

Libs up to their own dirty tricks, says Labor

By TIM COLEBATCH

On Tuesday the Liberals complained about the Labor Party using 'dirty tricks' in the Nunawading election campaign. Yesterday Labor supporters accused them of using similar tactics themselves.

The accusations came from country Laborites who have received mass-produced letters from the Liberals' deputy leader, Mr Tom Austin, urging them to donate anything from \$25 to \$500 to help the Liberals win the by-election.

The letters, written in what could fairly be called emotive language, warn that "every facet of life is under siege (and) our democratic rights are at threat" unless Labor is defeated in the by-election, to be held on Saturday week. But they also:

- Could be read as implying that at the original Nunawading election the Labor Party was involved in such irregularities as "dead people" voting, others voting twice, and others again being refused votes because their names were not on the "role" (sic).

- Go on to state that it was because of these irregularities that the Supreme Court overturned the result and ordered a fresh election.

- Claim that Mr Cain has tried to introduce not only "savage death duties" but also "wealth taxes", and that "extremists in the Labor Party want to do away with the Upper House".

The letters, sent by Mr Austin to thousands of country Victorians, claim that the lucky dip which de-

cided the original Nunawading election "has cast enormous doubt over the future of our State".

"With one vote the Cain Government was given a *blank cheque to do as it pleases* with our lives, our jobs, our money, our schools, our laws, our democracy," Mr Austin said.

The letter claims that because of "irregularities... the Supreme Court of Victoria has overturned the ballot and ordered a new election in Nunawading."

In fact none of the three "irregularities" cited was found to have occurred in the 2 March election. In the 16-day Supreme Court hearing there was no suggestion that 'dead people' had voted, or that others had found their names wrongly excluded from the roll.

In fact the judge ordered a fresh ballot because he found 57 votes had been wrongly excluded because of errors by various electoral officials.

Further, the Cain Government has never introduced a wealth tax other than death duties — and it was the moderate Labor Unity faction, not the Socialist Left, that was behind its campaign to abolish the Legislative Council.

But the poor old facts always seem to come off second best in election campaigns. The Liberals had a valid complaint against Labor's appeal for voters to "Re-elect Bob Ives" — a misleading expression given that Mr Justice Starke found that original election to have been "absolutely void". But it seems that both sides are playing the same rules.