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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM,
Q.C., M.P., TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE FEDERAL
COUNCIL OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS' UNION OF
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IN NO AREA OF GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY IS THERE A GREATER NEED FOR MODERNISATION AND REFORM THAN IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT. IN NO AREA ARE THERE GREATER CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF SUCH REFORM. IN NO AREA IS THE COST TO THE PUBLIC OF OUR PRESENT ADMINISTRATIVE CONFUSION AND PHYSICAL DILAPIDATION GREATER AND MORE ENTRENCHED. OUR TRANSPORT SYSTEMS ARE OUTDATED, INEFFICIENT AND UNECONOMICAL. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM IS FRAGMENTED AND VAGUELY DEFINED. TRANSPORT IS THE CINDERELLA SERVICE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR. IT WILL REMAIN SO UNTIL FAR-REACHING REFORMS ARE ACHIEVED.

LOOK AT THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM. WE ALL KNOW THE NOTORIOUS BURDEN THAT OUR RAILWAYS HAVE INHERITED FROM A COLONIAL PAST. THE NATION IS STILL PAYING A HEAVY PRICE FOR RAILWAY SYSTEMS CENTRALISED ON STATE CAPITALS AND CONSTRUCTED ON INCOMPATIBLE GAUGES. THE POWER OF THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT TO LEGISLATE ON TRANSPORT IS ILL-DEFINED. APART FROM A GENERAL POWER TO LEGISLATE IN RESPECT OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TERRITORIES, THERE IS NO SPECIFIC PROVISION IN THE CONSTITUTION GIVING THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT POWER IN RELATION TO ROADS OR ROAD TRANSPORT. OUR POWERS IN RESPECT OF INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS AND EXPORT ROADS IN FACT DERIVE FROM OUR POWERS OVER TRADE AND COMMERCE.

FOR MANY YEARS THE STATE RAILWAYS HAVE BEEN AN INSUPPORTABLE BURDEN ON STATE GOVERNMENTS, DISTORTING THEIR BUDGETS AND DEPLETING THEIR RESOURCES AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHER ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES. ALL FORMS OF TRANSPORT - URBAN, RURAL AND INTERSTATE - HAVE FALLEN DEEPER AND DEEPER IN DEBT AND OBSOLESCENCE. THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN THAT WHILE THE STATES HAVE LACKED THE FUNDS TO PROVIDE MODERN TRANSPORT, THE COMMONWEALTH IN GENERAL HAS LACKED THE POWERS. ON TOP OF THAT WE HAVE A MULTIPLICITY OF TRANSPORT UNIONS, ORGANISED ON A FRAGMENTED FEDERAL BASIS, TENDING TO REINFORCE AND PERPETUATE THE INEFFICIENCIES ENGENDERED BY INTERSTATE RIVALRY.

THE GOVERNMENT'S AIM IS TO PROVIDE A NATIONAL TRANSPORT POLICY WHICH WILL ENSURE THAT EACH FORM OF TRANSPORT FULFILS THE ROLE TO WHICH IT IS BEST SUITED - WHETHER ROAD, RAIL, SEA OR AIR. WE HAVE TAKEN A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT STEPS. WE AMALGAMATED THE OLD DEPARTMENTS OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT AND CIVIL AVIATION. WITHIN NORMAL LIMITS, AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TRANSPORT ACTIVITIES ARE NOW CONDUCTED WITHIN ONE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT. THIS ENSURES OPTIMUM CO-ORDINATION AND A TRANSPORT SYSTEM CAPABLE OF COPING EFFECTIVELY WITH DEMANDS AT MINIMUM COST TO THE NATION. THIS POLICY IS IN DIRECT CONTRAST TO THE COMPLETE LACK OF CO-ORDINATION UNDER PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATIONS. I REMIND YOU THAT IT IS THE POLICY OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY TO SEEK A REFERENDUM TO GIVE THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT COMPLETE POWERS TO MAKE LAWS WITH RESPECT TO ALL FORMS OF TRANSPORT.

MEANWHILE WE ARE MAKING GRANTS TO THE STATES TO UPGRADE THEIR URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT; WE ARE INCREASING

OUR GRANTS FOR ROADS; AND WE WILL CO-OPERATE WITH THE STATES IN RESPECT OF ROAD SAFETY, ROADS AND UNIFORM ROAD LAWS. OUR BASIC AIM IS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND IMPROVE SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE.

THE STATE RAILWAY SYSTEMS ARE THE BEST, OR RATHER THE WORST, EXAMPLE OF THE INADEQUACY OF OUR TRANSPORT SERVICES. IT WILL HELP IF I EXPLAIN EXACTLY HOW WE APPROACH THIS PROBLEM AND THE DIFFICULTIES THAT FACE US. BRIEFLY, THE STATE RAILWAYS HAVE BEEN STARVED OF THE CAPITAL RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAINTAIN THEIR COMPETITIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY. THEY ARE GEARED TO OPERATE ON A STATE LEVEL RATHER THAN A NATIONAL LEVEL. FOR THE MOST PART THEY OPERATE WITH ANTIQUATED ROLLING STOCK AND EQUIPMENT. YET AUSTRALIA NEEDS A MODERN, EFFICIENT RAILWAY SYSTEM TO PLAY ITS PROPER ROLE IN THE NATION'S DEVELOPMENT.

IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT IN 1972 - IN ONE OF THE FIRST ACTS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT - I OFFERED TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RAILWAYS OF ANY STATE PREPARED TO OFFER THEM. VICTORIA AND QUEENSLAND REFUSED EVEN TO DISCUSS THE OFFER. DISCUSSIONS WITH THE OTHER FOUR STATES HAVE BEEN GOING ON FOR SOME TIME, AND IT IS HOPED THAT DECISIONS CAN BE MADE ON TWO OF THEM SHORTLY, TO ENABLE OUR PROGRAM TO REVITALISE THE INTERSTATE RAILWAY NETWORKS TO GET UNDER WAY. FOR THIS PURPOSE, THE BUREAU OF TRANSPORT ECONOMICS, AT THE REQUEST OF THE AUSTRALIAN AND STATE TRANSPORT MINISTER IS EVALUATING MAINLINE UPGRADING PROGRAMS TO ENABLE AN ORDER OF PRIORITY FOR WORKS TO BE ESTABLISHED.

IN SOME STATES THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS. AGREEMENTS HAVE BEEN SIGNED WITH SOUTH AUSTRALIA TO BUILD STANDARD-GAUGE LINES FROM TARCOOLA TO ALICE SPRINGS AND TO CONNECT ADELAIDE TO THE EAST-WEST STANDARD GAUGE LINE AT CRYSTAL BROOK. THE COMPLETION OF THE LATTER PROJECT WILL MEAN THAT ALL MAINLAND CAPITAL CITIES WILL BE FINALLY CONNECTED TO STANDARD GAUGE. THERE REMAINS, HOWEVER, A SIGNIFICANT SHORTAGE OF ROLLING STOCK SUITABLE FOR USE ON THE INTERSTATE RAIL NETWORK, AND THE STATE RAILWAYS ARE HAVING TO TURN AWAY BUSINESS. THIS SHORTAGE MUST BE OVERCOME. THE GOVERNMENT IS CURRENTLY LOOKING AT A PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ROLLING STOCK FOR THE STATES THROUGH THE COMMONWEALTH RAILWAYS, DUE TO BE RENAMED THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS.

ONE OF OUR GREAT INSTRUMENTS FOR THE REFORM AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL TRANSPORT WILL BE THE INTER-STATE COMMISSION. THE GOVERNMENT WILL INTRODUCE A BILL TO RE-ESTABLISH THE COMMISSION WHEN PARLIAMENT RESUMES. IN MY 1972 POLICY SPEECH I SAID:

"THE INTER-STATE COMMISSION WAS INTENDED TO END THE CENTRALISATION FOSTERED BY ALL THE STATE GOVERNMENTS THROUGH THEIR RAILWAY SYSTEMS. IT SHOULD NOW PROVIDE NOT ONLY FOR THE CO-ORDINATION OF OUR SIX MAINLAND RAILWAY SYSTEMS AND OUR MAJOR PORTS IN THE PERIOD BEFORE THE COMMONWEALTH, LIKE OTHER FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS, INEVITABLY TAKES RESPONSIBILITY FOR RAILWAYS AND PORTS; IT IS ALSO THE IDEAL INSTRUMENT FOR CO-ORDINATING OUR MAJOR ROADS AND SHIPPING LINES AND AIRLINES AND PIPELINES...

"A FEDERAL LABOR GOVERNMENT WILL PROMPTLY RESTORE THE MACHINERY THE CONSTITUTION INTENDED AND VEST IT WITH THE COMMONWEALTH'S FULL CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS TO PLAN AND PROVIDE MODERN MEANS OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE STATES."

THE PLANNING NECESSARY FOR THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION IS BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT. AS I UNDERTOOK IN MY POLICY SPEECH LAST APRIL, WE WILL INTRODUCE LEGISLATION FOR THE COMMISSION THIS YEAR.

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I WANT TO DEAL IN A MOMENT WITH SOME ISSUES OF SPECIAL CONCERN TO YOUR UNION. FIRST LET ME TOUCH BRIEFLY ON THREE AREAS WHERE THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN PROMPT ACTION TO IMPROVE OUR TRANSPORT SYSTEM.

URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT - IN THE 1973-74 BUDGET THE TREASURER ANNOUNCED AN ALLOCATION OF \$32.1 MILLION FOR ASSISTANCE TO THE STATES FOR URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS IN 1973-74 (INCLUDING \$1 MILLION FOR RESEARCH AND PLANNING). A FURTHER \$40.8 MILLION IS TO BE PROVIDED IN FUTURE YEARS FOR PROJECTS COMMENCED IN 1973-74. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS FINANCING TWO-THIRDS OF THE COST OF APPROVED PROJECTS ON A GRANTS BASIS. THREE STATES - VICTORIA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA - HAVE SO FAR SIGNED THE AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH FUNDS ARE TO BE PROVIDED. THE NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT ADVISED LAST WEEK THAT IT IS WILLING TO SIGN THE AGREEMENT IN ITS PRESENT FORM, AND ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT TO SIGN THE AGREEMENT THIS WEEK. TASMANIA HAS ALSO ACCEPTED THE AGREEMENT.

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INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS AND EXPORT ROADS - AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS
HAVE PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO THE STATES FOR ROADS SINCE 1926. THE
CURRENT COMMONWEALTH AID ROADS LEGISLATION WILL EXPIRE ON
30 JUNE. IN MY ELECTION POLICY SPEECH ON 29 APRIL, I ANNOUNCED
THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO PRESS AHEAD WITH
THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NATIONAL ROADS SYSTEM IN THOSE AREAS WHICH
FALL WITHIN ITS OWN CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES. IN PARTICULAR,
IT WOULD IN FUTURE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WHOLE COST OF
CONSTRUCTING AND MAINTAINING THE PRINCIPAL ROAD BETWEEN STATE
CAPITALS, AND OF EXPORT ROADS OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE,
INCLUDING NORTHERN BEEF ROADS, OTHER RURAL ROADS JOINING MINES
TO SEAPORTS, AND URBAN ROADS TO MAJOR SEA AND AIR TERMINALS.

AT THE PREMIERS' CONFERENCE LAST FRIDAY I ANNOUNCED
THAT THE NEW ROADS ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION WOULD APPROPRIATE
A TOTAL OF \$1,120 MILLION IN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE
OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS FOR ROADS IN THE STATES. OF THIS
SUM, \$400 MILLION WILL BE ALLOCATED OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS
FOR INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS AND EXPORT ROADS. THE NEW ROADS
ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION WILL BE INTRODUCED IN THE FIRST SESSION
OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT.

SAFETY STANDARDS - THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITH THE STATES IN FORMULATING MOTOR VEHICLE STANDARDS AND TRAFFIC LAWS ON A NATIONAL BASIS. THIS IS BEING DONE THROUGH THE AUSTRALIAN TRANSPORT ADVISORY COUNCIL, WHICH HAS A SERIES OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES. THE T.W.U. PARTICIPATES IN THOSE CONCERNED WITH VEHICLE PERFORMANCE, TRAFFIC CODES AND TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS. THE COUNCIL HAS ENDORSED THE AUSTRALIAN DESIGN RULES FOR MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY, WHICH INITIALLY APPLIED TO CARS BUT ARE BEING EXTENDED TO TRUCKS AND BUSES. THE COUNCIL IS ALSO CONCERNED WITH SAFETY OF INTERSTATE BUSES AND HAS ENDORSED A UNIFORM SCHEME OF COMPULSORY INSPECTIONS. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO LEGISLATE TO COVER INTERSTATE OPERATORS NOT CONTROLLED BY STATES. FOLLOWING A RECOMMENDATION BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO DECIDED TO SET UP A NATIONAL AUTHORITY ON ROAD SAFETY AND STANDARDS TO ADVISE THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT ON ROAD SAFETY, INCLUDING PROPOSALS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE STATES FOR THIS PURPOSE.

THE CREATION OF A MODERN EFFICIENT TRANSPORT SYSTEM REQUIRES THE CO-OPERATION OF TRANSPORT WORKERS AND THEIR UNIONS. YOUR INDUSTRY DEMANDS A STRONG, MODERN, UNITED UNION. THE DIFFICULTIES OF DEALING WITH DIFFERENT STATES AND TRANSPORT AUTHORITIES ARE GREAT ENOUGH. SUCH DIFFICULTIES ARE INCREASED IF THE TRANSPORT UNIONS THEMSELVES ARE INEFFICIENTLY ORGANISED OR WASTE THEIR ENERGIES IN INTERNAL CONFLICTS. IN SHORT, WE NEED A RESPONSIBLE APPROACH FROM YOU TO HELP US IMPLEMENT OUR IMPORTANT PROGRAMS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NATION AND THE INDUSTRY. TRANSPORT UNIONS MUST WORK TOGETHER TO HELP US COMPLETE OUR TASK.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THE NEED TO KEEP UNIONS FULLY INFORMED AND INVOLVED IN MATTERS THAT AFFECT YOU. WE HAVE DONE OUR BEST TO DO SO. WE INVITED A UNION REPRESENTATIVE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSIONS ON THE TRANSFER OF STATE RAILWAYS TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT.

IF
A DECISION TO TRANSFER IS MADE A CONFERENCE WILL BE CALLED OF AUSTRALIAN AND STATE GOVERNMENT OFFICERS, A.C.T.U. AND UNION REPRESENTATIVES TO ENSURE THAT THE TRANSITION PERIOD IS SMOOTHLY CARRIED OUT.

UNION GOODWILL

WILL BE ESSENTIAL IN FORMULATING A NATIONAL TRANSPORT POLICY. YOU HAVE AN INDUSTRY WITH MANY DIFFERENT AND SOMETIMES COMPETING UNIONS. IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, FOR EXAMPLE, ENGINE DRIVERS AND MEN SERVICING ROLLING STOCK BELONG TO A STATE UNION DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF COMMONWEALTH RAILWAYS EMPLOYEES. THIS SITUATION HAS SIGNIFICANTLY DELAYED OUR NEGOTIATIONS TO TAKE OVER THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RAILWAYS. MY POINT IS SIMPLY THAT DEMARCATION DISPUTES ARE NOT CONDUCIVE TO A NATIONAL TRANSPORT POLICY. THEY MUST BE REDUCED. IF A NATIONAL RAILWAY SYSTEM BECOMES A REALITY, THEN A NATIONAL UNION REPRESENTING RAILWAY EMPLOYEES WILL BE NEEDED TO LOOK AFTER INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, WAGES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE ON A NATIONAL SCALE. I HOPE YOU WILL WORK TOWARDS IT.

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THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO A POLICY OF ENCOURAGING THE AMALGAMATION OF TRADE UNIONS. ITS ATTEMPTS LAST YEAR TO AMEND THE CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT TO MAKE AMALGAMATION PROCEDURES SIMPLER WERE FRUSTRATED TWICE BY THE SENATE. WHILE THE NUMBER OF UNIONS IN AUSTRALIA HAS DECLINED SLOWLY OVER THE YEARS - FROM 375 IN 1956 TO 305 IN 1972, THIS LARGE NUMBER OF SEPARATE UNIONS REPRESENTS A TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF A LITTLE OVER 2½ MILLION. SUCH A DISPERSAL OF PEOPLE AMONG SO MANY SEPARATE UNIONS HAS SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS. THERE IS THE INEVITABLE DUPLICATION OF WORK AND RESOURCES WHICH PRODUCES WASTED EFFORT. THE FRAGMENTATION OF UNION RESOURCES IN TERMS OF STAFF, FINANCE AND FACILITIES IMPOSES GRAVE LIMITATIONS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR WORK. RESEARCH RESOURCES OF UNIONS - LIBRARIES AND RESEARCH STAFF - ARE MEAGRE AND SUFFER BADLY IN ANY COMPARISON WITH HIGHLY ORGANISED EMPLOYER ORGANISATIONS. AND AS WE KNOW, THE LARGE NUMBER OF UNIONS GIVES RISE TO DEMARCATION DISPUTES WHICH ARE A COMMON OCCURRENCE IN THIS COUNTRY.

AT PRESENT, FOR AN AMALGAMATION PROPOSAL TO BE ADOPTED, TWO CONDITIONS MUST BE SATISFIED: AT LEAST HALF THE MEMBERS MUST VOTE AND MORE THAN A HALF OF THE FORMAL VOTES MUST BE IN FAVOUR OF THE AMALGAMATION. UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS IT WOULD BE NECESSARY MERELY FOR A MAJORITY OF THOSE VOTING TO APPROVE OF THE PROPOSALS: IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY FOR 50 PER CENT OF THE MEMBERS TO VOTE IN AN AMALGAMATION.

THE KEY TO INDUSTRIAL EFFICIENCY IS EFFICIENT EMPLOYEE ORGANISATION. WHILE OUR OPPONENTS HAVE OBSTRUCTED OUR EFFORTS TO MODERNISE AND DEMOCRATISE AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNIONS, UNION CAN STILL WORK FOR MORE RESPONSIBLE AND EFFICIENT ORGANISATION IN THEIR OWN WAY. I COMPLEMENT THE T.W.U. ON THE AWARD RECENTLY NEGOTIATED FOR YOUR MEMBERS IN THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY AND THOSE EMPLOYED BY GENERAL CARTAGE FIRMS UNDER THE FEDERAL TRANSPORT WORKS AWARD - A KEY AWARD WITH A BEARING ON THE WHOLE TRANSPORT INDUSTRY. THIS AWARD WAS NEGOTIATED BY DIRECT AND FREE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES. IT INCLUDES A SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES PROCEDURE WHICH THE GOVERNMENT REGARDS AS ESSENTIAL TO GOOD INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS. ADHERENCE TO THE SPIRIT OF SUCH A PROCEDURE BY ALL PARTIES SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY OF THE INDUSTRY AND THE REAL INCOME OF EMPLOYEES ARE NOT IMPAIRED BY INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES.

THERE IS A PARTICULAR PROBLEM IN YOUR INDUSTRY WHICH TYPIFIES THE ARCHAIC CONDITION OF OUR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS. WE HAVE FIVE INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION REGISTRATION SYSTEMS IN THIS COUNTRY. THE CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT REQUIRES AN EMPLOYER OR EMPLOYEE ORGANISATION TO BE REGISTERED UNDER THE ACT BEFORE IT CAN REPRESENT ITS MEMBERS IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION SYSTEM. THERE IS A SIMILAR REQUIREMENT IN THE INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION LEGISLATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES, QUEENSLAND, SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA. IN ORDER TO REPRESENT ITS MEMBERS IN AUSTRALIAN AND STATE SYSTEMS IT IS NECESSARY FOR A FEDERAL UNION TO HAVE ITS MEMBERS IN EACH OF THE FOUR STATES IN A UNION REGISTERED UNDER THE STATE LEGISLATION.

THE RESULT IS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE BRANCH OF A FEDERAL UNION AND A STATE UNION ARE OFTEN AMALGAMATED, WITH THE SAME OFFICERS, BOOKS, THE ONE SYSTEM OF MEETINGS, ONE MEMBER REGISTER AND ONE ELECTION OF OFFICERS. SOMETIMES THE RULES OF EITHER THE STATE OR FEDERAL UNION ARE ADHERED TO, THE OTHER SET BEING IGNORED. SOMETIMES A MIXTURE OF RULES IS ADOPTED. THE WHOLE SYSTEM CAUSES INDUSTRIAL STRIFE THROUGH DEMARCATION DISPUTES AND COMPETITION FOR UNION MEMBERSHIP WITHIN THE SAME INDUSTRY.

WE HAVE TRIED TO REMEDY THIS PROBLEM. THE INDUSTRIAL COURT IN FEBRUARY 1969 DREW ATTENTION TO THE URGENCY OF THE SITUATION AFTER HEARING AN APPLICATION INVOLVING YOUR UNION AND ITS NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH. AT THE CONCLUSION OF ITS JUDGEMENT IN MOORE V DOYLE, THE INDUSTRIAL COURT SAID:

"A SYSTEM OF TRADE UNION ORGANISATION IS URGENTLY NEEDED WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE ONE BODY TO REPRESENT ITS RELEVANT MEMBERS IN BOTH THE FEDERAL AND STATE ARBITRATION SYSTEMS AND IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR FEDERAL AND STATE AUTHORITIES TO EXAMINE THE QUESTION WHETHER ORGANISATIONS AND TRADE UNIONS CAN BE PROVIDED WITH SUCH A SYSTEM.

"WE HAVE DECIDED TO REFER OUR JUDGMENT IN THIS MATTER AND THESE REMARKS TO THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL FOR THE COMMONWEALTH IN THE HOPE THAT IT MAY BE POSSIBLE, AFTER CONSULTATION BETWEEN COMMONWEALTH AND STATE ATTORNEYS-GENERAL, THE TRADE UNIONS, BOTH FEDERAL AND STATE, AND OTHER INTERESTED GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES TO ARRANGE FOR THE EXAMINATION OF THE IMPORTANT ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS TO WHICH WE HAVE REFERRED."

DESPITE THIS URGENT APPEAL THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT AND THE ANTI-LABOR STATE GOVERNMENTS DID NOTHING. SO IN JANUARY LAST YEAR I WROTE TO THE PREMIERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES, QUEENSLAND AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA SUGGESTING THAT THEY CONSIDER ADOPTING A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PROPOSAL AIMED AT PROVIDING SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM. THE PROPOSAL PROVIDED FOR THE "RECOGNITION" OF A STATE BRANCH OF A FEDERAL UNION UNDER STATE INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION LEGISLATION. A "RECOGNISED" STATE BRANCH WOULD NOT HAVE A LEGAL IDENTITY DISTINCT FROM THE FEDERAL UNION BUT WOULD EXIST AS PORTION OF THE FEDERAL UNION AND ACT AS THE FEDERAL UNION WITHIN THE STATE INDUSTRIAL JURISDICTION. QUEENSLAND REFUSED TO CO-OPERATE AND WE HAD NO RESPONSE AT ALL FROM NEW SOUTH WALES, THE STATE WHERE THE PROBLEM IS MOST ACUTE.

NEVERTHELESS, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ITSELF PASSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT TO DEAL WITH SOME OF THE PROBLEMS RAISED BY THIS CASE. IN ADDITION THE GOVERNMENT APPOINTED MR JUSTICE J.B. SWEENEY, ASSISTED BY MR R.E. MCGARVIE, Q.C., AND MR K.D. MARKS, TO CONDUCT THE INQUIRY INTO THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CASE. HIS HONOUR'S REPORT IS EXPECTED ABOUT THE END OF THIS MONTH.

WE HAVE RECOGNISED FROM THE START THAT MODERN AND EFFICIENT PUBLIC TRANSPORT DEPENDS ON MODERN AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND MODERN AND EFFICIENT UNIONS. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS PLAYED ITS PART. WE HAVE BEEN GENEROUS WITH FUNDS AND GENEROUS WITH IDEAS AND INITIATIVES. WE LOOK CONFIDENTLY TO THE CO-OPERATION OF THE STATES AND YOUR GREAT UNION IN BRINGING ABOUT A NEW DEAL, LONG OVERDUE AND LONG AWAITED, FOR TRANSPORT IN OUR COUNTRY.
