

NOTES FOR THE PRIME MINISTER
FOR CLERMONT AND EMERALD, QLD.
29 NOVEMBER 1974

1. I WAS LAST IN EMERALD - THIS RICH AND BEAUTIFUL REGION OF CENTRAL WESTERN QUEENSLAND - IN THE EARLY 1960'S. I REMEMBER FONDLY THE HOSPITALITY OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS DISTRICT. LAST WEEK THE NATIONAL PARTY SENT ME A TELEGRAM TELLING ME TO CANCEL MY VISIT. I REPLIED PROMPTLY AND IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS. I WILL NOT BE DETERRED FROM MEETING AND DISCUSSING MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE WITH QUEENSLANDERS BECAUSE OF A HANDFUL OF ROWDY DEMONSTRATORS ORGANISED BY THE NATIONAL PARTY. THE HOOLIGANISM, THE ROWDINESS, THE DOWNRIGHT OBSCENITY OF A FEW HOOLIGANS IS QUITE FOREIGN TO QUEENSLAND. IT IS REJECTED BY THE VAST MAJORITY OF DECENT PEOPLE OF THIS STATE.

2. I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR DISTRICT, YOUR LOCAL NEEDS AND PROBLEMS. A CAMPAIGN IS A GOOD TIME TO GET A MESSAGE AS WELL AS GIVING A MESSAGE. IT AMAZES ME THAT WE HEAR SO MUCH SCARE TALK AND NONSENSE FROM MR. BJELKE-PETERSEN ABOUT CENTRALISM. OUR POLICIES ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT GIVE THE LIE TO THIS TALK. WE ARE DOING MORE TO HELP LOCAL COUNCILS UPGRADE THEIR SERVICES AND AMENITIES THAN ANY GOVERNMENT BEFORE US. THIS YEAR, ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE GRANTS COMMISSION, WE APPROVED DIRECT GRANTS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA TOTALLING %56.3 MILLION. QUEENSLAND'S SHARE IS \$8.9 MILLION. EMERALD IS RECEIVING \$92,000. NO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS EVER GIVEN DIRECT GRANTS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BEFORE. AND THAT MONEY CAN BE SPENT IN ANY WAY THE LOCAL COUNCILS WISH.

The Bellendenker Shire Council is receiving \$107,000.

REMEMBER WHAT OUR OPPONENTS USED TO SAY BEFORE WE AMENDED THE GRANTS COMMISSION ACT TO MAKE THESE GRANTS POSSIBLE: CANBERRA WOULD BE TAKING OVER LOCAL COUNCILS AND CONTROLLING THEIR PURSE STRINGS. CANBERRA'S TENTACLES WOULD BE REACHING INTO EVERY SHIRE AND MUNICIPALITY IN AUSTRALIA. YOU CAN SEE NOW WHAT NONSENSE THAT WAS. OUR GRANTS ARE DIRECT, INTEREST-FREE, NON-REPAYABLE. THERE ARE NO STRINGS ATTACHED TO THE WAY THE MONEY IS USED.

3. OUR GENEROSITY TO QUEENSLAND IS NOT CONFINED TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT. DESPITE ALL THE BLEATS AND PROTESTS FROM YOUR OUTGOING PREMIER WE HAVE GIVEN MORE MONEY TO THE STATE THAN ANY PREVIOUS AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. OUR TOTAL PAYMENTS TO QUEENSLAND LAST YEAR WERE \$739 MILLION - \$382 PER HEAD OF POPULATION COMPARED WITH AVERAGE PAYMENTS TO ALL STATES OF \$345 PER HEAD. ANY BRAKE ON QUEENSLAND'S DEVELOPMENT IS NOT DUE TO US. IT IS DUE TO YOUR PREMIER. HE HAS TURNED DOWN \$50 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDS FOR GROWTH CENTRES AND LAND STABILISATION. AND HE SPENDS THE MONEY WE GIVE HIM MORE SLOWLY AND SPARINGLY THAN ANY OTHER STATE. WE CAN MAKE MONEY AVAILABLE BUT WE CAN'T SPEND IT ON OUR OWN. WE NEED THE CO-OPERATION OF THE STATE.

4. WE HAVE GIVEN THE STATES A VIRTUAL BLANK CHEQUE FOR WELFARE HOUSING. ONLY THIS MONTH WE ALLOCATED A FURTHER \$8 MILLION TO QUEENSLAND - IN ADDITION TO OUR EARLIER RECORD ALLOCATIONS - WHEN THEY SHOWED THEY HAD THEIR PLANS READY AND COULD SPEND THE MONEY. THERE IS NO REASON WHY FURTHER FUNDS CANNOT BE SPENT THIS YEAR, EXCEPT THAT THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT IS NOT PREPARED TO SPEND THEM. SOUTH AUSTRALIA - WITH TWO-THIRDS YOUR POPULATION - IS SPENDING AT LEAST \$35 MILLION MORE ON HOUSING THAN QUEENSLAND IS MANAGING TO SPEND.

THIS ATTITUDE IS COSTING THE JOBS OF BUILDING WORKERS. IT IS HOLDING BACK YOUR STATE.

5. MR. BJELKE-PETERSEN REPEATEDLY TELLS US THAT HE WON'T TAKE OUR MONEY. I KNOW HE'S A RELIGIOUS MAN BUT HE IS CARRYING RELIGION TOO FAR WHEN HE TAKES A VOW OF POVERTY ON BEHALF OF QUEENSLAND.

6. WHEN YOUR CANDIDATE JIM TURNER INVITED ME TO VISIT YOUR DISTRICT - IT WAS BEFORE THIS ELECTION WAS ANNOUNCED - HE TOLD ME SOMETHING OF YOUR PROBLEMS AS A COMPARATIVELY ISOLATED AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT. THERE IS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PROBLEM OF HIGH TELEPHONE COSTS AND DELAYS. MY COLLEAGUE REG BISHOP, THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL, IS CONSIDERING A PROPOSAL FROM PERC TUCKER FOR A RADIO TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBER NETWORK LINKED TO THE NATIONAL TELEPHONE SYSTEM. YOU CAN BE SURE THAT IF THIS SCHEME IS TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE WE WILL GIVE IT CLOSE ATTENTION. OUR EXPERTS WILL LOOK AT IT AND SEE IF IT OFFERS SOME ANSWERS TO THE NEEDS OF ISOLATED TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBERS.

7. WE ARE PARTICIPATING ON A DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR BASIS WITH QUEENSLAND IN A \$720,000 PROGRAM FOR LOCUST CONTROL. MR. BJELKE-PETERSEN TRIED TO MISREPRESENT OUR ATTITUDE TO THIS PROBLEM BY TELLING THE PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND WE WERE RESTRICTING OUR AID TO ONLY ONE TYPE OF LOCUST. I GAVE THE LIE TO THAT ALLEGATION. OUR FUNDS WILL HELP ERADICATE ANY SORT OF LOCUST WHICH DAMAGES AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. I WAS GLAD TO HAVE A LETTER RECENTLY FROM MR. L.V. PRICE, PRESIDENT OF THE QUEENSLAND GRAINGROWERS' ASSOCIATION, EXPRESSING HIS APPRECIATION OF OUR OFFER TO ASSIST QUEENSLAND'S LOCUST ERADICATION PROGRAM.

HE WROTE: "YOUR GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO ASSIST THIS PLAN IS MOST WELCOME AND WILL MAKE A REALLY CONSTRUCTIVE CONTROL EFFORT POSSIBLE."

8. WE ARE STEPPING UP BEEF ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN QUEENSLAND. IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS WE WILL BE SPENDING \$24 MILLION ON BEEF EXPORT ROADS IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA. FEDERAL LIBERAL- COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS GROSSLY NEGLECTED BEEF ROADS, WE ARE UPGRADING THE BEEF ROAD BETWEEN CLERMONT AND CHARTERS TOWERS. THIS IMPORTANT ROAD CONNECTS THE CATTLE BREEDING AREAS IN QUEENSLAND WITH THE FATTENING COUNTRY OF THE BRIGALOW AND THE CENTRAL WEST. WE MADE A SPECIAL GRANT OF \$3 MILLION TO ALLOW THE BITUMEN TO PROCEED SOUTH AS FAR AS MOUNT DOUGLAS. THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT IS DOING NOTHING TO IMPROVE THE ROAD.

ON 30 AUGUST 1973, MY COLLEAGUE REX PATTERSON WROTE TO COUNCILLOR TURNER OF THE BELYANDO SHIRE COUNCIL: "ON THE SUBJECT OF THE CHARTERS TOWERS-CLERMONT ROAD, I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT I AM AWARE OF ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE BEEF INDUSTRY AS WELL AS FOR A NUMBER OF OTHER PURPOSES SUCH AS PROVIDING THE RESIDENTS OF THE AREA WITH A MUCH NEEDED IMPROVED LINKING ROAD AND AS AN AID TO TOURIST INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT. AS I MENTIONED, THE CHARTERS-TOWERS CLERMONT ROAD IS RECEIVING CLOSE CONSIDERATION IN THE INVESTIGATIONS NOW IN PROGRESS FOR A POSSIBLE EXTENSION OF THE BEEF ROADS SCHEME BEYOND 30 JUNE 1974."

OUR EXTRA GRANT WAS THE RESULT OF THAT EXTENSION OF THE BEEF ROADS SCHEME.

9. ALTHOUGH RURAL ELECTRICITY COSTS IN QUEENSLAND ARE THE HIGHEST IN ALL THE EASTERN STATES, THE BJELKE-PETERSEN GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED TO CO-OPERATE WITH US IN SEEKING WAYS TO REDUCE THESE COSTS. HIGH ELECTRICITY COSTS HELP PUSH UP PRICES OVER A WIDE RANGE OF GOODS AND SERVICES. THE BJELKE-PETERSEN GOVERNMENT REFUSES TO USE ITS WIDE POWERS TO CONTROL PRICES AND RESISTED OUR ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN COMMONWEALTH POWER OVER PRICES BY REFERENDUM.

10. MR BJELKE-PETERSEN HAS REFUSED TO CO-OPERATE IN OUR PLANS FOR A SOIL CONSERVATION PROGRAM. I WROTE TO ALL THE PREMIERS ON 17 SEPTEMBER OFFERING A TOTAL GRANT TO ALL STATES OF \$2.5 MILLION FOR AN INTERIM PROGRAM FOR UP TO JUNE 1976. QUEENSLAND WAS OFFERED \$160,000 IN 1974-75 AND \$700,000 IN 1975-76 - THE HIGHEST AMOUNTS FOR ANY STATE. THE OUTGOING PREMIER HAS NOT YET TOLD US WHETHER HE WILL ACCEPT OUR OFFER.

11. UNDER THE LABOR GOVERNMENT WE HAVE SEEN THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT POST-WAR FALL FOR MANY YEARS IN THE INDEBTEDNESS OF RURAL PRODUCERS. IN 1971 THE BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS REPORTED THAT 7,570 AUSTRALIAN FARMERS APPLIED FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE RURAL RECONSTRUCTION BOARD. THIS YEAR THE FIGURE IS DOWN TO 523.

12. OUR DECISION TO ESTABLISH AN ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY AT A COST OF \$56 MILLION WILL HELP THE LOCAL BEEF INDUSTRY AND ALL LIVESTOCK INDUSTRIES IN AUSTRALIA.

13. THE FITZROY REGION HERE IN CENTRAL WESTERN QUEENSLAND WAS ONE OF THREE AREAS IN QUEENSLAND WHICH WE PROPOSED AS REGIONAL GROWTH CENTRES IN OUR ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN 1972. MR. BJLEKE-PETERSEN HAS BLOCKED OUR INITIAL PLANS TO DEVELOP TOWNSVILLE AS A GROWTH CENTRE.

 14. WE ARE AWARE OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF ISOLATED CHILDREN IN REGIONS SUCH AS YOURS. WE INTRODUCED A SPECIAL SCHEME LAST YEAR TO HELP THESE CHILDREN. THIS YEAR WE HAVE BUDGETED TO SPEND \$11.5 MILLION THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA, INCLUDING \$3.3 MILLION ON QUEENSLAND FOR THIS PURPOSE. WE ARE HELPING 2964 QUEENSLAND FAMILIES, AND 4899 QUEENSLAND CHILDREN, WITH OUR ISOLATED CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM THIS YEAR.
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