



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

9 NOVEMBER 1978

ADDRESS AT LORD MAYOR'S DINNER, MELBOURNE

Last week in Melbourne a radio interviewer asked me if I had given thought to retiring, he had that hopeful and rather optimistic tone to his voice. I let him down gently. I made it clear that day was some years off - as much as I would love to go back to the farm. He then asked if I would be writing a book - you know. "Fraser on Fraser" or something. On this occasion he had that "I hope he doesn't do it" kind of tone to his voice. I was pleased to be able to satisfy him.

What happened yesterday is history. What happened last week or last year or 20 years ago cannot be altered. It is now part of history and people can judge it as they wish. I'm more interested in tomorrow, next week, next year. My interest is in the future - Australia's future.

In just over 400 days we enter a new decade - a decade that promises so much. What do the '80's hold for our families, our friends, this city - and for our country? How are we placed, now, as a nation to cope with the problems and challenges: how are we placed to capitalise on the opportunities? Will the 80's be a "decade of despair", as some would have it - or will it be a decade of dreams fulfilled?

Today, in Australia at least, there is a new feeling, a new spirit and a sense of expectation - perhaps also a sense of relief that we are through the worst of the recession. I share that optimism. In every sense, we are uniquely placed to take advantage of the challenge and promise of the next decade. In stockborkers' jargon Fraser is "bullish".

Of course, this hasn't been a good year for Fraser bulls. Poor Franz's future snapped recently. But that set-back hasn't dissuaded me about Australia in the 80's. In many senses we are still the lucky country. Our great natural resources are the envy of nations around the world. We have the minerals - the energy supplies - so desperately needed in an energy hungry and energy short world. Our massive rural industries are supplying local and world markets. Our wheat, sheep and beef are keenly sought on the world marketplace.

We are developing a great multi-cultural society. Families from all parts of the world are looking to Australia for new hope - a new homeland. They are contributing to our maturing as a nation, they are adding to the character of this nation.

Our technology and scientific expertise is grabbing attention and respect in the hospitals, laboratories and academies throughout the U.K., Europe and the Americas. Interscan - developed by the CSIRO - will help make the world airways safer. The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute - under Gus Nossal - is playing a leading role in world cancer research.

The world is looking to Australian expertise in dry land and grassland farming. The CSIRO - in cooperation with industry - has pioneered new techniques in wool production. As a result, Australian machines have been sold in many markets overseas.

In the arts - music, painting, writing - Australians like John Sutherland, Sidney Nolan, Robert Helpmann, and Morris West are admired and respected everywhere. Australian ballet charms and delighted audiences of the world.

There is no question that we have the people, the talent, the capacity and the opportunity to make Australia unequalled among the free nations. These are not just politician's words.

This challenge, this promise that the 80's holds, is not some unrealistic utopia. It's not pie-in-the-sky. Do we all have a vision of Australia's future? Surely we all want an Australia which is a country of growth and development, of prosperity and enlightenment, of stability and security, or compassion and effective help for those in need? Do we not want a country in which there is unequalled freedom and opportunity for individual Australians?

It is in this way that we can have a more self reliant, more caring, more responsible, more creative and more tolerant nation. We are already on the way to realising this ideal. It is our goal to build a vital economy, sure of its own strength, developing through the capacity of its people.

Beating inflation - killing the deadly effects of inflation throughout society - has been the key. The Treasury tells me that we will achieve a five percent inflation rate before the middle of next year. Think what this will do for Australian industry - for confidence. Australian companies are now selling Australian-made products in some of the toughest overseas markets - and Australian products are respected in the great market places of the world. We have entrepreneurs who have used drive and initiative to seek out new markets and produce goods to meet those markets' needs.

How long is it since our companies could do that. Our manufacturers are able to do it, because Australia has a more stable cost base, with inflation now below that of our trading partners. A stable cost base gives confidence to industry, it allows industry to plan ahead and invest with a certainty and predictability. If some industries can do it - more can. It is for Australian enterprises to show the stuff they are made of.

Australia's rural industries are now, for the first time in maybe a decade, looking ahead with optimism. With costs coming under control, our great wheat, beef, wool and sheep industries are experiencing good markets together with a good season at the one time. Too often we underestimate what a strong rural economy can do for Australia. There can be no permanent prosperity in our great cities, until there is prosperity in the countryside. City and country are interdependent.

Not only are costs settling down, but interest rates are falling. That's good news for every Australian - for business, for farmers, for home seekers. Inflation, interest rates, stability in policy from Canberra - these are the keys to a revival of confidence and development throughout Australia

Of course, the real productivity - the real life - of Australia is private enterprise. The decisions of people in industry - in banking, retailing, manufacturing - affect our country's fortunes. The initiative of individuals is central to how we grasp the opportunities of the 80's. But Government also has its place.

The historic decisions taken by the Commonwealth and every State Government in Melbourne this week illustrate how Government and industry - in partnership - can set up the guidelines for growth. Great new power sources, upgraded export facilities, a great world trade centre for this city - these are the acts of governments adding confidence upon confidence. In these conditions, how can Australians have anything but confidence in the future of our country.

But Government is more than economics, figures and indicators - it is about people and the place that people take in our society. We must be concerned to protect the weak and the poor. We must be concerned to help young Australians in the transition from school to the workplace. We must be concerned to create and promote a tolerant society for the well-being of all - irrespective of colour or race.

The Galbally Report on Migrant Services; family allowances; training for the young; automatic pension increases; unparalleled help for handicapped and aged; and channels to protect people from unreasonable decisions by what are sometimes regarded as all-powerful bureaucracies - these are the hallmarks of concern and opportunity.

Let me ask just one thing of you - that we do not pay mere lip-service to the goals and aspirations we all share. They are not simply abstract notions for speeches by Prime Ministers. We need - all of us - to relate these goals to our everyday lives. Can I suggest that this gathering of men and women in Melbourne tonight is perhaps better placed than most to do just this. Let me offer some examples.

We all believe in there being more jobs available for Australians out of work. It is not now time for union leaders to show concern for their members out of work - for the unemployed - by moderating their wage claims? Jim Callaghan - Labor Prime Minister of the United Kingdom - is also struggling hard to make this point. He knows the British community must show wage restraint.

We all believe in the handicapped receiving a fair deal. Is it not now time that more employers showed real concern for the handicapped by offering them work as vacancies become available? Do the handicapped not have the same right to work as anyone of us in this room?

We all believe we live in a great country. Isn't it time we stopped knocking our achievements? Isn't it time we started demonstrating real national pride and confidence in Australia and a belief in the future?

Achieving the aspirations we share is not just a task for Dick Hamer's Government, for Malcolm Fraser's Government. It is a partnership - in the truest sense - between government and citizens.

At this dinner last year, I said:

"Forces at work will take Australia into the 80's and beyond with a real hope and confidence, and a real sense of belonging to a nation that has become an example to the world."

With the 80's on our doorstep, we will achieve just that. Achieving the goals and aspirations we share is not just a task for Government. It is a task for Government and people, for the Commonwealth and the States, for the young and old. For Australians wherever they are.

The Australian Government seeks a partnership with the community, between government, employers and employees, between government agencies and voluntary organisations, between legislators and individual Australians. With such a partnership, with such a commitment, there is nothing Australians cannot achieve.
