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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.
TO THE APEX CONVENTION, ALBURY
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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION -- A NEW PARTNERSHIP

THE BASIC CONTRACT BETWEEN THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE WAS SPELT OUT IN THE POLICY SPEECH WHICH I DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY FOR THE ELECTIONS OF 1972. IN THAT SPEECH I SAID:-

- "OUR PROGRAM HAS THREE GREAT AIMS. THEY ARE:
- . TO PROMOTE EQUALITY;
 - . TO INVOLVE THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA IN
THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF OUR LAND;
 - . AND TO LIBERATE THE TALENTS AND UPLIFT THE
HORIZONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE".

THE INTERVENING TWO YEARS AND FOUR MONTHS HAS BEEN A PERIOD OF VERY GREAT TURBULENCE AND TURMOIL AT HOME AND AROUND THE WORLD. GOVERNMENTS EVERYWHERE HAVE HAD TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS OF RAPID CHANGE NOT EXPERIENCED IN THE LIFETIME OF THE OLDEST OF US HERE. IN ALL THE MIXED ECONOMIES, THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM IS UNDERGOING UNEXAMPLED STRESS. IN ALL THE DEMOCRACIES, THE POLITICAL SYSTEMS ARE UNDER PROFOUND CHALLENGE. GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESS, ORGANISATIONS, GROUPS, FAMILIES, INDIVIDUALS ARE BEING CALLED UPON TO ADJUST AND ADAPT TO CHANGE AT A PACE AND TO A DEGREE SELDOM, IF EVER, ENCOUNTERED IN HISTORY.

IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IT MIGHT APPEAR THAT PRINCIPLES PROCLAIMED FOR THE PURPOSES OF AN ELECTION MORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO WOULD HAVE LITTLE RELEVANCE TODAY. THERE MAY BE THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT THE SHEER NUMBER OF DECISIONS WHICH HAVE HAD TO BE MADE, THE SPEED WITH WHICH THEY HAVE HAD TO BE MADE HAVE OBSCURED OR EVEN OVER-RIDDEN BASIC PRINCIPLES. I DO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE YEARS, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL BE SEEN TO HAVE PROMOTED THE THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES I PUT FORWARD IN 1972, THE PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE THE BASIS OF OUR CONTRACT WITH THE PEOPLE, WITH FIDELITY AND CONSISTENCY.

AT THIS APEX CONVENTION, IT IS THOROUGHLY APPROPRIATE THAT I SHOULD TRY TO PUT THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SECOND AIM WHICH I ASSERTED IN 1972 -- TO INVOLVE THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF OUR NATION. IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT I SHOULD DO SO BEFORE AN AUDIENCE OF APEXIANS -- MEMBERS OF THE MOST CONCERNED, THE MOST INVOLVED OF ALL OUR COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS. IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT I SHOULD DO SO IN THIS CITY, WHERE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ONE OF THE HIGHEST TASKS THAT CIVILISED MAN CAN UNDERTAKE - THE CREATION OF A GREAT CITY - WILL BE CRUCIAL IN DETERMINING THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF A NOBLE EXPERIMENT.

THE PROGRAM UNDERTAKEN BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS MEANT A GREATER DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IN MATTERS LIKE SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, WELFARE AND CITIES THAN HAD HITHERTO BEEN ACCEPTED IN AUSTRALIA. THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY IS THIS: IN MODERN COMMUNITIES, EVEN THE WEALTHIEST FAMILY CANNOT PROVIDE ITS MEMBERS WITH THE BEST EDUCATION, WITH THE BEST MEDICAL TREATMENT, THE BEST ENVIRONMENT, UNAIDED BY THE COMMUNITY. INCREASINGLY, THE BASIC SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES WHICH DETERMINE THE REAL STANDARD OF LIFE OF A FAMILY OR AN INDIVIDUAL CAN ONLY BE PROVIDED BY THE COMMUNITY AND ONLY TO THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE COMMUNITY IS WILLING TO PROVIDE THEM. EITHER THE COMMUNITY PROVIDES THEM OR THEY WILL NOT BE PROVIDED AT ALL. IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT, THIS MEANS THAT THE COMMUNITY, THROUGH THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, MUST FINANCE THEM OR THEY WILL NOT BE FINANCED AT ALL. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED THAT THESE SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE PROVIDED AND THAT THEY WILL BE FINANCED. AND A NATIONAL FINANCIAL COMMITMENT MUST INEVITABLY MEAN A NATIONAL INVOLVEMENT.

BOTH BEFORE AND SINCE WE CAME TO OFFICE, THIS APPROACH - THIS NATIONAL INVOLVEMENT - HAS BEEN CRITICISED ON A NUMBER OF GROUNDS. I'D LIKE TO DEAL WITH TWO OF THE CRITICISMS. ONE IS THE CHARGE OF CENTRALISM. THE OTHER IS THE FEAR THAT A BLOATED BUREAUCRACY - BUREAUCRACIES ARE OF COURSE ALWAYS BLOATED - THE FEAR THAT UNFEELING PUBLIC SERVANTS IN CANBERRA - AND PUBLIC SERVANTS IN CANBERRA ARE ALWAYS UNFEELING - WILL DESTROY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE,

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, EITHER BY MAKING VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS LIKE APEX REDUNDANT OR BY THROTTLING THEM WITH RED TAPE.

I MAINTAIN, ON THE CONTRARY, THESE TWO PROPOSITIONS:-

FIRST, THAT OUR NATIONAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMS WILL REPLACE THE EXISTING STATE CENTRALISM WITH GENUINE REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION;

AND SECONDLY, THAT THE PROGRAMS PROVIDE FOR, OR RATHER, POSITIVELY REQUIRE A LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT AND INITIATIVE BY GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE COMMUNITY WHICH MAKES THE WORK OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS LIKE APEX MORE RELEVANT, MORE REWARDING, MORE EFFECTIVE, MORE EXCITING, THAN EVER BEFORE.

LATER, I SHALL REFER TO SOME SPECIFIC PROGRAMS IN WELFARE, HEALTH, EDUCATION AND AREA IMPROVEMENT WHERE WE SEEK AND NEED PARTICIPATION BY AND COOPERATION WITH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS, PROGRAMS IN WHICH APEX IS ALREADY INVOLVED. I SHOULD SAY, HOWEVER, THAT OUR WISH FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IS BEING PUT INTO EFFECT OVER A VERY WIDE RANGE OF POLICY MAKING AND DECISION TAKING.

THE NUMEROUS ROYAL COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES OF INQUIRY AND TASK FORCES WE HAVE ESTABLISHED ARE NOT ONLY DESIGNED TO PROVIDE THE BEST ADVICE FROM THE BEST QUALIFIED MEN AND WOMEN. THEY HAVE ALSO DEMONSTRATED OUR INTENTION TO HAVE FULL PUBLIC INQUIRY AND FREE PUBLIC DEBATE BEFORE FAR-REACHING DECISIONS ARE TAKEN. THERE IS NO BETTER ILLUSTRATION THAN THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION ITSELF. HERE WE ARE TRYING TO GET TO THE VERY HEART OF THE MATTER - THE FUNDAMENTAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE GENERAL COMMUNITY.

SHORTLY AFTER ITS ESTABLISHMENT, THE COMMISSION INVITED INTERESTED ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS TO MAKE WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO IT ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE. THE COMMISSION WROTE TO MORE THAN 150 GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND 500 ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA, BUSINESS GROUPS, CHURCHES, VOLUNTARY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS, EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS, AND PROFESSIONAL AND WELFARE BODIES, TO INFORM THEM OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SEEKING THEIR COMMENTS.

WITH THE AID OF THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE, HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT WAS GIVEN TO LESS ARTICULATE AND LESS WELL-ORGANISED CITIZENS TO PREPARE SUBMISSIONS. THE ROYAL COMMISSION'S ADVISER ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND HIS STAFF ASSISTED AND SOLICITED MANY SUCH SUBMISSIONS TO GENERATE AS WIDE A HEARING OF PUBLIC VIEWS AS POSSIBLE.

AT EACH PLACE WHERE A FORMAL HEARING WAS HELD, PUBLIC MEETINGS WERE ARRANGED FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS TO PUT FORWARD EITHER ORAL OR WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS. SIX HUNDRED PEOPLE TOOK PART IN THESE MEETINGS.

THIS HAS BEEN AN EXAMPLE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN A MATTER OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE AT A LEVEL QUITE NEW TO AUSTRALIA.

WE HAVE ADOPTED THE SAME APPROACH WITH THE WORKING GROUP ON RURAL POLICY WHICH PRODUCED THE GREEN PAPER ON RURAL POLICY, WITH THE INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE COMMISSION, AND WITH ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS. WE HAVE TAKEN THE VIEW THAT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION BY THE GOVERNED IS A FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTIC OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. INITIALLY AND INEVITABLY, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WILL MEAN THAT THE BEST ORGANISED AND THE MOST ARTICULATE. THE MOST ACTIVE WILL TEND TO HAVE THE FIRST AND GREATEST SAY. WE DO WISH HOWEVER, TO PROVIDE THE MACHINERY AND TO DEVELOP A LEVEL OF PUBLIC AWARENESS WHICH WILL ENABLE THE WHOLE PUBLIC TO BE INVOLVED AND INCLUDED IN A GENUINE, MEANINGFUL WAY.

THESE ARE EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DISCUSSING AND FORMING POLICY. WE WANT HOWEVER, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN IMPLEMENTING POLICY. WE WANT COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION. LET ME GIVE EXAMPLES OF HOW WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE THIS IN THE FIELDS OF SOCIAL WELFARE, CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION, HEALTH AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE PLACES WE LIVE IN.

THE AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE PLAN

THE AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE PLAN IS A PIONEERING EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT. ITS ESSENTIAL PURPOSE IS TO SEEK OUT AND MEET AREAS OF SOCIAL NEED HITHERTO EITHER IGNORED OR UNIDENTIFIED BY THE EXISTING WELFARE AGENCIES - NATIONAL, STATE, LOCAL OR VOLUNTARY. ITS ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC IS THAT ITS WORK IS BASED ON REGIONS, ON REGIONAL COMMUNITIES AND THAT ITS WORK AND PLANNING IS TO BE DONE BY GENUINELY INDEPENDENT, GENUINELY COMMUNITY BASED GROUPS OF CONCERNED CITIZENS WHO KNOW THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY OF WHICH THEY ARE A PART.

THE BASIC PLANNING UNIT IS CALLED THE REGIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. SUCH COUNCILS HAVE ALREADY BEEN SET UP IN THIRTY-SIX REGIONS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA. THE COUNCILS ACT AS A COMMUNITY FORUM FOR DISCUSSION AND A COMMUNITY INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION IN IMPROVING EXISTING WELFARE SERVICES AND PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT IN THE LONG RUN, EXPERIMENTING IN NEW FORMS OF WELFARE. AS ITS CONTRIBUTION, THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT:

- . MAKES SPECIFIC GRANTS TO THE REGIONAL COUNCILS TO COVER ADMINISTRATION;
- . PROVIDES A 'CAPITATION GRANT' OF \$2 FOR EACH PERSON IN THE REGION FOR SMALL SCALE, SHORT-TERM SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS;
- . AND MAKES A 'COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT' GRANT TO PAY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS TO STIMULATE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.

AN "INITIATING" GRANT IS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST THE FORMATION OF A COUNCIL WITH DIVERSE REPRESENTATION FROM COMMUNITY ORGANISATION.

THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSION

YOU WILL BE AWARE THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO ESTABLISH A CHILDREN'S COMMISSION. IN THE OPERATION OF THIS BODY, WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE IN THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF PROGRAMS SPONSORED BY THE COMMISSION.

THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSION WILL PROVIDE HELP FOR A WIDE RANGE OF IMAGINATIVE AND FLEXIBLE PROGRAMS DEVOTED TO LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN BEFORE THEY REACH SCHOOL AGE AND CARING FOR OLDER CHILDREN OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS.

THE DECISION TO SET UP A CHILDREN'S COMMISSION WAS ITSELF A RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIONS FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PROVIDING CARE FOR CHILDREN. IT RECOGNISES THAT THE CARE PROVIDED SHOULD NOT BE RIGID OR HIGHLY INSTITUTIONALISED, BUT THAT CHOICES FOR PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN SHOULD BE MAXIMISED.

THE POLICY OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSION WHEN IT IS ESTABLISHED, AND OF THE INTERIM COMMITTEE WHICH IS NOW CARRYING OUT ITS WORK, IS ONE OF MAINTAINING THE CLOSEST POSSIBLE CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNITY.

THE INTERIM COMMITTEE AND ITS VARIOUS STATE COMMITTEES HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED A NUMBER OF REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND WILL BE ENCOURAGING MORE IN THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR.

PART OF THE FINANCE TO BE ALLOCATED BY THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSION WILL GO TO THE STATES FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE GRANTS, AND PART OF THE FINANCE WILL GO DIRECT TO COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS. BUT THE COMMISSION WILL EXPECT THAT PROGRAMS TO BE SUPPORTED WILL BE THOSE WHICH THE COMMUNITY HAS SHOWN IT WANTS, NOT JUST THOSE WHICH IT HAS BEEN TOLD IT WANTS, AND THAT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE RUNNING OF THE PROGRAMS WILL ALLOW FOR A GENUINE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.

SCHOOLS COMMISSION

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS MADE AVAILABLE 7.2 MILLION DOLLARS FOR THE 1973-75 TRIENNium TO SUPPORT INNOVATORY PROJECTS AND FIELD-BASED EXPERIMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION. THE INNOVATIONS PROGRAM WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCEPT PROPOSALS FROM SCHOOLS, TEACHERS, PARENTS, OR COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS.

THE INNOVATIONS PROGRAM REPRESENTS A MAJOR EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT IMPROVEMENTS IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THROUGH THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVE AND THE DEVOLUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FROM THE CENTRE TO THE REGION.

THE GENERAL AIMS OF THE PROGRAM ARE:

- . TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIA;
- . TO ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY;
- . TO STIMULATE INNOVATION IN SCHOOLS;
- . TO ENHANCE THE CAPACITIES OF ALL THOSE COMMITTED TO EDUCATION TO GENERATE THEIR OWN IMPROVEMENTS IN SCHOOLS.

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAM

THE COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAM IS AIMED AT THE PROVISION OF SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE LIVE OR WORK AS DISTINCT FROM THOSE AVAILABLE IN HOSPITALS AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS. COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES HELP PERSONS TO MEET THEIR HEALTH AND WELFARE NEEDS AT CONVENIENT LOCATIONS AND TO RETURN HOME AFTER ATTENDANCES. THIS LESSENS DEPENDENCE ON INSTITUTIONS AND FREQUENTLY PRESENTS AN ALTERNATIVE TO GOING INTO HOSPITAL.

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING ON THEIR LOCAL HEALTH SERVICE WILL BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO INFLUENCE THE ACCEPTABILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES. IT WILL ALSO PROVIDE A MEANS OF EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY AND CHANGING CONVENTIONAL EXPECTATIONS. PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THEIR OWN HEALTH SERVICES WILL HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE LIMITATIONS OF MEDICINE, THE COSTS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PARTICULAR SERVICES, AND THE INDIVIDUAL'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERSONAL AND FAMILY HEALTH.

AREA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

THE AREA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM IS INTENDED TO SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN NOMINATED REGIONS THROUGH PROJECTS DETERMINED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE REGION. A FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT IN THE AIP IS THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN MAKING DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR REGION AND THEIR WAY OF LIFE.

THE AIP HAS BEEN AN EXERCISE IN CO-OPERATIVE FEDERALISM WITH STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BEING INVOLVED CLOSELY IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDING \$14.1 MILLION IN 1974-75 FOR AREA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS.

REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

I GIVE A FINAL EXAMPLE OF A COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN NATIONAL PROGRAMS - ONE IN WHICH APEX HAS GIVEN NOTABLE COOPERATION. UNDER THE REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT SCHEME, APEX CLUBS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA HAVE SPONSORED A NUMBER OF PROJECTS WHICH HAVE A DOUBLE VALUE. THEY PROVIDE SOCIALLY MEANINGFUL WORK FOR THE IMMEDIATE VICTIMS OF OUR PRESENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AND THEY LEAVE BEHIND SOMETHING OF ENDURING WORTH TO THE COMMUNITY. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WELCOMES ANY APPLICATION FROM APEX CLUBS FOR APPROVAL FOR PROJECTS WHICH WOULD HAVE A LASTING BENEFIT FOR THE COMMUNITY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME GIVING MEN AND WOMEN PRESENTLY UNEMPLOYED SATISFYING, WORTHWHILE WORK.

THE WHOLE THRUST OF ALL THESE PROGRAMS - AND I COULD MENTION MANY MORE - IS THAT A GREAT NUMBER OF CONCERNED AUSTRALIAN MEN AND WOMEN ARE ALREADY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY DECISION-MAKING AND COMMUNITY ACTION IN COOPERATION WITH GOVERNMENT, IN A WAY THAT WAS NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE AS A GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE MORE AND MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS, PARTICULARLY THE DISADVANTAGED AND THE HANDICAPPED IN OUR MIDST.

BUT IT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT IN TERMS OF THE STRENGTH AND VIGOUR OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY THAT THOSE OF US WHO ARE NOT UNDERPRIVILEGED, NOT HANDICAPPED, THOSE OF US WHO BY VIRTUE OF WEALTH OR HEALTH OR GOOD FORTUNE CAN SERVE, SHOULD HAVE ENHANCED OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY. SO WE ARE TRYING IN TRUTH BOTH TO ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DISADVANTAGED AND IN A DIFFERENT BUT RELATED SENSE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ADVANTAGED - OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY.

I SHOULD HOWEVER, ADD A WARNING. ALL THESE PROGRAMS I HAVE MENTIONED ARE NOVEL FOR AUSTRALIA AND EXPERIMENTAL IN AUSTRALIA. BECAUSE THEY ARE NEW, BECAUSE THEY ARE TENTATIVE, THEY LACK THE POLITICAL CLOUT THAT COMES FROM YEARS AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE. BECAUSE THEY SEEK OUT NEW AND NEGLECTED AREAS OF NEED, THEY MAY BE REGARDED AS POLITICALLY PERIPHERAL. THEY HAVE NOT HAD THE TIME TO BECOME SACRED COWS. BECAUSE THEY ARE DESIGNED TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE WEAKEST, OF THE LEAST ARTICULATE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, THEY MAY BE REGARDED AS POLITICALLY DISPENSABLE.

TWO OF THE PROGRAMS I HAVE MENTIONED - THE AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE PLAN AND REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT SCHEME - ARE ALREADY UNDER CHALLENGE FROM SOME OF THE STATE GOVERNMENTS IN THE HIGH COURT - NOT, OF COURSE, ON ANY GROUNDS OF THEIR SOCIAL VALUE BUT ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL ARGUMENT THAT THEY SHOULD BE PROVIDED, IF AT ALL, BY OR THROUGH THE STATE GOVERNMENTS..

AND IF THAT CHALLENGE SHOULD SUCCEED, NO LESS THAN 57 NATIONAL WELFARE PROGRAMS, SOME OF THEM INITIATED BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, COULD BE IMPERILLED. FOR EXAMPLE, PROGRAMS FOR AGED AND HOMELESS AND HANDICAPPED AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, ISOLATED CHILDREN, HEALTH CENTRES, LEGAL AID OFFICES, NURSING HOMES AND HOME NURSING, MEALS ON WHEELS, FLYING DOCTORS AND BLOOD TRANSFUSION. THE COMMON DISTINGUISHING FACTOR IN ALL THESE PROGRAMS IS THAT THEY ARE DESIGNED TO MEET SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE WEAK AND INARTICULATE SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY - THE OLD THE SICK, MIGRANTS, ABORIGINES, THE VERY YOUNG. IF THESE GROUPS WERE POLITICALLY POWERFUL, IF THEY COULD MOUNT EFFECTIVE POLITICAL PRESSURE, THE GOVERNMENTS WHICH DARED TO PLACE THESE PROGRAMS IN JEOPARDY WOULD BE DESTROYED. BUT AS IT IS, THE THING PASSES OFF WITH SCARCE A MURMUR.

AGAIN, BECAUSE THESE PROGRAMS - THE ONES I HAVE MENTIONED TODAY AS WELL AS THE ONES THREATENED BY THE HIGH COURT CHALLENGE - CAN HELP ONLY THE WEAK, THE UNDERPRIVILEGED, THE INARTICULATE, THEY WOULD BE THE FIRST TO GO, THE FIRST TO BE KNOCKED OFF IN ANY FULL SCALE ONSLAUGHT AGAINST PUBLIC SPENDING AND PUBLIC INITIATIVE. THE TRAGEDY IS THAT WHATEVER VALUE THESE PROGRAMS MIGHT HAVE FOR THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF OUR FELLOW CITIZENS, WHATEVER THE COST IN HUMAN HAPPINESS AND HUMAN HOPE THEIR ABOLITION MIGHT MEAN, IT WOULD BE QUITE FEASIBLE POLITICALLY TO DUMP THEM ALL AT ALMOST NO POLITICAL COST.

THE ONLY PROTECTION IS THE CONSCIENCE AND THE CONCERN OF THE INTERESTED AND ARTICULATE GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY, OF WHICH I FIRMLY BELIEVE APEX IS IN THE FRONT RANK. IT IS BECAUSE APEX HAS BEEN INVOLVED AND WILL BE FURTHER INVOLVED IN THESE SORTS OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS, IT IS BECAUSE APEXIAN'S KNOW THEIR VALUE, KNOW WHAT THEY MEAN TO THOUSANDS OF OUR FELLOW-CITIZENS, THAT I BELIEVE I CAN COUNT UPON APEX TO PROTECT THEM AS WELL AS TO PROMOTE THEM. A VOICE MUST BE RAISED ON BEHALF OF THE VOICELESS IN OUR COMMUNITY - AND I LOOK TO APEX TO GIVE IT.

I SAID BEFORE THAT WE, LIKE ALL COMPARABLE COMMUNITIES, ARE GOING THROUGH A PERIOD OF EXTRAORDINARY ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. SIGNIFICANTLY, APEX WAS FORMED IN A TIME OF EVEN GREATER HARDSHIP AND DIFFICULTY. IT WAS A RESPONSE BY A HANDFUL OF CONCERNED AUSTRALIANS AT THE TIME OF THE DEPRESSION. THOUGH THERE IS A SIMILARITY IN THE UNIVERSALITY OF PRESENT WORLD ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, THERE IS ONE VERY GREAT SALUTARY DIFFERENCE. THE GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEN AND NOW IS THE DEGREE OF SOCIAL CONCERN, THE EXTENT TO WHICH THOSE IN TROUBLE ARE SUPPORTED BY THE COMMUNITY, BY A CONCERNED COMMUNITY, BY THE CONSCIENCE OF THE COMMUNITY. YET THAT CONCERN AND THAT CONSCIENCE CAN ALL TOO EASILY GO TO SLEEP. I LOOK NOT LEAST TO APEX TO KEEP THAT CONSCIENCE AWAKE, TO KEEP THAT CONCERN ALIVE.
