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EXTRACTS FROM A SPEECH AT THE TASMANIAN A.L.P.
CONFERENCE, DEVONPORT, TASMANIA.

4 MARCH 1973, BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON.E.G.WHITLAM,
Q.C., M.P.

LEADER OF THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY

1. Exactly six years ago - 16 March 1967 -
I made my first address to an A.L.P. Conference as the
Party's leader, here at Devonport.
2. It was a critical time in the history and
fortunes of our Party. We had just emerged from our
worst defeat. There were people inside and outside the
Party who genuinely questioned whether the A.L.P. could
long endure.
3. I said then :
" There are literally millions of
ordinary Australians who wish profoundly to see
a Labor Government in Canberra; there are
thousands who are willing to work actively to
secure that Government; there are hundreds
upon hundreds who want to give their time,
ideas, energy and money towards it. No
party is so rich in its potential resources.
It is our duty to encourage, develop and use
those human resources of energy and goodwill. "
4. That was what I set out to do. My gratitude
is deep and my debt immense to all those who joined in
that great crusade - for it was nothing less than that.

The role of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Branch
and my colleagues from Tasmania has been decisive.
 - a) First there is my personal and political
debt to Lance Barnard
 - b) The Tasmanian Branch was the first to
support my efforts to secure re-organisation
of the party structure, and Tasmania gave
unwavering support at every stage,
culminating in the great re-construction
in the two great mainland States. This was
the key to victory.
 - c) Eric Reece's smashing victory last April
set the pace of Labor's national march for
the rest of the year. From that time on,
we never looked back.
 - d) The magnificent Tasmanian performance in the
House of Representatives elections - a clean
sweep - clinched the victory.

5. I may say in passing that there is cold comfort indeed for our opponents in their claim that the swing to Labor was not so great after all. This is true only in relation to the great gains we made in 1969 - 17 seats with a massive swing of 7%. The 1972 election was in essence the last round in a six-year battle, and our share of the 1972 vote after preferences was in fact greater - 52% as against 51% - than the Liberal-Country Party achieved under Menzies in 1949.

6. We now look to a great future, for our country, and for our Party. Hard as the past years may have been, they have had one great advantage. We were able to use those years - preparing relevant and modern policies. No Australian Government has come to office so well equipped with men and measures for the great tasks ahead. That is why we have been able to move so swiftly in the first few weeks. We did not wake up to find ourselves in office and then wondering "Well, what do we do now?" We knew exactly what we wanted to do and exactly what the people wanted us to do.

The Parliament which has just opened will be the great Reform Parliament in Australian history. It has a double task - to clear away the backlog of the past 23 years and to build new machinery adequate for the needs and hopes of Australians for the rest of this century and beyond.
