

Pre-tremors of a political earthquake



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Lead Editorial

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The 6 February decision in the Senate to delay the report-back of the Senate inquiry into the government's cash ban bill until 28 February was a break point in the battle to stop politicians rubberstamping the policies of the international banking mafia to put banks ahead of people in the oncoming financial crisis. That breakthrough has been followed by more signs of a dramatic shift ahead. There has been a sudden spate of media coverage and indications from within the major political parties that MPs may break from the pack when it comes to crunch time. The question is, will the government be forced to withdraw its own bill in order to avoid such a showdown?

An escalation of the campaign over the next two weeks can make that happen. The opposition of all crossbench Senators is almost certain; the Greens have announced their opposition, declaring the bill "a case of the cure being worse than the disease"; and there is a rebellion under way within the National Party, testing the seams of the Coalition government.

Last week Barnaby Joyce failed in his challenge for leadership of Coalition partner the Nationals, which would have restored him to the position of Deputy Prime Minister. Neither he nor any of his supporters received cabinet posts after the shakeup, and Joyce warned that he and other Nationals are willing to cross the floor to block government legislation. This includes Queensland Senator Matt Canavan, who quit his role as resources minister to back Joyce. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in an 8 February article on the cash ban, "Coalition MPs including Russell Broadbent, Barnaby Joyce, George Christensen and Patrick Conaghan spoke against the bill in a party room meeting last September."

Further revealing the fragility of the government, the MP who moved Joyce's spill motion against Nationals leader Michael McCormack, Llew O'Brien, quit the party, though he continues to caucus as



'Antithetical to our Liberal principles': MPs move to prevent \$10,000 cash ban
smh.com.au

ALP Senator Kimberley Kitching's provocative tweet was widely circulated.

part of the governing Coalition, preserving—for the moment—its two-seat majority. O'Brien was then installed as deputy Speaker of the House, as Labor and National MPs overrode the government's choice.

Add to this picture dissent spilling over within the ALP. Many Senators are telling constituents they will oppose the cash ban. During the 30 January Senate hearings Labor Senator Kimberley Kitching made her opposition clear, having taken over from Senator Alex Gallacher who had set an excellent trajectory for a thorough probe of the bill in the December hearing. To stir the pot, she picked up on the grassroots opposition within Liberal party ranks, typified by the motion to stop the cash ban which was overwhelmingly passed at the Victorian State Council meeting last November.

Spelling potential doom for her future in the party (which was only assured by the personal intervention of the Prime Minister during the last preselection contest), at a 7 February gathering of the same Victorian Liberals, Senator for the banks Jane Hume dismissed concerns about the cash ban bill, saying there is a "tin foil hat" campaign spreading misinformation.

"Ministers are facing a torrent of criticism from Liberal and Nationals MPs as well as party members who believe the crackdown on cash is a breach of the government's stated belief in the free market", reported *SMH*, warning the bill could be vetoed in the Senate, "unless the government acts on demands from its own MPs to abandon the reform or send it back to department officials for extensive changes".

Some Liberal MPs are actively lobbying against the bill, one declaring that it had "been orphaned", i.e., nobody wants to claim it. *SMH* reported that Assistant Treasurer Michael Sukkar, who is in charge of the bill, has privately criticised it, having inherited the proposal from the previous Parliament.

Keep the heat on your MPs: this bill can be crushed, setting the stage for major policy changes!

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