

Cain leads his troops into the fray

It is a long time since the Premier, Mr Cain, has looked and sounded so confident.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the problems his Government has faced in recent times with the Builders' Laborers Federation, the dairy farmers, petrol shortages and train stoppages, Mr Cain clearly believes it when he says: "We will win Nunawading Province."

"We are running a good campaign. We are running a good government, taking the tough decisions and the right decisions. The place is vibrant, the atmosphere is good and it is infectious," he said.

There is no doubt that Mr Cain is more relaxed and sure of himself than he was during the general election campaign last March when he was accused of hiding in his "bunker" at Treasury Place.

Mr Cain still insists the March campaign was run well by the ALP but this time a new, more aggressive Mr Cain has emerged.

Not only has he attacked the Opposition Leader, Mr Kennett, in the way some of his colleagues wanted him to in March, but Mr Cain has also been much more aggressive with those he considers are hindering his Government, whether they come from outside or inside his party.

"I feel confident and pleased that we have been given a four-year term and I think I am becoming more aware that to go on governing well you have to go on kicking heads," Mr Cain said.

Around Spring Street it would be generally assumed that the heads Mr Cain was referring to were those of the BLF general secretary, Mr Norm Gallagher, sections of the ALP machine that tried to tell the Government how to deal with Mr Gallagher, rebel dairy farmers who were threatened with marketing de-regulation and, of course, Mr Kennett.

But yesterday Mr Cain was not naming the heads that had to be kicked.

"Just heads generally," he said. "It is becoming more difficult to govern and governments are all the more expected to take tough decisions."

"Governments which do nothing get less flak. I've done the head-kicking fairly judiciously over the past few years. I don't do it indiscriminately, only where it is required," he said.



Yesterday he was making no apologies for his attacks on Mr Kennett.

"Jeff Kennett's advisers have claimed I made personal attacks on Mr Kennett but they were not personal attacks, they were statements of fact," he said.

"It is vital for the Government to win control of the upper house to be able to deliver the mandate it was given in March."

"Jeff Kennett talks about an upper house safeguard but he is not fitted to be a safeguard of anything. The erratic and unstable things he says and does show he is not the sort of person who should be given power."

"I feel confident and pleased that we have been given a four-year term and I think I am becoming more aware that to go on governing well you have to go on kicking heads."

"That is not a personal attack, it is the truth. The statements he has made about fascists and death squads and all of that are on the record. Anybody who goes on with that sort of stuff just to get a headline is not to be trusted."

Over recent days some Labor Party supporters have been saying it would not be the end of the world if the ALP did lose Nunawading: the Government itself was not at risk and the ALP would be in power for another three-and-a-half years.

That is not a view shared by Mr Cain. "It is important that we win a majority in the upper house. I would be very disappointed if we did not win because it would cut right across our capacity to deliv-



Mr Cain: "The place is vibrant, the atmosphere is good and it is infectious."

Picture: DAVID JOHNS



Mr Kennett takes a break and an aside at the Government's tactics.

Picture: PETER SMITH



One-vote win would do, says Kennett

The Opposition Leader, Mr Kennett, took a rare break from campaigning in Nunawading Province yesterday and declared that he was interested only in winning by one vote.

"All I am looking to do for the people of Victoria is get the seat. Any votes in excess of that one vote victory would be a bonus," he said.

"It is like being one number off in Tattsloot. Either you have the numbers or you haven't."

"It is vital that we win that seat to stop the Cain Government getting control of the upper house so we can give all of Victoria a safeguard against this Government."

Mr Kennett is convinced the Liberal Party will win the upper house seat by a safe margin but is taking nothing for granted.

"We planned our campaign a long time ago and it is running well. We have never said it would be easy. We always planned for a very tough campaign based very much on state and local issues," he said.

Part of that local campaign has been Mr Kennett's visits to a different railway station in the large electorate every morning.

By yesterday morning he calculated he had spoken to at least 15,000 voters on stations.

"That is well over 10 per cent of the electorate," he said. "I've been out there every day for three weeks whereas John Cain has been out there two or three times and the rest of his campaigning has been done from his bunker at Treasury Place."

So when Mr Kennett was talking about a one-vote victory he was clearly not making a prediction. He was replying to suggestions that the Nunawading Province is more than just a new election for Mr Kennett and is a critical test of his leadership of the Liberal Party.

Government strategists have been working hard on the theory that if Jeff Kennett cannot achieve the traditional four per cent byelection swing against the Government his days as leader are numbered.

They have also been working hard to make Mr Kennett an issue, and the Premier, Mr Cain, has been maintaining his charge that the Opposition Leader is not fit to have the responsibility of blocking government legislation in the upper house.

Mr Kennett has little doubt the Government is wrong about his leadership and is angry about what he says are the vindictive and malicious personal attacks. "This campaign is all about the

need for checks and balances on any government and yet the Labor Party has been running such a vindictive campaign against me that I am worried they are bringing a whole new dimension into campaigning," he said.

"The Government knows it cannot win this campaign by being positive and they know the only way they can win is by hitting Kennett."

"The Government knows it cannot win this campaign by being positive and they know the only way they can win is by hitting Kennett."

"I'm sad about it really. I was driving the kids to school this morning and on the car radio they heard Mr Cain going off his brain on the Schildberger program. They feel all that. They don't understand it but they hear this man being abusive."

Mr Kennett said the Government campaign against him could not be compared to his "blunder" in the last campaign, when he made his famous remark about not being able to

trust Mr Cain with your daughters.

"I used a throwaway line and immediately apologised when I saw it could be misinterpreted," he said.

"All it tells me is that this Government is in panic. There are going to be some almighty disturbances in the Labor Party after this election. They have managed to keep the lid on the problems so far but there is an enormous amount of anger in the ALP over the way Cain is running the Government."

In the meantime, Mr Kennett claims, the Government is trying to buy votes in Nunawading with promises of hospital beds and jobs for youth.

He dismissed suggestions that his leadership was at stake as something the Government and sections of the media had been trying to encourage since he was elected.

"Not once has there been a challenge to my position in almost three years. Any speculation has come from outside. I will continue to lead the party both in opposition and in government for as long as I see fit with the support of my colleagues," he said.