



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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ADDRESS TO THE NATION

Tonight I want to talk particularly to the working men and women of Australia. I want to talk to you about matters that affect all of us each day -- which are important for Australia.

If we all play our cards right, Australia will move into the 1980's with more faith -- with more confidence -- than any other Western nation. It can be a great decade of growth, of development, of new opportunities for all Australians, for our sons and our daughters, or we can "blow it".

Economic recovery is with us. Confidence is much stronger than for years. Australian industry is more competitive. Businesses are investing more -- businesses are selling more -- here and overseas. Exports are up. Australian farms are doing well -- for the first time in many years. Australian industry is busier than it has been for a long while. It's starting to employ more people. If this process continues uninterrupted, Australia will have it made. Your Government's policies will be directed to seeing that this happens.

Tonight I want to speak of attitudes and actions amongst a few of us that almost seem designed to sabotage economic recovery. Strikes, and bans and industrial disruption, are against your interest. They harm the striker, his firm. They harm the community. They harm you and your family. It's happened too much in recent weeks. We saw milk being tipped down the gutter because of the Transport Workers Union. We saw the Postal Union holding up mail, the truckies blockading capital cities - especially Sydney. We saw the air controllers delaying flights, and inconveniencing passengers all across Australia, and the strike by the paint industry employees causing loss of production and loss of wages.

None of these actions was necessary. They were totally disruptive. They were selfish because they disregarded the hurt done to other people; to children who couldn't get milk, to working men and women who were stood down

because of shortages of supplies and who therefore lost wages. But it's not only selfish. So often strikes are fruitless and stupid.

I've already mentioned the strike in the paint industry. The strikers were out for about five weeks and in the end they went back to work and said "let the arbitration system decide". They could have said that right at the beginning, but instead they struck and lost up to \$1,000 each in wages. They were asking for an extra \$11 a week. Even if the paint workers had won, it could have taken them up to two years or even longer to catch up on the wages they lost when they were on strike.

It is worth remembering though, that the union officials who initiate strikes often go on getting paid. Nobody else wins in strikes and it is precisely because nobody wins that we have an arbitration system - the impartial umpire - to enable us to resolve disputes without harming anyone. We need to give that umpire a fair go. When people in Government employment go on strike, use bans or go-slow rules to disrupt work and to harm other people in the community, we as a Government have already decided that our immediate reactions will be much tougher.

The principle of "no work as directed, no pay" will be applied vigorously and stand down clauses will be implemented or applied when there is no work for people as a result of a strike. If companies give in to pressure outside the arbitration system, they will be inviting a Prices Justification Tribunal inquiry into their pricing policies. If essential supplies for other industries are held up, running the risk of further stand downs, those industries will be allowed to import under by-law. But wouldn't it be far better if this kind of Government action was totally unnecessary?

What I am asking you to do is to help make the arbitration system work. It's in your hands -- in the hands of the great majority of Australian working men and women. I haven't the slightest doubt that Australia's working men and women want to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay; that Australia's working men and women know that unreasonable wage claims keep others out of jobs; know that industrial disputes threaten recovery and that they want none of that.

Most Australian working men and women are in trade unions. It is for you to make your voice heard, to let the arbitration system work without threat, without bans -- without strikes. I ask you to do everything you can to prevent the few from disrupting whole industries with all the harm that follows for so many people. I ask you to do this because it is within your power. I ask you this because it is a major way in which you can help to keep the economic recovery going, because this is a major way in which you can help yourself, your family, your mates down the street. I ask you this because it's the best way to help Australia.