

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON R.J. HAWKE A.C. M.P.
TO THE VICTORIAN AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE
MELBOURNE
17 APRIL 1983

DELEGATES,

THIS IS THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF ANY BRANCH OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY AT WHICH I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO THANK EVERY MEMBER OF THE PARTY FOR THEIR WORK AND THEIR DEDICATION WHICH CULMINATED IN THE GREAT TRIUMPH - THE SWEEPING VICTORY OF OUR GREAT PARTY - ON 5 MARCH.

AND I DOUBLY APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO THAT IN MY HOME STATE, VICTORIA - THE STATE WHICH MADE THE BIGGEST SINGLE CONTRIBUTION TO THAT VICTORY.

AND IT WAS A CONTRIBUTION WHICH BEGAN LONG BEFORE THE CAMPAIGN.

NO BRANCH OF THE PARTY HAS HAD TO CONTEND AGAINST GREATER DIFFICULTIES OVER THE YEARS THAN VICTORIA.

WE HAVE SUFFERED TOGETHER TREMENDOUS PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES.

HERE WAS THE VERY CITADEL OF THE POWERFUL CONSERVATIVE ESTABLISHMENT - THE JEWEL IN THE LIBERAL PARTY CROWN.

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FOR YEARS THE DEMOGRAPHIC BALANCE - OR
IMBALANCE - SEEMED TO CONSPIRE AGAINST THE EXPRESSION
OF THE DEMOCRATIC WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

BUT WE HAVE WON THROUGH IN SPITE OF ALL.

AND WE ARE NOW IN THE UNPRECEDENTED POSITION -
SOMETHING THAT HAS NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE IN THE HISTORY
OF OUR PARTY OR THE HISTORY OF THE FEDERATION - THAT WE
HAVE AS MANY FEDERAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FROM VICTORIA,
AND INDEED PROPORTIONATELY, MORE THAN NEW SOUTH WALES,
THE TRADITIONAL HEARTLAND OF LABOR IN AUSTRALIA.

THAT IS SOMETHING THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN REGARDED
AS INCONCEIVABLE TEN YEARS AGO.

BUT THROUGH YOUR WORK AND DEDICATION AND LOYALTY,
IT HAS COME TO PASS.

AND OUR AIM IS TO KEEP IT THAT WAY - TO KEEP
VICTORIA A GREAT LABOR STATE.

BUT THE TRANSFORMATION WHICH HAS OCCURRED IN THE
VICTORIAN SCENE HAS BEEN PARALLELED THROUGHOUT THE NATION.

AND WE CAN TAKE PARTICULAR SATISFACTION IN THE
FACT THAT THE GREAT DRIVE TO VICTORY BEGAN IN VICTORIA,
AND IN A VERY REAL SENSE, BECAUSE OF VICTORIA.

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THE TRUST WHICH THE PEOPLE OF VICTORIA AND THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA HAVE PLACED ON US IS SOMETHING WE CANNOT ESCAPE, AND SHOULD NOT WISH TO ESCAPE, EVEN IF WE COULD.

AT SUCH A TIME AS THIS, I THINK IT IS NECESSARY TO CONSIDER THE FUNDAMENTAL REASONS FOR OUR EXISTENCE AS A PARTY, AND THE REASONS FOR OUR SURVIVAL AS AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST AND GREATEST PARTY.

AND I BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE TWO FUNDAMENTAL PROPOSITIONS WE HAVE TO CONSIDER; THAT WE EXIST AS A PARTY TO PROMOTE CERTAIN GREAT PRINCIPLES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS.

AND SECOND, WE EXIST AS A PARTY TO FORM ELECTED GOVERNMENTS BY ACHIEVING THE SUPPORT OF A MAJORITY OF THE VICTORIAN AND THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE.

AND THESE TWO THINGS ARE REALLY INSEPARABLE.

BECAUSE IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE BEST PRINCIPLES, THE BEST POLICIES, THE BEST PROGRAMS, ARE IRRELEVANT UNLESS WE ARE ABLE TO FORM GOVERNMENTS WHEREBY WE CAN PUT THOSE PRINCIPLES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS INTO PRACTICE.

IT'S JUST ONE YEAR AGO - THE THIRD OF APRIL 1983 - THAT JOHN CAIN LED THE PARTY TO ITS MAGNIFICANT VICTORY.

UNTIL THAT DAY, WE HELD ONLY ONE MAINLAND STATE - NEW SOUTH WALES.

SINCE THEN, THE VICTORIAN LABOR PARTY HAS STRENGTHENED ITS POSITION EVEN FURTHER, AND WE HAVE WON GOVERNMENTS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND OF COURSE, THE GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA.

A TRANSFORMATION ON THIS SCALE HAS NOT OCCURRED IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY SINCE 1943.

THIS YEAR HAS BEEN INDEED THE ANNUS MIRIBILIS IN THE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN LABOR.

NOW DELEGATES, THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS TRANSFORMATION FOR THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIA ARE ENORMOUS.

BUT EQUALLY SIGNIFICANT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR US ALL, AS MEMBERS OF THIS GREATEST OF ALL PARTIES.

AND DELEGATES, WE SHOULD NEVER FALL FOR THE LINE THAT THE PURSUIT AND RETENTION OF POWER AND HOLDING TO OUR PRINCIPLES ARE INCOMPATIBLE.

THERE IS NO COMPROMISE OF PRINCIPLE INVOLVED IN COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY.

AND I THINK THE TRUTH OF THAT IS WELL ILLUSTRATED BY THE PROCEEDINGS AND THE OUTCOME OF THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE IN CANBERRA LAST WEEK.

IT IS TRUE THAT ALL THE PARTICIPANTS - GOVERNMENTS, UNIONS AND BUSINESS - WORKED TO REACH A CONSENSUS; AND TO A QUITE REMARKABLE EXTENT, THEY SUCCEEDED IN DOING SO.

BUT NO PARTY TO THE CONFERENCE WAS OBLIGED TO ABANDON ANY BASIC PRINCIPLE.

THE UNION LEADERS IN PARTICULAR CARRIED OUT THE JOB - IN SPIRIT AND IN DEED - THE JOB FOR WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN ELECTED BY THE UNION MEMBERSHIP - AND THAT IS, TO ADVANCE THE TRUE INTERESTS OF THE MEMBERS.

AND IF THE CONCLUSIONS REACHED ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY BY THAT HISTORIC CONFERENCE CAN BE MADE TO WORK EFFECTIVELY, THEN EVERY TRADE UNIONIST IN AUSTRALIA, EVERY AUSTRALIAN WORKER, WILL REAP THE BENEFIT THROUGH MORE JOBS, LOWER INFLATION AND BETTER STANDARDS.

AND AT THAT CONFERENCE, THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT DEMONSTRATED, FOR ALL AUSTRALIA TO SEE, THAT UNITY OF PURPOSE, AND A PRINCIPLED, BUT FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO BASIC ISSUES CAN ADVANCE THE INTERESTS, NOT ONLY OF THE MEMBERSHIP, BUT OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE.

AND I BELIEVE THAT THAT IS THE APPROACH WE, AS A PARTY, HAVE TO BRING TO OUR OWN AFFAIRS, AND WHICH WE, AS LABOR GOVERNMENTS, HAVE TO BRING TO THE AFFAIRS OF THIS STATE AND THIS NATION.

WE MUST NEVER ABANDON OR COMPROMISE ON OUR PRINCIPLES.

ON THE CONTRARY, OUR TASK IS TO WORK TO ENSURE THAT THE BASIC LABOR PRINCIPLES - THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF REFORM, PROGRESS AND EQUALITY - ARE ENSHRINED NOT JUST IN THE PLATFORM OF OUR PARTY, BUT IN THE ATTITUDES AND NATIONAL CHARACTER OF OUR COUNTRY; AND TO ENSURE THAT THE IDEALS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY ARE THE IDEALS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE AS A WHOLE.

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AND I BELIEVE, THAT IN THE SPACE OF A SINGLE YEAR SINCE OUR LAST CONFERENCE, WE HAVE MOVED TOWARDS THAT GOAL MORE DRAMATICALLY, MORE RAPIDLY, MORE CLOSELY, THAN AT ANY TIME IN OUR PARTY'S LONG HISTORY.

THE LIGHT ON THE HILL BECKONS US ALL. IT BURNS BRIGHTER THAN EVER.

DELEGATES, ONCE AGAIN, I TAKE THIS EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT, FOR YOUR WORK, FOR YOUR SERVICE TO OUR GREAT PARTY, AND THROUGH OUR PARTY, YOUR SERVICE TO OUR GREAT NATION.
