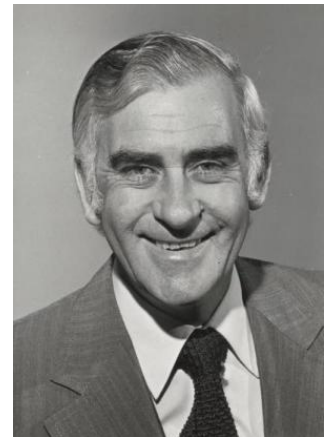


Sir Billy Mackie SNEDDEN KCMG QC

Leader of the Opposition 2 December 1972 to 21 March 1975

- Billy Snedden became the 18th Leader of the Opposition when the Coalition Government was defeated in the 1972 federal election by the Labor party led by Gough Whitlam.
- Member of the House of Representatives for Bruce (VIC) 1955-83.
- Attorney-General 1964 and Minister for Immigration 1966-69.
- Minister for Labour and National Service 1969-71, Treasurer 1971. He was elected Deputy Liberal Leader 1971.
- Replaced as Leader of the Opposition in 1975 by Malcolm Fraser.



As Opposition Leader

- Committed the Liberal Party to blocking supply bills in the Senate, resulting in the Whitlam Government going to the people at a double dissolution election on 18 May 1974.
- In the lead up to the election released the Opposition policy document *The Way Ahead*. This revised policy document removed implicit support for the White Australia Policy, softened the line on communism and addressed what were seen to be the new issues of the 1970s.
- Famously summed up the 1974 election result by saying: 'We were not defeated. We didn't win enough seats to form a government.'

Political life

- In February 1976 he became Speaker of the House of Representatives, and was knighted in 1978 during his term of office.
- First contested the Liberal Party leadership in 1967, after the death of Harold Holt.

Personal life

- Born 31 December 1926 in Perth, Western Australia. Died 27 June 1987 in Sydney.
- Educated at Highgate State Primary School, Perth Boys School and Perth Technical College, then the University of Western Australia completing a law degree in 1950.
- In March 1950 married Joy Forsyth. They had four children



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Life after politics

- Chairman of the board of Melbourne Football Club in 1981, and later director of the Victorian Football League.
- Director of dairy products company K.L. Ballantyne Proprietary Ltd, and board member of retail company Charles Davis Ltd in 1983.
- Director of Mercedes-Benz Australia in 1984, and also joined the board of Standard Charter Bank in London.
- Patron of the Professional Boxing Association of Australia.

Character

But he had never come across publicly as a forceful figure, and it was difficult to see him transforming the Liberal Party in the way Whitlam had whipped the Labor Party into electoral shape in opposition. Nor was it clear in which direction Snedden wanted to take the Liberal Party. Surprisingly, in view of the length of time he had been in public life, it was difficult to pin down his basic beliefs – except his constantly repeated assertion that individual enterprise must be rewarded.

Oakes, Laurie and Solomon, David, *Grab for Power: Election '74*, Cheshire Publishing Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1974

Did you know?

- He was the last Speaker of the House of Representatives to wear the full regalia of wig and robes.
- Snedden, when President of the Liberal Club at the University of Western Australia, first encountered Bob Hawke who was President of the ALP Club.
- His first attempt to enter federal politics was in 1949 when he was defeated by Kim Beazley Snr for the seat of Fremantle.
- He extended and refurbished the Speaker's suite at Parliament House.

Sources

Snedden, Billy Mackie and M. Bernie Schedvin, *Billy Snedden: An unlikely liberal*, Macmillan Australia Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1990.

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Further reading

Aitchison, Ray (ed), *Looking at the Liberals*, Cheshire Publishing, Melbourne, 1974.

Henderson, Gerard, *Menzies' child: the Liberal Party of Australia 1944-1994*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994.



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