

Bronwyn's plan: let them eat lunch

BY BRAD NORINGTON

It's a demanding business being Bronwyn Bishop. There are only so many hours in a day to share yourself around, telling the world about the political ambitions and philosophies that drive you.

So it was yesterday, as Senator Bishop gave a three-minute speech before the meal was served at an Artists for Life lunch in Sydney's Inter-Continental Hotel.

Art was important, she said, because it enriched people's lives. And endangered species should be protected so they did not become extinct.

But the Senator had no time to linger, enjoy lunch and hear her fellow speaker on the podium, Dame Leonie Kramer.

Instead, she raced off to another room on the same floor of the hotel. This was her main gig, a long speech to a luncheon of the Society of Senior Executives.

It was here that Senator Bishop laid down her political credentials. She told an enthusiastic audience about the power of individualism and, among other things, how Hitler and Stalin had changed her life.

Senator Bishop said she was 16 years old when she decided to become a politician. Her views, based on the idea that the individual was number one, had come from history.

"I saw from studying history that the system of governments that were in place - the rules that decided who was going to be calling the tune - decided how free individuals were," she said.

"The questions that interested me most were why did Germany throw up Hitler, why did Russia throw up Stalin, why did the United Kingdom throw up a system of power sharing, power devolution and freedom of the individual?"

The audience did not need to ask why Australia had thrown up Bronwyn Bishop. She told them.

It was a thing of the past, she said, that men could be ambitious but women could not. She did not agree with affirmative action but she did agree with merit.

"Each of us wants to have the opportunity to reach maximum potential, and that's really what drives me," Senator Bishop said.

Yet, she was coy when it came to discussing how far her ambitions ran. The Senator has a standard response for these questions: John Hewson is the Opposition Leader and, yes, she intends to move from the Senate to the House of Representatives before the next election.

Senator Bishop would not criticise Dr Hewson directly but she did say that the Liberal Party needed more policies of the heart, such as a safety net for people who could not provide for themselves. Again, it was the power of the individual at work.

"Compassion is part of understanding a philosophy that is dedicated to the individual," she said.

Senator Bishop might have missed lunch number one, but she was keen to join Dame Leonie afterwards for a quick photograph. Then it was a dash to her next engagement.



Senator Bishop, left, and Dame Leonie Kramer...
"Why did Germany throw up Hitler?"

Picture by GREG WHITE

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