



LEADERSHIP IN AUSTRALIA

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Recently I was asked to answer three questions on Australian leadership and what it meant to me. To some it may come easy while to others it may evoke emotional responses of images and memories that are both positive and negative in nature, depending on one's life experiences.

Those who have experienced leadership may well scoff and guffaw at my poor attempts to describe and demonstrate what leadership is all about as they may well have had far greater opportunities than I and are better qualified to answer the three questions.

Still, despite my own personal life experiences of leadership, I must say that I have stood in awe of those who have been able to influence others to follow them in the wake of their footsteps, long after they have gone. This brief article is but a small testament and tribute to those leaders of a bygone era. Thank you for your guidance, mentoring and contributing to my development as an Australian. I welcome as many positive and constructive criticism that may well assist others in understanding the burden of command and leadership.

I also write this as a guide to those of Australian Lakonian origins in the hope that they understand what and how they too can contribute to the economic security, longevity and diverse society of ours without losing their cultural heritage. We must not be oblivious to the fact that we in Australia are changing and work harmoniously we must remain competitive living amongst our neighbours who they may be. Therefore, we must identify good leaders based on the values of a civilised society that can only bring prosperity and a uniqueness of who we are in this country we call home, Australia. Remember when leadership is thrust upon you, it is an honour, a privilege and with it comes much responsibility. The following responses are mine and mine alone and may not meet with everyone's approval and therefore constructive criticism is most welcome.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE UNIQUE FEATURES AND QUALITIES OF AUSTRALIAN LEADERSHIP? The attributes of leadership comes in many forms and disguises and yet I am of the opinion that leadership is a conglomeration of attributes that operate in harmony with one another. Leadership is serving and leading the people who place their faith in you and believe that you are the one to follow. The first thing that comes to mind is a string of positive characteristics that describe Australians, while at the same time describe what has been embedded within our psyche. Positive outlook on life, love, honesty, societal values, credibility, inspirational, fearless, selfishness, hope, accessibility, integrity, innovative, motivated, compassionate and faith are the top qualities in my view, qualities which may be ideal in some organisations and yet not be valued by others whose objectives are merely for profit rather than what is best for the nation.

WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES AUSTRALIANS SEEK FROM THEIR LEADERS? Given the parameters of Australian society, quality is a two edged sword that will depend upon the value one puts on each of the following: Honesty, credibility, inspirational, innovative, confident, integrity, compassionate, faith, skilled, courage and the ability to call upon others for support when required. Australians expect their leaders to do what is in the best interests of the nation using whatever tools they have at their disposal and should they fail, would prefer that they step down for another who can do the job. Such is the competitiveness of leadership and therefore no matter how inspirational a leader is, it is difficult to soar like an eagle when one is flying solo. Having said all of the above, we have leaders as captains of industry whose leadership attributes could well be translated into other fields of industry and/or practices that enhances the nation's ability to become competitive in today's ever evolving economies and uncertain future.

WHAT IS THE FINEST EXAMPLE OF AUSTRALIAN LEADERSHIP THAT YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED OR OBSERVED? A difficult question to answer when one has been mentored by the best of the best during my time as a young soldier. I can honestly state that a diverse group of Individuals who inspired me to never give up and reach my full potential would fit the bill. I could select from a number of field of life experiences ranging from early childhood, military, community, business and political fields. However at the age of 66, I must confess that I agonise in having to narrow the field down to one person.

The one man who has stood head and shoulders above all else has been Brigadier "Harry the Hat" Hammett. (Now deceased). Without a shadow of doubt, this man had the ability to command by the mere presence of his being and we who served with him, would have gone to hell and back. He was proactive at all times, making sure that the needs of his men were met and that the best form of entertainment that he and his Operations Officer "Wary" George Mansford (rose to the rank of Brigadier and still alive in Cairns, bless his heart) was the toughest training he could provide. Mind you this form of training was preparing for war and if you translate that into industries wishing to remain competitive, it would mean education, training and selecting the best people for the job.

"Harry the hat" Hammett, would not ask another to do a job that he himself was not capable of doing and would be seen with the men under his command during the rough and tumble of "murder ball", a hybrid of Gaelic football, soccer and grid iron. At other times you would see him running with a few hundred others around the area with aim of bonding with his men. In the jungles of North Queensland, "Harry the hat" Hammett would be seen visiting the men, with his Regimental Sargeant, and operations Officer, asking questions, seeing that they were being fed, had all the right equipment and up to date information as well as asking did the men know why they were there. On reflection one could say that he was a captain of industry observing and monitoring the status of his organisation and whether it was to survive in a competitive world. In our case we were being prepared for war and "Harry the hat" Hammett wanted to know whether we had reached our full potential.

After some two years, he left us for another position within defence but in our minds he had achieved his objectives and had left us in a better standard of readiness in that which he first arrived. That was his legacy he left behind. Over the years, he kept in touch with us young men, no matter where we were posted throughout the world we felt bonded to him. His inspirational alone was enough for us to follow and yet he gave us more tools to advance to a higher level that we ever thought possible and made us believe that we could soar like eagles.

When we heard of his death, it was not only a shock to the system, but we who had served with him carried on the legacy of leadership and the many examples that he demonstrated while alive. "Harry the hat" Hammett was one of many and even at the time of writing others are always in the wings that need their story of leadership to be told. I am humbled by the experience and yet feel exalted knowing that I served with him. "Harry the hat" Hammett could be translated into any of the captains of industry, fill any ambassadorial post, Government position, a political representative and at the same be seen to be involved with the Aussie battler.

As always, apologies to purists for my poor grammar and savagery of the English language. I wish you all well and hope that this article does not cause ambiguity in the minds of those who read it.



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