

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR E.G. WHITLAM

AT THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

MONDAY 13 MAY 1974

ON 2 DECEMBER 1972 THERE WAS A NEW SPIRIT OF HOPE KINDLED IN THIS COUNTRY. THAT HOPE, FOR A BETTER AUSTRALIA, A MORE EQUAL AUSTRALIA, A MORE INDEPENDENT AUSTRALIA, A MORE TOLERANT AUSTRALIA, A MORE COMPASSIONATE AUSTRALIA, BURNS BRIGHTER THAN EVER. AND IT WILL BURN BRIGHTER STILL, AFTER 18 MAY.

EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE, EVERY RESPONSE OF THE PAST TWO WEEKS - AN ENTHUSIASM AND EXHILARATION, A DETERMINATION BEYOND ALL MY EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC LIFE - CONFIRMS MY BELIEF THAT THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE ARE NOT GOING TO TURN BACK. THEY'RE NOT GOING TO TURN THEIR BACKS ON THE MILLIONS OF THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS TO WHOM OUR GOVERNMENT HAS BROUGHT A NEW DEAL, A NEW SENSE OF PURPOSE AND A NEW SENSE OF PRIDE AND PARTICIPATION IN THEIR COUNTRY.

AFTER NEXT SATURDAY, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE A NEW PARLIAMENT, A CONTEMPORARY PARLIAMENT, A PARLIAMENT FOR OUR TIMES. WE ARE GOING TO HAVE A CONSTITUTION THAT REFLECTS THE NEEDS OF OUR TIMES - IN CRUCIAL MATTERS OF EQUAL DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION - OF WORKABLE PARLIAMENTS - OF FULL LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP IN OUR NATIONAL AFFAIRS. WE ARE GOING TO HAVE AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUING TO CARRY OUT ITS MANDATE, BUT THIS TIME, A GOVERNMENT WITH THE AUTHORITY IT NEEDS TO GO AHEAD, AGAINST THE OBSTRUCTION OF THE MEN OF YESTERDAY.

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN AN ELECTION IN LIVING MEMORY WHERE THE ISSUE AT STAKE WAS SO CLEAR AND SO CLEAR-CUT. IT IS NOTHING LESS THAN WHETHER PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY SHALL PREVAIL, WHETHER ELECTED GOVERNMENTS SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO CARRY ON THEIR FULL ELECTED TERM AND TO CARRY OUT THE FULL PROGRAM FOR WHICH THEY WERE ELECTED.

THE HOPES RELEASED BY OUR VICTORY IN 1972 WERE NOT CONFINED TO AUSTRALIA. AROUND THE WORLD, PARTICULARLY IN OUR REGION, PEOPLE WERE MADE TO BELIEVE THAT PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY COULD WORK, THAT THERE COULD BE ORDERLY CHANGE, PEACEFUL CHANGE - TO BELIEVE THAT A GOVERNMENT ENTRENCHED FOR 23 YEARS OF ALMOST UNCHALLENGED POWER COULD BE REMOVED BY THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE, EXPRESSED FREELY, PEACEFULLY AND EMPHATICALLY. NOW THEY SEE ALL THAT PUT IN JEOPARDY, AFTER ONLY 17 MONTHS.

THE ELECTION OF OUR GOVERNMENT NOT ONLY CREATED A NEW INTEREST IN AUSTRALIA, AROUND OUR REGION, AROUND THE WORLD: IT REPRESENTED A NEW HOPE FOR DEMOCRACY EVERYWHERE, FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF PEACEFUL CHANGE THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

WHAT OUR OPPONENTS SAY TO THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE,
AND WHAT THEY WANT THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE TO SAY TO THE
REST OF THE WORLD IS THAT IT WAS ALL A MISTAKE.
THEY SAY: TURN BACK, . . . THEY SAY: COME BACK -
COME BACK TO THE SAME OLD DESPAIR, THE SAME OLD DIVISIONS,
THE SAME OLD PREJUDICES, THE SAME OLD MANIPULATED FEARS,
THE SAME OLD DRIFT, THE SAME OLD STOP-GO, THE SAME
OLD SPECIAL PLEADING, THE SAME OLD DOMINATION BY SPECIAL
INTERESTS, THE SAME OLD CREW THAT YOU REJECTED ONLY
17 MONTHS AGO AND REPLACED IN A PEACEFUL, ORDERLY,
DEMOCRATIC WAY ONLY 17 MONTHS AGO.

WHAT IS IT THEY ASK YOU TO REJECT? WHAT IS IT THAT HAS STIRRED UP SO MUCH VOCAL AND VISIBILE HOSTILITY AMONG POWERFUL INTERESTS AGAINST MY GOVERNMENT?

IT IS BECAUSE WE HAVE PLACED THE PEOPLE BEFORE SPECIAL PRIVILEGE. IN ORDER TO FIGHT INFLATION, TO PROVIDE MONEY FOR SCHOOLS, FOR HOSPITALS, FOR THE AGED, THE HANDICAPPED, FOR OUR CITIES, WE HAVE WITHDRAWN - HAD TO WITHDRAW - SOME SPECIAL PRIVILEGES CONFERRED BY OUR OPPONENTS - AN AMOUNT IN ALL OF NEARLY \$500 MILLION OF YOUR MONEY. OUR OPPONENTS ARE COMMITTED TO RESTORING THESE PRIVILEGES. THEY PROPOSE TO DO IT WITH YOUR MONEY, AND WITH THE MONEY THAT WE HAVE DIVERTED TO AREAS OF GREATEST NEED, TO SCHOOLS, TO HEALTH, TO WELFARE, TO CITIES, TO THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE, TO THE PLACES WHERE MOST AUSTRALIANS LIVE AND HAVE TO LIVE, AND TO THE NEEDS OF MOST AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN. FOR LET IT BE UNDERSTOOD: EVERY CONCESSION AND SUBSIDY TO A SPECIAL MINORITY INTEREST IS A TAX UPON THE MAJORITY, A TAX UPON YOU AND YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS OUTSIDE.

SO BE CLEAR ABOUT OUR OPPONENTS' INTENTIONS. THEY TALK ABOUT A PACKAGE TO FIGHT INFLATION. NOW WE KNOW WHAT'S IN THE PACKAGE.

FIRST, RESTORE ALMOST \$500 MILLION WORTH OF SPECIAL INTEREST PAYMENTS, BOUNTIES AND CONCESSIONS AND SUBSIDIES. HOW WOULD THIS BE DONE? WITH YOUR TAXES.

SECONDLY, FREEZE WAGES. HOW WOULD THIS BE DONE? BY SUSPENDING THE ARBITRATION COMMISSION, UNDERMINING ITS AUTHORITY, SETTING ASIDE FEDERAL AWARDS AND LETTING STATE POLITICIANS SET YOUR WAGES AND SALARIES. FOR THAT IS WHAT MR SNEDDEN'S PROPOSAL FOR A WAGE FREEZE MEANS.

WOULD YOU LET SIR ROBERT ASKIN FIX YOUR INCOMES?

THIRDLY, MR SNEDDEN HAS A MARVELLOUS PROPOSAL TO BRING DOWN THE PRICE OF MEAT - BY WITH-HOLDING LOCAL SUPPLIES AND THEN IMPORTING MEAT. AT THE RISK OF BEING CORRECTED BY PROFESSOR MANNING CLARK, WE HAVEN'T IMPORTED MEAT SINCE BENNELONG WAS A BOY, OR AT LEAST SINCE GOVERNOR PHILLIP PLANTED THE UNION JACK DOWN THERE ACROSS THE QUAY.

FOURTHLY, OUR OPPONENTS SAY, DOUBLE THE PRICE OF PETROL. FOR MAKE NO MISTAKE, WHAT ANTHONY SAYS, CLEOPATRA MUST DO.

THAT IS THE PACKAGE. SOME PLAN AGAINST INFLATION!
SOME PACKAGE!

AND FOR THE REST OF THEIR POLICIES - WE 'LL READ ABOUT THEM IN THE HERALD OVER THE 3 DAYS - 3 DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTION THEY'LL TELL US WHAT THEY PROPOSE FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS.

WE ARE FIGHTING INFLATION. WE ARE BEATING
INFLATION, WE SHARE THE PROBLEM OF INFLATION WITH
EVERY COMPARABLE COUNTRY, AND WE ARE DOING BETTER THAN
ANY COMPARABLE COUNTRY, ALONE AMONG COMPARABLE COUNTRIES,
OUR INFLATION RATE FELL LAST QUARTER. IT WILL CONTINUE
TO FALL. BUT ALMOST ALONE AMONGST THOSE COMPARABLE
COUNTRIES, WE ARE NOT FIGHTING INFLATION BY PUTTING
MEN AND WOMEN OUT OF WORK. WE HAVE RESTORED THE
FULL EMPLOYMENT DESTROYED BY MR SNEDDEN WHEN HE WAS
TREASURER. WE WILL MAINTAIN FULL EMPLOYMENT.
ALONE AMONGST THESE COMPARABLE COUNTRIES WE ARE CONTINUING
TO FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION WHILE CONTINUING TO PROVIDE
NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR CHILDREN, THE DISADVANTAGED,
FOR HOME SEEKERS, FOR HOME BUYERS, FOR THE CITIES.

THE FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION WILL CONTINUE.
IT WILL BE WON. BUT WE DO NOT CHOOSE TO FIGHT IT
AT OUR CHILDREN'S EXPENSE, OR AT THE EXPENSE OF THE
DISADVANTAGED OF THIS NATION. IT WON'T BE WON BY
LETTING OUR PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN OUR CITIES BECOME
EVEN MORE RAMSHACKLE, MORE AND MORE INEFFICIENT,
MORE COSTLY. IT WILL BE WON ON THE BASIS OF MORE EQUAL
SHARING OF OUR OPPORTUNITIES, OF OUR WEALTH, AND
IF EVER NECESSARY, MORE EQUAL SPREADING OF SACRIFICES.

I CANNOT PROMISE THE GRAZIERS EARNING OVER
A HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS, WHO HAVE LOST \$4 MILLION
IN SUPERPHOSPHATE BOUNTIES, THAT THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE
TO FOREGO A NEW YACHT FOR A YEAR. BUT I WILL PROMISE YOU
THAT NO AUSTRALIAN CHILD WILL HAVE TO FOREGO A YEAR'S
EXPANDED EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES - AND IN EFFECT,
AS IT WOULD BE UNDER OUR OPPONENTS, LOSE THOSE NEW
OPPORTUNITIES FOR A LIFETIME.

WHAT HAS OUR GOVERNMENT BEEN ABOUT?

THIS VERY MEETING, THE GREAT PLACE IN WHICH IT IS HELD, THE AUSPICES UNDER WHICH IT IS HELD, THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY WHO WORK IN THIS CITY, WHO GIVE THIS CITY ITS LIFE, SYMBOLISE WHAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS ALL ABOUT.

WE ARE FOR THE PEOPLE, AGAINST SPECIAL INTERESTS.
WE ARE FOR EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY, AGAINST PRIVILEGE.
WE ARE FOR A MODERN, PROGRESSIVE, HUMANE AUSTRALIA.
WE ARE FOR AN AUSTRALIA IN WHICH EVERY CITIZEN -
EVERYONE BORN HERE, EVERYONE WHO SETTLES AMONGST US, HAS
A FAIR AND EQUAL CHANCE TO ENJOY THE OPPORTUNITIES
OUR GREAT WEALTH OFFERS, WHERE EVERY MAN AND WOMAN
CAN PARTICIPATE AS A FULL MEMBER OF SOCIETY, FULLY
INVOLVED IN THE WORK OF MOVING THIS COUNTRY AHEAD.

AND THAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENCE OF
SO MANY DISTINGUISHED AUTHORS AND ARTISTS AND ACADEMICS
HERE TODAY.

THIS COUNTRY HAS SEEN IN THE LAST 17 MONTHS AN UNPARALLELLED BURST IN CREATIVE ACTIVITY. SURE, WE HAVE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THE ARTS A GREAT AMOUNT OF MONEY. FOR INSTANCE, TODAY I WILL BE ANNOUNCING THE FULFILMENT, AFTER MANY MONTHS OF INQUIRY, OF A PROMISE I MADE IN 1972 FOR A PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT, BY WHICH AUSTRALIA'S AUTHORS CAN RECEIVE PAYMENT FOR THEIR BOOKS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

BUT AS FAR AS THE ARTS ARE CONCERNED, IT'S NOT JUST A MATTER OF MONEY; IT IS A MATTER OF INVOLVEMENT, INVOLVEMENT IN THE MAINSTREAM OF THE LIFE OF THE REAL AND LIVING COMMUNITY. FOR IT IS OUR ARTS, OUR GREAT BUILDINGS, LIKE THIS, WHICH EXPRESS TO GENERATIONS YET UNBORN WHAT WE WERE LIKE IN OUR TIME, WHAT WE ACHIEVED, WHAT WE DARED TO TRY TO ACHIEVE, IN OUR TIME.

IN 17 MONTHS WE HAVE ACHIEVED MUCH AND WE HAVE DARED TO ACHIEVE MUCH - TOGETHER. BUT THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO BE DONE - TOGETHER. IT HASN'T BEEN ALL PLAIN-SAILING, AND I'M NOT SAYING THERE AREN'T THINGS WE WOULDN'T HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY, GIVEN MORE TIME, GIVEN THE EXPERIENCE WE NOW HAVE. WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE AN AUSTRALIA WHERE THE ABLE AND THE ABLE-BODIED, THE TALENTED, THE SKILLED, CAN ENJOY THE FULLEST FRUITS OF THEIR GIFTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES; BUT, AT THE SAME TIME AND ABOVE ALL, AN AUSTRALIA WHERE NO GROUP OF AUSTRALIANS MUST TAKE SECOND PLACE OR GO TO THE WALL - JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE WOMEN, JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE NEWCOMERS, OR BECAUSE THEY ARE YOUNG, OR BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO LIVE IN NEW AND DISTANT SUBURBS, OR BECAUSE THEIR PARENTS ARE POOR, OR BECAUSE THEY ARE HANDICAPPED, OR BECAUSE THEY ARE OLD, OR BECAUSE THEY ARE ABORIGINES, OR BECAUSE THEY HAVE SUFFERED INJURY OR SICKNESS.

WE ARE TRYING TO BUILD AN AUSTRALIA WHERE ALL CAN FEEL INVOLVED, AN AUSTRALIA IN WHICH ALL FEEL A SENSE OF DIRECTION, OF PURPOSE, AN AUSTRALIA WHICH BELONGS, NOT TO SPECIAL INTERESTS, NOT TO THE PRIVILEGED MEN BORN TO RULE, NOT TO OVERSEAS CORPORATIONS, BUT AN AUSTRALIA WHICH BELONGS TO ALL AUSTRALIANS.

AND IT CAN BE DONE. WE ARE GOING TO DO IT.

IT CAN BE DONE THROUGH OUR PROGRAM.
WE ARE GOING TO CARRY THAT PROGRAM THROUGH.

IT CAN BE DONE THROUGH THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM.
WE ARE GOING TO DO IT. WILL YOU JOIN US IN DOING IT?
IT CAN BE DONE THROUGH THE PROGRAMS WE HAVE STARTED,
THROUGH THE PROGRAMS THAT ARE NOW BEARING THEIR FRUIT
FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL AUSTRALIANS.
WILL YOU LET US GET ON WITH THAT JOB?

IN THIS GREAT CITY, THE LIVING SYMBOL OF SO
MUCH THAT WE AUSTRALIANS HAVE ACHIEVED TOGETHER IN
THE PAST: IN THIS BUILDING, SO MUCH A LIVING SYMBOL OF
OUR PRESENT VIGOR, PROSPERITY, PRIDE AND STRENGTH;
AT THIS MEETING, SO MUCH THE SYMBOL OF THE NEW HOPES
BORN AND THE TALENTS AND ENERGIES UNLEASHED BY OUR
EMPHATIC BUT NONETHELESS INCOMPLETE VICTORY 17 MONTHS AGO:
I ASK YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE FUTURE, FOR YOUR FUTURE,
YOUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE, FOR THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIANS
YET UNBORN.

AUSTRALIANS CAN TURN BACK, TURN THE CLOCK BACK,
GO BACK TO ALL THAT OLD HOPELESS NESS, FLATNESS AND
STALE FUTILITY, OR THEY CAN GO ON AND GO AHEAD -
WITH OUR PROGRAM OUR CLEAR AND POSITIVE PROGRAM
FOR A STRONG, UNITED, MORE EQUAL AUSTRALIA.

LET SATURDAY BE THE DAY WHEN AUSTRALIA SAID
OVERWHELMINGLY YES .. TO THE FUTURE.
