

ENGLISH: LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

Brumby's Camps

Prior to the 2010 election, John Brumby's "Education for Life" program consisted of a 2-week camp experience which sparked heated debate. All three articles and cartoons featured in the Herald Sun over the week of his announcement ardently contend that his proposal is unwarranted and unnecessary. The editorial "We Need to Do more" (November 17 2010) puts forward the argument that Mr. Brumby's plans are a desperate plea to win votes and little detail has been provided. Following suit is Greg Kasarik's letter "Army no Dumping Ground" (November 18 2010), where he refutes Mr. Brumby's proposal to "send students to army bases", stressing that the Australian Army adheres to a strict code which should not be tarnished by troubled teens. The accompanying visual aid also downplays the "Education for Life" program, where Mark Knight (November 17 2010) satirically depicts Mr. Brumby's "boot-camps". All three articles adamantly reject Mr. Brumby's plans, manipulating concerned parents to oppose the scheme.

The Herald Sun's Editorial "We Need to Learn More" highlights that the crux of Mr. Brumby's proposal is "scant on detail". In order to outline the gratuitous nature of his plans, the editor utilizes a sarcastic medium, evident from phrases such as "looks like a winner". Because "looks like" could be interpreted to be mocking, readers could have evoked within them feelings of doubt at Mr. Brumby's announcement. This questioning tone is reiterated and further amplified as phrases such as "sounds like... might... looks like" are littered throughout the editorial. This is designed to denigrate Mr. Brumby's proposal and therefore undermine his credibility. More questions could be raised within readers towards the "Education for Life" program as the writer attempts to elicit readers to respond with outrage toward the proposal. The editor is skeptical at organizations such as "Country Fire Authority... Meals on Wheels", leaving the implication that they are of no benefit to school children, when their "2 weeks" would be more efficient spent "in the classroom". This could arouse slight hostile feelings, specifically in parents of school children, annoyed that the program is irrelevant and a waste of time.

Moreover, the Herald Sun discloses that the program will cost "\$208 million". This staggering figure in conjunction with "scant on detail" demonizes Mr. Brumby for not giving out information to the public when it will cost so much money. Since a majority of parents reading will be taxpayers, the appeal to the "hip pocket nerve" could make the readership oppose the program. In particular, "scant on detail" is evocative, since "scant" has the undertone that the detail being provided is miniscule, perhaps even non-existent. This could stimulate the audience into thinking that that Mr. Brumby has ulterior motives or is on a hidden agenda. The accompanying poster telling readers that the "election is 10 days to go" could introduce the notion that Mr. Brumby is proposing his plan so that he can win votes. This belief is affirmed as the editor urges Victorians to focus their attentions on how "Mr. Brumby... wrote to the Minister for Defense... for advice on his new proposal". The Herald Sun condescendingly undermines Mr. Brumby and discredits him for acting rashly and without aforethought.

Similarly, Greg Kasarik's authoritative and slightly venomous letter "Army no dumping Ground" condemns the idea of having year 9 students enroll into the Australian army. Kasarik's previous occupation of "former soldier" allows him to undermine the proposal without questioning from the audience since he has had previous experience within the defense force. Phrases such as "highly demanding selection...highly professional organization" depict that the Australian Defense Force (ADF) is an organization that adheres to a strict code of conduct and is of vital significance. Therefore he implies that Mr. Brumby's proposal of applying troubled youth into the army (in hopes of "fixing their behavioral problems") as illogical and "silly". As a consequence, this could incite concerned parents to generate ridicule at Mr. Brumby's plans, thinking that Mr. Brumby has not asked for permission from the army or thought about the consequences. This derision towards Mr. Brumby is then replaced with fear

as Kasarik explains that the army “has the demanding role of defending our country”. In particular, “defending our country” could elicit fear that without our army being “ready and professional”, we would be under constant attack. Thus the need for a strong and capable army is of vital importance, and should not be compromised. Akin to the Herald Sun’s editorial, Kasarik also offers an alternative, albeit in a slightly didactic tone. According to Kasarik the more beneficial thing to do is to “assist them in a civilian environment with trained instructors, who know and want to relate with kids”. “Civilian environment” suggests that children should not be placed in the army because they need to be educated properly in a safe manner. This also subtly suggests that the army is dangerous and no place for troubled teens. In addition “trained instructors who know what to do and want to do it” implies that the army personnel are not “trained” to deal with adolescents, nor do they aspire to do it in the first place. Hence, Kasarik’s clear and logically framed arguments could permeate into concerned parents, positioning them to view Mr. Brumby’s plans as outrageous.

In a similar fashion, Mark Knight’s satirical cartoon spoofs and derides “Camp Brumby”. Parents of troubled teens could immediately feel opposed to Mr. Brumby’s camp as they take note of the line-up of adolescents in the foreground. The children are shown with unenthusiastic and slightly haughty expressions: evident from the disbelief in their eyes. Their comments range from “This sucks already” to “I’m going to seek asylum”. Not only do these remarks encompass the notion that children would most likely oppose “Camp Brumby”, but are also homage to some topical issues of that year. To the right of the teenagers, readers would see a figure many would assume as John Brumby himself, evident from his trademark “bushy eyebrows”. Because his chest is puffed out and his large strides could ensue hilarity, this casts Mr. Brumby sardonically. Therefore readers could have instilled into them the mindset that Mr. Brumby and his proposals are not to be taken seriously. Knight portrays how he views the camps are likely to look like as he draws them with barbed-wire fences and guard-towers. These high-security implementations are comparable to what is seen in a jail. Knight hints that “Camp Brumby” is unwarranted because it is more likely to be a detention centre for children rather than a camp for rehabilitation (the fencing and guard-towers implying that there is no escape). Likewise, prominent signs on the barbed-wire fence include “no play-stations, Facebook, phones...” This indicates that Brumby’s camps rob children of their freedom, generating disgust within parents since it makes an appeal to moral and human rights. The notion of his camps being a prison is strengthened as readers focus their attentions on the bus in the background. The cloud of acrid smoke emanating from the trail of the bus could leave the implication that the teenagers are left behind, and that they are left there without second-thoughts since the bus is in a rush to leave. Overall, the image starkly depicts Mr. Brumby’s camps as malign and unjust since it could rob children of their freedom.

The crux of the two articles and cartoon denigrate Mr. Brumby’s “Education for life program”. The editorial utilizes a more emotive approach, seen from the heavy use of sarcastic attacks in order to highlight the lack of detail given. In contrast, the letter to the editor opts for a more scathing and authoritative tone, as Kasarik belittles Mr. Brumby for not considering the impact his proposal could have on the Australian Defense Force. Similarly, Mark Knight’s cartoon downplays “Camp Brumby”, envisioning that the camps are more akin to a prison rather than a rehabilitation centre. Ultimately, upon digesting the contents of all three media texts, concerned parents are likely to view Mr. Brumby’s “Education for Life program” as gratuitous and unwarranted.