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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,  
TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
BUILDING WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION,  
SYDNEY, MONDAY 5 AUGUST 1974

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IT IS FITTING THAT THE FIRST PRIME MINISTER TO OPEN AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF YOUR UNION SHOULD BE A LABOR PRIME MINISTER. YOUR UNION AND YOUR INDUSTRY ARE ESSENTIAL PARTNERS OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT IN BUILDING - LITERALLY BUILDING - THE KIND OF SOCIETY WE SEEK FOR OURSELVES, FOR THE WORKING MEN AND WOMEN OF THIS COUNTRY, FOR OUR FAMILIES AND OUR CHILDREN.

I DOUBT IF THERE HAS EVER BEEN A TIME WHEN THE TRADITIONAL SOLIDARITY BETWEEN A LABOR GOVERNMENT AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO BOTH OF US, MORE IN NEED OF EMPHASIS AND CONFIRMATION. TODAY THE HOPES AND PLANS OF THE WHOLE LABOR MOVEMENT ARE UNDER ATTACK FROM AN EMBITTERED AND UNSCRUPULOUS OPPOSITION. WE MUST UNITE TO RESIST THAT ATTACK AND DEFEAT IT. IF WE FAIL, ALL THE GOVERNMENT'S HOPES AND AMBITIONS FOR THIS COUNTRY WILL FAIL. ALL OUR PLANS FOR THE WELFARE AND SECURITY OF THE WORKER WILL FAIL.

IT IS TIME FOR CO-OPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING.  
WE ARE MINDFUL OF WHAT THE UNIONS HAVE DONE TO HELP  
ELECT AND SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT. TODAY I ASK YOU  
TO REFLECT ON WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS DONE - AND CAN  
DO - FOR THE UNIONS. JUST AS WE ARE CONSCIOUS OF YOUR  
PROBLEMS, I ASK YOU TO BE CONSCIOUS OF OURS.

IN THE LONG RUN OUR NEEDS AND INTERESTS  
ARE THE SAME - THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STABLE AND HEALTHY  
SOCIETY, THE PRESERVATION OF A STRONG AND EXPANDING  
ECONOMY. NO PEACETIME GOVERNMENT, I VENTURE TO  
SUGGEST, HAS EVER FACED MORE COMPLEX AND TESTING  
PROBLEMS IN ACHIEVING THIS. THE CHALLENGE IS A GLOBAL  
ONE, A UNIVERSAL ONE. AT SUCH A TIME WE MUST LOOK TO  
OUR TRADITIONAL ALLIES IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT  
FOR LOYALTY AND SUPPORT. OUR ULTIMATE TASK IS TO  
PRESERVE THE UNDERLYING STRENGTH OF THE ECONOMY.  
OUR IMMEDIATE TASK IS TO RESTRAIN ITS PRESENT  
INFLATIONARY TENDENCIES.

I DO NOT NEED TO REMIND YOU HOW DANGEROUS  
AND DESTRUCTIVE INFLATION CAN BE FOR THE WORKER AND  
HIS FAMILY. IT CAN DESTROY ALL YOUR EFFORTS - AND OURS -  
TO IMPROVE LIVING STANDARDS AND PROMOTE SECURITY AND  
SOCIAL JUSTICE. IT CAN ALSO, AS I SAY, DESTROY THE  
GOVERNMENT.

THAT IS WHY, FROM THE MOMENT THE GOVERNMENT WAS ELECTED, IT HAS WORKED UNREMITTINGLY, CEASELESSLY, TO ATTACK INFLATION AT ITS ROOTS - NOT JUST THE SYMPTOMS, BUT THE CAUSES. AND THAT IS A MUCH MORE DIFFICULT BUSINESS - TO ISOLATE AND ATTACK THE CAUSES, THE DEEP-SEATED FORCES THAT CREATE WASTE AND INEFFICIENCY AND HIGH COSTS IN THE ECONOMY. I CANNOT PRETEND, LIKE MR. SNEDDEN, THAT WE HAVE FOUND THE MAGIC SOLUTION; BUT WE HAVE TRIED. WE WILL GO ON TRYING TILL WE WIN THE BATTLE. ALREADY WE HAVE MADE FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURAL REFORMS IN OUR TARIFFS, IN OUR METHODS OF ASSISTANCE TO INDUSTRY, IN OUR APPROACH TO SUBSIDIES AND THE USE OF MANPOWER. ALL THESE REFORMS ARE ESSENTIAL TO A LONG-TERM ANTI-INFLATIONARY POLICY. THE IMMEDIATE BATTLE, HOWEVER, IS STILL FAR FROM WON. AND IN THAT BATTLE EVERY SECTION OF THE COMMUNITY MUST PLAY A PART AND, IF NECESSARY, ACCEPT SOME MEASURE OF SACRIFICE.

THE TRADITIONAL CYCLE OF BOOM AND STAGNATION IN THE ECONOMY, SO MUCH A FEATURE OF LIBERAL ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT, HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY MARKED IN YOUR OWN INDUSTRY. IN THE PAST 13 YEARS THERE HAVE BEEN THREE DISTINCT BOOMS AND THREE SEVERE DOWNTURNS IN THE BUILDING TRADE. IN JUNE 1972, AT THE TIME OF THE LAST RECESSION IN THE INDUSTRY, THERE WERE 230 UNEMPLOYED FOR EVERY 100 REGISTERED VACANCIES IN THE SKILLED BUILDING TRADES. THIS IS AN INTOLERABLE RECORD OF WASTE, INSTABILITY AND HARDSHIP. OUR TASK AS A GOVERNMENT IS TO TRY TO REDUCE THESE FLUCTUATIONS, TO KEEP THE INDUSTRY AT FULL EMPLOYMENT LEVELS AND MAINTAIN A RATE OF GROWTH THAT WILL ENABLE IT TO SUPPLY US WITH THE HOUSES, OFFICES, SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS REQUIRED BY OUR GROWING POPULATION. I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE CAN ACHIEVE THIS, BUT WE WILL ACHIEVE IT ONLY WITH YOUR SUPPORT AND CO-OPERATION.

LET ME FIRST SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF INFLATION AS IT BEARS ON YOUR OWN INDUSTRY. NO GOVERNMENT CAN HOPE TO CONTROL INFLATION WHEN, IN A FULLY-STRETCHED ECONOMY, BANKS AND OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS ARE SO FLUSH WITH FUNDS THAT THEY ARE ABLE TO SUPPORT AN EXCESSIVE DEMAND FOR GOODS AND SERVICES. THE OLD STORY - TOO MUCH MONEY CHASING TOO FEW GOODS - APPLIES WITH UNIQUE FORCE TO THE BUILDING INDUSTRY. THE PRESENT TIGHT LIQUIDITY AND HIGH INTEREST RATES ARE A RESULT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO CONTROL AND REDUCE INFLATION. WE SHALL NOT CAPITULATE, WE SHALL NOT WAVER FROM THIS POLICY TO ACHIEVE SOME SHORT-LIVED POPULARITY. NOBODY LIKES A TIGHT MONETARY POLICY, LEAST OF ALL A LABOR GOVERNMENT. BUT IT IS NECESSARY FOR THE PRESENT TO KEEP MONEY TIGHT TO RESTRAIN PRIVATE SECTOR SPENDING. AS I TOLD THE PREMIERS ON 7 JUNE:

"WE ARE FOLLOWING SUCH A MONETARY POLICY, NOT BECAUSE WE LIKE ITS CONSEQUENCES IN TERMS OF FINANCIAL STRINGENCY AND HIGHER INTEREST RATES, BUT BECAUSE WE HAVE TO IF THERE IS TO BE A CURB ON EXCESSIVE PRIVATE SPENDING."

WITHIN THAT OVER-RIDING POLICY OBJECTIVE, HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THAT THE ESSENTIAL NEEDS OF THE ECONOMY FOR FINANCE MUST BE MET. WE WILL CERTAINLY NOT PERMIT ANY GENERAL DOWNTURN IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY. WE WANT TO SEE THAT MONEY AND CREDIT ARE AVAILABLE TO FINANCE ORDERLY ECONOMIC EXPANSION. WITH THAT IN MIND, WE HAVE, IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS, RELEASED ADDITIONAL FUNDS TOTALLING ALMOST \$349 MILLION. IN ADDITION, FURTHER FUNDS HAVE BEEN FREED TO HELP THE MAJOR TRADING BANKS MAKE LOANS TO INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND RURAL PRODUCERS.

FOR ALL THAT, I MUST SAY FRANKLY THAT A GENERALLY RESTRICTIVE MONETARY POLICY WILL NEED TO BE MAINTAINED FOR SOME TIME IF EXCESSIVE DEMAND PRESSURES ARE TO BE CURBED AND INFLATION BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. IF MONETARY POLICY SOUGHT TO PREVENT A RISE IN INTEREST RATES WHEN DEMANDS FOR CREDIT WERE BOOMING, MONEY AND CREDIT WOULD EXPAND EXPLOSIVELY, WITH DEVASTATING EFFECTS ON PRICES. IN THE END, ANY SUCH POLICY WOULD PROVE FUTILE. OBVIOUSLY THERE ARE SOME COSTS TO THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED IN OUR PRESENT RESTRAINTS. BUT WOULD-BE HOME BUYERS, THOSE ON FIXED INCOMES, EXPORTERS AND THE COMMUNITY GENERALLY WOULD SUFFER MUCH MORE IF INFLATION WERE ALLOWED TO RUN UNCHECKED.

IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S MONETARY POLICIES ARE BEGINNING TO STABILISE THE PRICE OF HOUSES. AFTER INCREASING BY 20 PER CENT OR MORE DURING THE PAST YEAR, THERE ARE NOW ALMOST DAILY REPORTS THAT HOUSE PRICES ARE LEVELLING OUT AND, IN SOME CASES, FALLING. OBVIOUSLY IT WOULD SERVE NO WORTHWHILE PURPOSE TO INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF HOUSING FINANCE WHEN THE HOUSING INDUSTRY IS OVER-STRETCHED, AS IT HAS BEEN DURING THE PAST EIGHTEEN MONTHS. ADDITIONAL FINANCE DOES NOT BUILD MORE HOUSES: IT SIMPLY ADDS TO INFLATIONARY PRESSURES, TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF ALL POTENTIAL HOME-BUYERS. NOR DOES IT CREATE MORE JOBS OR PROMOTE THE SECURITY OF THE BUILDING WORKER. YET THE FACT IS THAT IN THE YEAR TO THE MARCH QUARTER 1974 - THE LATEST PERIOD FOR WHICH STATISTICS ARE AVAILABLE - MORE DWELLINGS WERE APPROVED, COMMENCED AND COMPLETED THAN EVER BEFORE. AT THE END OF MARCH THERE WERE OVER 100,000 DWELLINGS UNDER CONSTRUCTION. THIS REPRESENTED AN INCREASE OF 30 PER CENT COMPARED WITH A YEAR EARLIER AND 54 PER CENT COMPARED WITH 1972.

THIS BACKLOG OF WORK REFLECTS MAINLY THE ENORMOUS INCREASE OF 44 PER CENT IN THE NUMBER OF HOUSING LOANS APPROVED IN 1972/73. IT HAS SERVED TO MAINTAIN ACTIVITY IN THE INDUSTRY AT A VERY HIGH LEVEL IN THE JUNE QUARTER. STATISTICAL DATA AND INDUSTRY REPORTS SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE LABOUR FOR FINISHING TRADES AND CERTAIN MATERIALS AND APPLIANCES ARE STILL IN SHORT SUPPLY, PRESSURES ON THE INDUSTRY HAVE BEGUN TO EASE.

THIS IS TO BE WELCOMED. THE BIG PROBLEM IN THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN ONE OF EXCESSIVE DEMAND FOR RESOURCES. THE RESULTING STRAINS HAVE BEEN ALL TOO EVIDENT IN DELAYS, ESCALATING PRICES AND A REDUCTION IN PUBLIC SECTOR WELFARE HOUSING. OUR MEASURES HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO MODERATE THESE EXCESSIVE DEMAND PRESSURES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND TO PROVIDE SCOPE FOR AN EXPANSION OF PUBLIC SECTOR HOUSING. THESE OBJECTIVES ARE NOW BEING ACHIEVED. CONTRACTORS ARE AGAIN SHOWING AN INTEREST IN TENDERING FOR PUBLIC HOUSING. AT THE SAME TIME WE HAVE INCREASED OUR ALLOCATIONS TO THE STATES TO PREVENT ANY UNDUE REDUCTION IN THE DWELLING CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE. ADVANCES TO THE STATES FOR WELFARE HOUSING IN 1974-75 WILL TOTAL \$235 MILLION - A RECORD FOR ANY GOVERNMENT. AND WE HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR WELFARE HOUSING IF THE STATES CAN USE THEM PRODUCTIVELY.



I WANT TO DEAL TODAY WITH TWO SPECIFIC PROPOSALS OF DIRECT IMPORTANCE TO YOUR MEMBERS. THE FIRST OF THEM, WE BELIEVE, WILL SERVE A TRIPLE PURPOSE IN RESTRAINING INFLATION, REDUCING INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES AND PROMOTING THE WELL-BEING AND SECURITY OF WAGE AND SALARY EARNERS. AS MY COLLEAGUE CLYDE CAMERON HAS ANNOUNCED, THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE SUPPORTING A POLICY OF WAGE INDEXATION AT NEXT WEEK'S CONFERENCE CALLED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION COMMISSION, MR JUSTICE MOORE. OUR INTENTION IS TO RESTORE QUARTERLY AUTOMATIC COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENTS TO WAGES.

I DO NOT SUGGEST FOR A MOMENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S SOLE OBLIGATION TO THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IS TO COMPENSATE WAGE EARNERS FOR INCREASES IN THE COST OF LIVING, OR THAT SUCH ADJUSTMENTS SHOULD BE THE LIMIT OF THE WAGE-EARNER'S EXPECTATIONS. WE SEE INDEXATION AS ONE OF A SERIES OF WAGE PROPOSALS. WE WOULD HOPE THAT, IN RETURN FOR INDEXATION, UNIONS WOULD FORGO ANY WAGE CLAIMS BASED SOLELY ON PRICE MOVEMENTS AND THAT FURTHER WAGE AND SALARY INCREASES - THOSE OF GENUINE SUBSTANCE AND LONG-TERM VALUE - WOULD BE BASED LARGELY ON PRODUCTIVITY, OR CHANGES IN WORK VALUE OR CONDITIONS. THESE CHANGES WOULD BE MADE PRINCIPALLY THROUGH DETERMINATIONS OF THE COMMISSION. WE WANT TO RESTORE THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMISSION. WE WANT IT ONCE AGAIN TO BE THE MAJOR INFLUENCE ON WAGE MOVEMENTS IN THIS COUNTRY.

I HAVE TO TELL YOU FRANKLY THAT REPEATED WAGE RISES OF THE ORDER OF 15 OR 20 PER CENT OR MORE ARE UNSUPPORTABLE IN PRESENT ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES. WE ALL KNOW, OF COURSE, WHY SUCH CLAIMS HAVE BEEN MADE AND, IN MOST CASES, WHY THEY HAVE BEEN GRANTED. THEY HAVE BEEN MADE, NOT MERELY TO COMPENSATE WORKERS FOR PRICE RISES THAT HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED, BUT TO PROTECT THEM AGAINST RISES WHICH THEY ANTICIPATE IN THE FUTURE. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT INDEXATION WILL REMOVE THE NEED AND THE INCENTIVE FOR SUCH CLAIMS. WHEN WORKERS KNOW THAT THEY WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY COMPENSATED - AS THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO BE - FOR INCREASES IN THE COST OF LIVING, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO DIRECT THEIR WAGE NEGOTIATIONS TO QUESTIONS OF REAL AND LASTING IMPORTANCE TO THEIR WELFARE AND THEIR INDUSTRY. SOME MODERATION IN THE SCALE OF WAGE CLAIMS WILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT LONG-TERM ANTI-INFLATIONARY EFFECTS.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR ATTITUDE AND THAT OF OUR OPPONENTS. THE LAST TIME WORKERS NEEDED THIS PROTECTION AGAINST PRICE INCREASES - IN THE EARLY 1950s - THE LIBERALS DEPRIVED THEM OF IT. THEY REMOVED QUARTERLY ADJUSTMENTS WITHOUT SUBSTITUTING ANY GUARANTEE AGAINST THE ERODING EFFECTS OF THE COST OF LIVING. NO WONDER THERE WAS A WAVE OF INDUSTRIAL UNREST.

WE HAVE STRONG HOPES THAT OUR PROPOSALS WILL REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF WORKING DAYS LOST THROUGH STRIKES. IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT THE FIGURES FOR WORKING DAYS LOST THIS YEAR ARE THE HIGHEST FOR MANY YEARS. YET 71.3 PER CENT OF THE STRIKES IN MAY AND JUNE THIS YEAR WERE DUE TO DISPUTES OVER WAGES, AND THE VAST MAJORITY OF THOSE WERE DUE TO WAGE DEMANDS REVOLVING AROUND PRICE MOVEMENTS. SO, IN OUR VIEW, QUARTERLY ADJUSTMENTS ARE QUITE CRITICAL TO BOTH GOOD INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION. WE HAVE CERTAINLY BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE CO-OPERATION AND GOODWILL SHOWN BY THE MAJOR UNIONS.

I COME NOW TO A SECOND PROPOSAL OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE TO THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND THE FUTURE STRENGTH OF THE ECONOMY. ON 17 JULY MR. CAMERON TABLED IN PARLIAMENT THE REPORT OF THE COCHRANE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO LABOUR MARKET TRAINING. MR. CAMERON'S SUBMISSION TO CABINET ON RETRAINING - BASED ON THE COCHRANE REPORT - RECOMMENDED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SYSTEM (NEAT). THIS PROPOSAL WAS APPROVED BY CABINET ON 8 JULY. I PAY TRIBUTE TO YOUR UNION FOR ITS READINESS TO JOIN THE SCHEME AND CO-OPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN MAKING IT A SUCCESS.

THE OPPORTUNITIES MADE AVAILABLE UNDER NEAT WILL BE AVAILABLE EQUALLY TO WOMEN AND MEN. WE SEE THE SCHEME AS PART OF A GENERAL MANPOWER POLICY TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF ALL WORKERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO FIND THAT THEIR OPPORTUNITIES AND ASPIRATIONS ARE THWARTED BY AN INADEQUATE EDUCATION.

I EMPHASISE THAT THE SCHEME IS NO MERE SHORT-TERM PALLIATIVE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT. IT WILL COVER A WIDE RANGE OF SKILLS, AND WHILE IT WILL BE PROMPT AND FLEXIBLE IN RELIEVING SHORT-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT, ITS CHIEF AIM WILL BE TO RESTRUCTURE THE WORK FORCE TO ENABLE CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THE SUPPLY OF ALL TYPES OF LABOUR.

THE SCHEME WILL FULFIL THIS GOAL BY ASSISTING PEOPLE WHOSE CAREERS HAVE BEEN EITHER CIRCUMSCRIBED OR CURTAILED BY CHANGES IN THE NATURE OF THE LABOUR REQUIREMENTS OF INDUSTRY, BY STRUCTURAL CHANGES WITHIN INDIVIDUAL INDUSTRIES OR THROUGHOUT THE ECONOMY, BY CHANGES IN DEMAND BY TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE, BY GOVERNMENT POLICIES OR CHANGES IN THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF CERTAIN GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS. IT WILL HELP PEOPLE DEVELOP NEW SKILLS RELEVANT TO THE NEEDS OF MODERN INDUSTRY. IT WILL AIM AT IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF SKILLS WITHIN THE WORKFORCE AND THE QUALITY OF LABOUR AVAILABLE TO INDUSTRY. FURTHERMORE, IT WILL ENCOURAGE THE CONCEPT OF CONTINUING TRAINING THROUGHOUT AN INDIVIDUAL'S WORKING LIFE SO THAT HIS SKILLS WILL REMAIN RELEVANT TO THE NEEDS OF SOCIETY,

NEAT AIMS PRIMARILY AT PROVIDING FOR THE TRAINING NEEDS OF ADULTS. IT WILL GRANT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER OF PRIORITIES:

1. ANY PERSONS RENDERED REDUNDANT BY GOVERNMENT POLICIES.
2. PERSONS RENDERED REDUNDANT BY TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES.
3. PERSONS WHOSE EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY HEALTH, IMPRISONMENT OR INAPPROPRIATE WORK SKILLS.
4. PERSONS WHOSE TRAINING WILL OFFSET SHORTAGES OF SPECIFIC SKILLS.
5. PERSONS WISHING TO UPGRADE THEIR TRAINING ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE.

THE SCHEME WILL ENDEAVOUR TO PROVIDE A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR EVERY APPLICANT IN LINE WITH HIS ASPIRATIONS AND HIS ABILITY TO COMPLETE A COURSE OF TRAINING IN NEEDED SKILLS. THE TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE TO GIVE WHATEVER PRELIMINARY OR PREPARATORY TUITION IS NECESSARY TO ALLOW ENTRY INTO STANDARD TRAINING PROGRAMS. THERE WILL BE FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME TRAINING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, AND CORRESPONDENCE TUITION WHERE APPROPRIATE.

THE FULL-TIME TRAINING ALLOWANCES WILL BE EQUAL TO THE AVERAGE ADULT MALE AWARD WAGE FOR ALL ADULT TRAINEES AND FOR THOSE UNDER 21 WITH DEPENDENTS, WITH A SLIDING SCALE OF ALLOWANCES FOR TRAINEES BELOW 21 DOWN TO 50 PER CENT OF THE RATE FOR THOSE UNDER 18. ALLOWANCES WILL BE PROVIDED WHERE NECESSARY FOR FARES, TUITION AND EXAMINATION FEES, BOOKS AND LIVING AWAY-FROM-HOME EXPENSES.

THOSE ARE SOME OF THE MEASURES WE HAVE BROUGHT FORWARD TO BRING WAGE JUSTICE AND WIDER OPPORTUNITIES TO TRADE UNION MEMBERS. THERE ARE OTHERS - STILL IN THEIR EARLY STAGES.

EVERY ONE OF OUR MEASURES WILL BENEFIT THE WORKING MAN AND WOMAN, THE WAGE EARNER, THE UNIONIST. WE ARE EXAMINING SCHEMES FOR NATIONAL COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION ON THE BASIS OF THE REPORT BY MR. JUSTICE E.A. WOODHOUSE. WE ARE COMMITTED TO A NATIONAL SUPERANNUATION SCHEME FOR ALL EMPLOYEES. WE ARE PLEDGED TO ESTABLISH AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE. OUR RESTRUCTURING OF THE TAX SCALES WILL TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE NEEDS OF LOWER-PAID WORKERS. OUR PLANS FOR CHILD CARE - YES, CHILD CARE - WILL GIVE A NEW DEAL TO THE WORKING MOTHER. IT IS TRUE THAT THESE PLANS HAVE BEEN BRIEFLY DEFERRED OUT OF ECONOMIC NECESSITY. THE FACT REMAINS THAT WE WILL BE SPENDING MORE ON ESSENTIAL CHILD CARE SERVICES THAN EVER BEFORE. IT WILL BE AN IMPROVED AND ENLARGED CHILD CARE SCHEME.

I REJECT UTTERLY THE CYNICAL OPPORTUNISM OF AN OPPOSITION THAT ACCUSES US OF NEGLECTING MOTHERS AND CHILDREN WHEN FOR YEARS THEIR OWN NIGGARDLY CHILD CARE PLANS CONDEMNED THOUSANDS OF WORKING MOTHERS TO HARDSHIP. THE DIFFERENCE IS SIMPLY THIS: THEY DID NEXT TO NOTHING AND PROMISED NEXT TO NOTHING. WE ARE PLEDGED TO A MASSIVE AND FUNDAMENTAL CHILD CARE PROGRAM.

I CANNOT CONCEAL FROM YOU - I CANNOT EMPHASISE TOO MUCH - THAT THE SUCCESS OF ALL THESE PLANS DEPENDS ON THE MAINTENANCE OF A STRONG, HEALTHY ECONOMY. THAT IS WHY WE MUST CO-OPERATE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST INFLATION. THAT IS WHY WE MUST STAND TOGETHER, WORK TOGETHER, TO RESIST THE SABOTAGE AND OBSTRUCTION OF THE OPPOSITION. LET ME GIVE YOU ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS PETTY AND VICIOUS OBSTRUCTIONISM THAT CONCERNS THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. WE HAVE INTRODUCED A CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION BILL. IT WILL, AMONG OTHER THINGS, FACILITATE THE MAKING OF INDUSTRIAL AGREEMENTS. IT WAS PART OF OUR POLICY; IT WAS APPROVED BY THE PEOPLE; IT IS SUPPORTED BY THE UNIONS AND THE EMPLOYERS. YET THE OPPOSITION WILL OPPOSE IT. WHAT SORT OF DEMOCRACY IS THAT? YOU WANT IT; THE EMPLOYERS WANT IT; THE PEOPLE WANT IT. BUT THE OPPOSITION SAYS NO.



YOU SHOULD HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE CHOICE BEFORE YOU. IT IS SOMETIMES TEMPTING FOR PROFESSIONAL UNION LEADERS TO TAKE THE CYNICAL VIEW THAT ONE GOVERNMENT IS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER. THE FACT IS THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAS DONE MORE FOR THE WELFARE OF WORKING MEN AND WOMEN THAN ANY GOVERNMENT IN OUR HISTORY. EVERY DECISION WE HAVE TAKEN, EVERY PRIORITY WE HAVE ADOPTED, HAS BEEN DIRECTED TO THE BENEFIT OF THOSE MOST IN NEED, TO THE CARE OF THE WEAK AND VULNERABLE SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND TO THE CREATION OF WIDER AND MORE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL OUR CITIZENS.

THE AUSTRALIAN WORKER TODAY IS BETTER OFF THAN HE HAS EVER BEEN - NOT JUST IN MATERIAL TERMS, IMPORTANT AS THAT IS, BUT IN THE RANGE AND QUALITY OF SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES WE HAVE OPENED UP FOR HIM. REMEMBER ALL WE HAVE DONE FOR EDUCATION - EDUCATION AT EVERY LEVEL; FOR SOCIAL SECURITY; FOR AUSTRALIA'S REPUTATION IN THE WORLD. REMEMBER ALL WE HAVE DONE FOR MIGRANTS, WHO ARE SUCH A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP.

WHERE WOULD WE BE TODAY IF THE LIBERALS HAD STILL BEEN IN POWER SINCE 1972? WE WOULD BE REELING UNDER THE WORST AND CRUEST KINDS OF ANTI-INFLATIONARY ACTION: MASSIVE UNEMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL STAGNATION. OUR YOUNG WORKERS WOULD STILL BE SUBJECT TO CONSCRIPTION. OUR SCHOOLS WOULD STILL BE IMPOVERISHED AND DEVOID OF HOPE. PRICES, UNCHECKED BY OUR TRIBUNAL, WOULD BE FAR HIGHER THAN THEY ARE NOW. OUR DOLLAR WOULD STILL BE UNDERVALUED. OUR INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES WOULD STILL BE VULNERABLE TO FOREIGN TAKEOVER AND CONTROL. THE WHOLE SINISTER APPARATUS OF PENAL CLAUSES AND ANTI-UNION PROPAGANDA WOULD BE IN FULL STRIDE, INTIMIDATING THE WORKER AND THREATENING THE UNIONS WITH PENALTIES AND RESTRAINTS.

OUR OPPONENTS KNOW THIS. THEY BITTERLY RESENT WHAT WE ARE DOING TO MODERNISE AND DEMOCRATISE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY. HOW INCREDIBLE IT IS, HOW MONSTROUS, THAT LESS THAN THREE MONTHS AFTER A GENERAL ELECTION THE TWO-TIME LOSERS SHOULD STILL BE RESISTING THE UMPIRE'S DECISION, STILL CLINGING TO A PATHETIC BELIEF IN THEIR GOD-GIVEN RIGHT TO RULE. I APPEAL TO YOU TO STAND BESIDE THE GOVERNMENT YOU ELECTED. I APPEAL TO YOU TO CO-OPERATE WITH US IN ALL WE ARE DOING, TO MOBILIZE THE POWER AND RESOURCES OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN RESISTING THE SABOTAGE OF THE OPPOSITION AND EXPOSING THEIR HYPOCRISY AND DECEIT. LET THIS CONFERENCE, WHICH I NOW HAVE PLEASURE IN DECLARING OPEN, BE THE FIRST MOVE IN THIS DRIVE TO CONFIRM OUR SOLIDARITY, TO RESTORE OUR DETERMINATION AND RENEW OUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE.

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