

Mundine Move Shows Parties Gulf

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As someone who's been approached to run for parliament, most recently in Mallee and Higgins, I know what a big step it is: to put yourself forward, for acceptance or rejection, by 100,000 of your fellow Australians. It comes with personal sacrifices; almost always financial and for many, relationships suffer.

Plus, there's the usual privacy intrusions, commitment to party discipline, long hours and relentless internal machinations, usually the game of those with the least ability against those with the most.

Hardly sounds enticing does it? You've got to wonder why anyone would do it.

Because, if you care about where our country is headed, politics is still the best way to make a difference. For all the reasons not to run, that's still the best and only reason to stand.

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This week we had a substantial figure in our public life, Warren Mundine, one of our most significant Aboriginal leaders — as well as a former national president of the Labor Party — not just join the Liberal Party but commit to running in one of the nation's most marginal seats he's no sure thing to win.



Prime Minister Scott Morrison with Liberal candidate for Gilmore and former Labor Party boss Warren Mundine. Picture: Jonathan Ng

Along the way, Mundine delivered a devastating indictment of the party that had been in his DNA for decades. Labor, he said, is no longer the party of the worker. Morrison's Liberal Party, he said, could relate to everyone in a way that Shorten's Labor no longer could.

MORE FROM PETA CREDLIN: Banks betrayed real Liberals who helped her win seat

The fact that a deeply thoughtful and widely respected indigenous man had come to this conclusion, despite his long Labor pedigree, should be a seismic moment in our public life highlighting how far Labor has moved from being the party of the working class, to the party of the welfare or government class.

Instead, the immediate attention of the media focused on the cack-handed way the former Liberal candidate was replaced and the unhappiness of local branch members. Instead of Mundine's move signifying just how much the coming election matters, it's been treated as further evidence of Liberal chaos.

It's a classic case of missing the wood for the trees. Sure, the former candidate should have been managed better. It was an own-goal of administrative stuff-up that detracted from Mundine's announcement. And yes, instead of just strongarming state executive, factional boss Alex Hawke should have gone to Gilmore to take the local Liberal leadership into the PM's confidence because rank and file members who stand on the booths and put in the volunteer hours deserve to be treated better.

However, when it comes to politics Hawke's not the sharpest tool in the shed, and none of this would surprise anyone who's had much to do with the NSW Liberals in recent times. But putting this all to one side, what really matters is that a strong and articulate Aboriginal man coming from the wrong side of the tracks thinks that the Liberal Party is now best for people who want to see reward for effort.

Labor ad targets Warren Mundine

If you're a Labor voter who works hard to stay off welfare and who's proud of Australia even though some people have more than you — yet a bloke like Warren Mundine says that the Libs actually are a better bet than Labor — then maybe it's time to reconsider your allegiance to a grievance-riddled, identity obsessed, green-look-alike Labor Party.

Already, Mundine has shown that he's not just another cardboard cut-out politician. On his first day as the Liberal candidate he's talked about the need to consider nuclear power as the only currently feasible way to keep the lights on with zero CO2 emissions.

Labor, of course, is masking its embarrassment at the defection of its former national president by claiming that Mundine wants a nuclear reactor at Jervis Bay. In other words, it's just tawdry politics as usual.

As you know, I've been a critic of the current government for not being sufficiently different from Labor, whether that's been rolling PMs or pandering to the green lobby by destroying Australia's energy advantage.

But for all the government's mistakes, Mundine's move highlights the gulf that still remains between the two big parties. Labor's instinct is always for more spending, more regulating and more taxing, especially on anyone who works hard to get ahead.

For all its self-inflicted wounds and policy timidity, on the things that most matter, the government has steadily and competently made the country more secure and more prosperous because it hasn't succumbed to leftist ideology and the notion that government always knows best.

If that's what Warren Mundine thinks, maybe — just maybe — voters might be starting to wake up to it too.