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# McMahon needs a punchline

COMMENT



GEOFFREY HUTTON

**T**HE Prime Minister's visit to Washington faces his gagmen with a testing assignment: to drag up a punch line which will rival those of his predecessors in office. They have a lot to beat.

When the late Mr. Holt received the Johnson embrace, he came up with the classic All the Way with LBJ. You would have to dig back a long way into history to find its equal.

John Grey Gorton, who was showing signs of nationalism, did his best to reassure the senior partner with his dinky-di Australian declaration of loyalty, "We'll come a-waltzing Matilda with you". It probably struck the right note, if the Americans knew what it meant.

I have given some thought to Mr. McMahon's problem. Somehow, I Want Sympathy seems rather spineless for a young and thrustful nation. Abide with Me is always sung at English cup-tie finals, but it is strictly for the losers. The darkness is not deepening yet.

Hand in Hand might do, but I prefer the suggestion of a notorious wit, who also draws pictures for this newspaper. It is Tiptoe Through the Tulips with Me. The accent falls on the final pronoun.

**L**OYAL supporters of the principle of monarchy, which has its uses, must have been embarrassed by the public display of sheer nonsense which has been going on at great expense in Persepolis.

One emperor, eight kings, three ruling princes, two crown princes, 13 presidents, 10 sheiks and two sultans have been living it up in the desert among the ruins of Persepolis to help the Shah celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Empire.

But after watching a documentary on the state of the Persian peasants a few days ago, this lavish anachronism seemed a very sick joke. It reminded me of a steel engraving of the Congress of Vienna—all crowns, helmets, jack-boots and decorations—which I knew in my childhood.

Sir Paul Hasluck looked a very ordinary figure, stumping along in his bowler, among the grandiose royals, but at least he had his job to do, and he did it. Even M. Pompidou, a commoner with pretensions to glory, was offended by the order of precedence which placed the Head of State in France behind some crowned non-entities.

If royalty hopes to survive much longer it should hide itself from the TV cameras. Scandinavian monarchs have hit on the smartest survival tactic — visit their friends on bicycles.

**T**HE experts have had their say, and done it well, but it seems impossible to write about the affairs of the day without reference to Robin Boyd, who should have lived for at least 20 more years to continue his work of opening our eyes to the mess we were making of our cities and prod us into evaluating the shoddy environment we were creating.

His work as an architect must be judged by others more competent. But *The Australian Ugliness*, published 11 years ago, seemed to me the most important book of its era, and I believe that it will become the Bible of the growing movement to improve the quality of life in Australia.

Politicians who were interested in growth rates took some years to recognise the importance of his doctrine, and the National Trust still lacks the teeth which makes it such a valuable force in Britain.

But city dwellers are interested in more than rates and sewers and traffic jams. As public opinion strengthens, the politicians will listen — they are beginning to listen already. It has been my privilege to enjoy Robin Boyd's friendship and I look forward to seeing his critical and progressive ideas accepted as part of the Australian way of life. This will be his finest memorial.