside and told him that if he sent another letter like it that he would be out of the Labor Party.[54] It seemed that the QTLC-led QCE were unable to accommodate the diversity of members joining the ranks of the Labor party. Wilf Ardill claimed it was very difficult to provide a different point of view

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[47] MacCullum, "Rudd making the best of available talent".
[48] Manfred Cross, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/manfred-cross, 13 December 2010.
[49] MacCullum, "Rudd making the best of available talent".
[50] "Political chronicles – Queensland," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 22, no. 1 (1976): 97.
[51] Hugh Lunn, *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: a political biography* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1987), 171- 80.
[52] Ibid., 178.
[53] Day, "Sir John Egerton (Interview)", 130.
[54] Jim Fouras, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/jim-fouras, 25 July 2011.

to Egerton.[55] Peter Beattie, at the time a rank-and-file member of the ALP, believed, in the lead up to the December 1977 Federal election, that the decreasing popularity of the ALP within Queensland was due to the 'small clique of ageing union bosses' within the QCE, of which Egerton had been leading for a considerable period until his expulsion from the party.[56] The ALP had decreased its first preference vote in Queensland from 38.76% in 1975 to 37.70% in 1977.[57] Beattie felt that Queensland's contribution to the defeats stemmed from the lack of representation and reception provided to newer groups joining the party such as 'women, white-collar unionists, small businesspeople, lawyers and academics'.[58] Beattie believed these groups were becoming part of the ALP 'at a faster rate than the blue-collar unionists and their representatives around which party administration had been centred'.[59] As is also reflected in Rob Whiddon's interview, himself a proponent of internal reform within the Queensland branch, the QCE had been 'resistant to change' in the membership and this became a leading factor in the call for reform of the Queensland Branch of the ALP in later years.[60] Egerton had created a culture within the QCE that seemed unwilling to accept that the ALP was beginning to appeal to groups that were outside its traditional working class membership.

Furthermore, Egerton's leadership also raised concerns about the amount of power an individual should accrue in party leadership positions. It was not in the interest of the party to have the same head of the party and the same head of the trades' union movement. Mike Reynolds, a Labor state politician, described Egerton as 'the union and the labor stalwart, they were synonymous. To be a strong union leader, you were also the strong Labor leader'.[61] In a similar vein, Bill Hayden commented that 'Jack Egerton knew how to wield power because he was not only head of the party, but he was head of the Trades Union movement at the same time'.[62] Ian McLean described Egerton's leadership as 'strong. He had his friends… He was loyal to his own group and they were pretty effective… The security of the [ALP] was paramount to them'.[63] Yet it seems that Egerton would often tip the power balance too far in his favour. Reynolds further explained that Egerton 'was seen as a real standover merchant… who would bully his way to what he thought was right for the party. What Jack Egerton said, what his ruling was, was never really questioned until the

[55] Wilf Ardill, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/wilf-ardill, 16 May 2011.

[56] Peter Beattie, with Brian Stevenson, *In the arena: memories of an A.L.P. state secretary in Queensland* (Brisbane: Boolarong Publications, 1990), 12-3; see also Paul Reynolds, *Lock, stock & barrel: a political biography of Mike Ahern* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2002), 20.

[57] The University of Western Australia, "Australian Politics and Elections Database", accessed 24 February 2013, http://elections.uwa.edu.au/electionsearch.lasso.

[58] Beattie, *In the arena*, 14.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Rob Whiddon, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/rob-whiddon, 11 September 2011.

[61] Mike Reynolds, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/mike-reynolds, 1 August 2011.

[62] Bill Hayden, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/bill-hayden, 1 April 2011.

[63] Ian McLean, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/ian-mclean, 2 July 2011.

intervention period'[64] – which did not occur until 1979-80. Hughie Williams, retired Queensland Secretary of the Transport Workers' Union, described the following:

> Jack was very autocratic about it all… He controlled the Party. He was the boss of the Party. He was everything within the Party. I think everybody else was extremely weak and I could use the term quite gutless. Jack Egerton was a very powerful person; extremely clever… he had absolute total control. In fact, he was a control freak. And not only was he a control freak but the people he had control over were just weak. Nobody stood up to Jack Egerton.[65]

Egerton was a powerful and persuasive personality within Queensland Labour history. After receiving the knighthood, it seems many within the ALP chose to devalue Egerton's role within Queensland state and federal politics. Why Egerton agreed to be knighted by the same Governor-General who dismissed Whitlam, a year after the event, is bewildering. Yet, as controversial as the ennoblement was, Egerton still is an important figure within Queensland and Australian political history. His career provides an example of the historic association between ALP and the union movement. After the four years of frustration unions experienced under Gair in their endeavour to introduce three weeks' leave for all Queensland workers, Egerton successfully negotiated an alliance with the QTLC's historical nemesis, the AWU. Through this cooperation, Egerton was able to negotiate the numbers necessary to expel Gair from the ALP, which split the party. After the split, the QTLC and AWU returned to their former relation as rivals. As the QTLC ascended in power with Egerton as its president, he was able to seize control of the QCE from the AWU and consolidate his power as a factional leader of the Old Guard. From this foundation, Egerton played a role in federal politics. Egerton was amicable with Gough Whitlam and rewarded for this friendship once Whitlam became Prime Minister. Yet, always outspoken, he began to criticise the Whitlam government due to a perception that its policies were ignoring Queensland's rural focus. At the same time, Egerton's own leadership of the Queensland branch of the ALP led to a culture that excluded minority groups from being adequately represented within the party. His leadership also raised concerns about the amount of power an individual should amass through multiple political roles, particularly as he has been described as having an autocratic style of management. Whilst his career has been obscured by his acceptance of the knighthood, Egerton's role within the labour movement was an interesting one;

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[64] Mike Reynolds, "Queensland Speaks", http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au/mike-reynolds, 1 August 2011; see also Fry, Shields and Ellem, "The industrial and political role", 106.

[65] Hughie Williams, "Hughie Williams interviewed by Lindsay Marshall in the 'Decades of Division' oral history project" (Don Dunstan Foundation Queensland Chapter and National Library of Australia, 2009), recording, http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn4732289.

as he played such a central role, his career provides an insight into the overlap between unions and the ALP, as well as the wider political context of Queensland and Australia from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. Yet, at the same time, Egerton's career also demonstrates the risk of putting too much control into the hands of one leader.

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