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PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO N.S.W. STATE COUNCIL
OF THE A.L.P., SYDNEY
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It was the Fisher Labor Government which inaugurated the East/West Railway and yesterday I symbolically inaugurated the largest railway project in Australia since that time - a railway of about 830 kilometers costing \$100 million, and if I may respond to what John Ducker was saying by way of introduction, this weekend in South Australia we did two things which I believe indicate what could be done by co-operation between a Federal and a State Labor Government.

We inaugurated the first subdivision under the Land Commission of South Australia. This is a proposal which we came out with in 1972. The Australian Government can't make laws concerning land use. Every State Government can. But the Federal Government's financial resources are much greater than those of the State Governments. If you bring them together, you can see that by Federal finance you can acquire sufficient land for expanding urban development, and with State co-operation you can see that that land is fully serviced and is made available at cost.

We did it on Friday in South Australia. Then we went on to the middle of Australia and climaxed the remarkable week in the history of railways in Australia. Because this week we tabled on Wednesday morning in the House of Representatives the Heads of Agreement by which the Australian Government will acquire the South Australian Railways. That night the Senate passed the Australian National Railways Commission Act and on Thursday we introduced the legislation for the Interstate Commission, which is mentioned in the Constitution, and which was supposed to make it possible to co-ordinate transport modes throughout Australia, and I think I can say that by the end of June we will have - oh incidentally, we will later this month be making similar arrangements with Tasmania to acquire Tasmanian Railways - by the end of June we will have in operation in South Australia and Tasmania and maybe one or two other States, the free hospital services throughout Australia.

I point out that these things are perfectly feasible. There is no Federal intrusion or aggrandisement. There were free hospitals throughout Australia when Labor went out of office in 1949, under a five year agreement which the Chifley Labor Government had made with every State Government, Labor and Liberal, and after the agreements had run their five years, the Menzies Government did not renew them, and therefore we ceased to have free hospital services in Australia except in those States which kept them on through their own resources. Of course, only one State has done it - Queensland. Sure you have free hospital services there, but they're the worst anywhere in Australia.

And similarly the Constitution has always said that the Commonwealth can build or acquire a railway in a State with the consent of the Government of that State. Now we've done these things. We've restored free hospitals in the two Labor States, and we have acquired the railways in the two Labor States. And if that were done everywhere in Australia, all this nonsense we hear about the financial burdens of the States would be ended.

And I put it to you bluntly: We won't remain in power federally, and you'll not get into power in the States if you fall for this line which was around at the end of last year - that the way to survive was to blast Canberra. It'll get nobody anywhere. But by co-operation between the Federal Labor Government and the two State Labor Governments we have in Australia, we will have solved the financial problems in those two States. We will have at last decent railway systems in two States and we will again have free hospital services in two States.

Now I come back to what I've said. Since I addressed you last year, our opponents have changed leaders, both in the New South Wales Parliament and the Australian Parliament. The interesting thing is that the new Liberal leader in New South Wales played a central role in destroying the Federal Liberal leader. There are important lessons to be drawn from what was done to Mr. Snedden. There are lessons not only to be learnt by the Liberals, but by us.

A basic weakness in Mr. Snedden's position was his inability to establish a sound relationship between the State non-Labor Parties and the Federal Liberal Party, particularly after the Queensland elections in December. The State non-Labor leaders thought the easy way for them, the cheap road to political popularity was just to knock Canberra, to be as unco-operative and as obstructive as possible. Now the fact is the State Parties, whether they be Labor or Liberal, cannot live to themselves. For good or ill, the people are going to judge the Parties as one. It's true of both the great Parties, and especially true of the Labor Party. No member, no candidate, no leader will get any kudos from the public by joining any chorus against Canberra. It is easy enough, but it is deceptively easy because the people are not at all impressed.

They know that the Labor Government in Canberra is carrying out the program of the Australian Labor Party. One program for one party. We're all going to be judged by our success or failure with that program. We will succeed with the program to the extent that the whole Party at all levels gets behind it and goes out to sell it. There are two aspects about the program which call for a special effort by all members to promote it.

It's that a great many of our programs are first designed to benefit those in the community who can't speak for themselves, or who can't make their voices heard very well. Another aspect is that some very important issues such as equal electorates and equal representation don't always make an immediate or dramatic appeal to the imagination of the general public or, it must be said, for our own members and supporters.

The programs most likely to be changed, the programs most likely to be reversed by our opponents, are those which benefit the inarticulate and the underprivileged. The programs marked for the axe are those which benefit those with the least political leverage. Mr. Fraser has already made it plain that he will campaign for massive cuts in Government spending.

No more than his predecessor will he be very specific about the areas in which he would make those cuts. But the irresistible logic, the logic of economics, the logic of politics is that the cuts would be made in the politically expendable areas. Now who is politically expendable for Mr. Fraser? All those underprivileged groups who were entirely neglected in their 23 years in office, whose needs we have tried to identify and to meet. There is already a ready-made list of expendable programs, the programs imperilled by the High Court challenge on the constitutional validity of the Australian Assistance Plan and the Regional Employment Development Scheme.

The challenge was initiated by the Victorian Government and it is supported by the New South Wales Government. All these programs benefit the relatively inarticulate or underprivileged. The beneficiaries are for the most part scarcely in a position to speak up for themselves. This is why they, as our fellow citizens, are so vulnerable. This is why programs designed to benefit them are politically so vulnerable. If we don't speak up for those programs, if we don't speak up for the people who would be deprived by their abolition, then no-one else will.

It's impossible to find any consistence in the approach of the New South Wales Government to our programs. It would be wrong for me to give the impression that the story has been one of total non-co-operation. There has in fact been a great deal of co-operation, although there has too often been needless delay even in areas where the New South Wales Government has ultimately decided to come to the party.

It would be churlish not to acknowledge one matter in which there has been praiseworthy co-operation from the New South Wales Government, making available highly qualified people to assist in Australian Government enquiries and commissions. A great number of New South Wales judges have been made available by Sir Robert Askin to serve on our enquiries and commissions.

Let me give you one instance here, where I must say I'm disappointed by the obstruction one finds in the Labor movement, and particularly in the Trade Union movement. It is the proposal for national compensation. True we've had for years ever since the Lang Labor Government we've had compulsory workers' compensation in New South Wales, and ever since the McKell Government we've had compulsory third party insurance for people injured on the roads.

But there are still a great number of people for whom there is no cover at all, and for those where there is cover, or where there appears to be, it is quite problematical how much you'll get and how long you'll have to wait for it. Now we've come out with full proposals here, and it is amazing the link there is between some trade union people and the insurance companies in obstruction.

The fact is that the existing schemes leave thousands unprotected. For example, people who are injured at home, many of them women. Our scheme will compensate and rehabilitate people who are injured or become ill anywhere. It will be done automatically, and there will be a proper income until they are rehabilitated.

Now this has been something which many of us have spoken about for years. It has been in the Party platform for some years. It was in the policy speech in 1972 and in 1974. I must say I am disappointed, and I resent it that some union secretaries make an alliance with lawyers and with insurance companies to keep the old system.

That is - are we to be the conservative party? Whose interests do we have in mind? Now here again the beneficiaries of a Labor reform are not well organised and they're not able to drum up pressure. By contrast the opponents, or obstructionists are well organised - some unions, lawyers, insurance companies. Someone has to speak up for those who are not in a position to make their voices heard in any powerful or well-organised way. That is a job for all of us in the Labor Party, not just a few Ministers. I do hope all of you will see what is at stake here, and will speak up for it.

There is not much point in putting things in the platform and getting a Government which tries to carry out the platform and then have people, including those in the Labor Party, with very dubious allies jeopardising it and sabotaging it. Now this is not only a moral obligation for members of a Party like ourselves. It is not just an obligation we have because these programs are part of our pledges put twice to the people. Strong support for these programs makes sound political sense, at the State level as well as the national level. There is no dividend for state branches in downgrading national programs or trying to draw a distinction between State and national policies.

I heard on the radio that Neville Wran was making the point this morning in addressing you that the present State Government was seriously neglecting the growing areas of this State and was showing concern solely for those areas where it felt it had political obligations itself.

Now I know that a very great number of people, including people in State branches and State Parliament resent it if one exposes shortcomings in the State. That is surely a false patriotism to assert that everything in the State garden is lovely. It is not. And we got into power federally because we were able to convince the people in Sydney and Melbourne in particular that there were things grievously wrong in the State backyards, that they could be cured if there was federal interest shown in them, but they would only be cured if there was a Federal Labor Government showing interest in them.

Now many people in the Party think well this means that we are neglecting existing areas. I'd like you to take this approach to it. If we were to find a country town grow up every year of the size of the increase in population in Sydney we'd want to see that that country town had proper schools and hospitals and transport connections and so on.

But because it happens in an already large place, like Sydney or Melbourne, we're neglected. Now what we're saying - what Neville Wran says this morning, what I say this afternoon - is that we must look after those western and southern suburbs, we are merely acknowledging that governments have an obligation to people wherever they choose to live, and it's those suburbs that are the growing areas in this State. It's not that one is neglecting the areas which are already full, which are already supplied, which are already serviced, which are relatively static in population, it merely is that we say that if people have to go and live or choose to go and live in those new areas then it's our obligation, as a Party seeking office to see that the Governments which we elect of which we are the supporters and members see that there are proper services in those new areas.

If you have a city of 20,000 in the country you'd certainly see that it had proper services. If an equivalent population comes in some part of the metropolitan area it's no less obligatory on us to see that there are services there. Now it is true that since the War, there have been a considerable number of large country towns which have grown up. The population of Wollongong for instance has much more than doubled since the War, or of Mt. Isa, or of Gladstone, or Whyalla, and very properly governments have seen that they get services to match.

In Sydney and Melbourne where an equivalent population arises, State Governments in general have neglected them, and it's no less than the statistical truth to say that in the western suburbs of Sydney there are not the hospital facilities that there are in the areas where the population is more static as in the country or the older parts of Sydney. And there are not the facilities for teachers' colleges or technical colleges or colleges of advanced education or universities in those areas that there are in the longer-settled parts of the city.

And it is a false patriotism which says that the Federal Government has no role to play in interstate highways: of course it has. It has an obligation under the Constitution to look after trade and commerce with other countries and between the States.

With the Hume Highway, the busiest road in the southern hemisphere, and one of the worst, the State Governments have not been able to make a decent road. Are people to complain when you have a Federal Government which will accept its obligation to see that roads like that at least are made trafficable all the year round?

And again, there are areas such as this port of Sydney, the busiest port in the southern hemisphere, but a grossly inefficient port. There again it deals with interstate or international trade, and it ought to be the function of a Federal Government to see that the communications with that port from other ports are made efficient.

This is not an intrusion. It is a responsibility of the Australian Government under the Constitution and we ought to see that the port is improved. If you lend yourself to the argument that the Federal Government shouldn't come into the Hume Highway, or shouldn't come into the port of Sydney, you're just saying that the Hume Highway is going to continue to be inadequate and the port of Sydney is going to get less and less efficient.

Now the way to win a New South Wales State election is to show that the State Labor Government will co-operate in the areas and the programs where the Lewis Government has been inactive or obstructive. When the people have to choose between solid programs, solid benefits, and slogans or shiboleths about State rights, they will come down on the side of the genuine article. But they have to know what the choice really is. And that means all of us have to put the case as fully and as forcefully as we can.

I myself earlier mentioned about the question of distribution of electorates and so on. Let me give you the figures for this State because I believe they will illustrate one of the things where one will be able to draw a very easy comparison between us and our opponents in the coming months.

The population of an electorate in the House of Representatives in this state ought to be 63,000, i.e. the average of the whole State divided by the number of electorates. But the proportion at the moment varies grossly. There are some electorates which are 32% above that amount, i.e. an enrollment of 83,000 and there are some which are 26% below, namely 46,600.

Now if you have electorates that different - 83,000 and 46½ thousand - quite obviously the people in those electorates are not having an equal say in electing Members of Parliament. They're not having an equal share in making the laws. They're not having equal access to the things which Governments have to provide. These are not exceptions. These are ones which you can see in many cases. Now I quoted one electorate which had 83,000 people on the rolls at the moment: that is the electorate of Mitchell. There's another, Robertson which has 81,000. Chifley has 80,000. MacArthur has 79,000, and Macquarie, a country electorate incidentally, has 74,000. Now take the other ones. The smallest one which I have quoted - 46½ thousand is Darling. There is Hume which has just under 50,000. There is Sydney, obviously a metropolitan electorate which has 51,400. There is Riverina - 52,000, and Wentworth, again, a city electorate, 52,000. Now this is not a fair go.

Some people might say "Oh, you mustn't touch these things. People will think there is something crook about it." The fact is it won't deter the Government from supporting an equal form of distribution. It is the fair thing. It is the just thing, and it is possible to come out with a distribution where no electorate has more than 5,000 people on the rolls than any other electorate in a State.

What we've come out with - the distribution which has been made, which is being proposed - ensures that those with the smallest enrollment are the electorates which are growing fastest, and those with the largest are those which are growing slowest.

Now I do ask you to stand on your principles in these things. You'll get no votes, you'll get no respect by departing from your principles, and if you look at the facts, you can embarrass your opponents. You will get respect and success for us. Silence, obstruction, conservatism or timidity on such matters as the equal electorates or what I've mentioned earlier, national compensation, will not gain votes in a State election not least because the Australian Government, and I too, will not cease to advocate. We are not going to back-track on the platform, or on the undertakings given in the policy speeches. We have no alternatives. It is a commitment we cannot escape. It is a commitment for the whole Party. It is a commitment that no-one in the Party can escape.

Ladies and Gentlemen, don't let's think that just by running dead or knocking the Government you've had, that you'll help it or you'll get a State one. The way to prevail is to carry through against the attacks of our opponents, the obstruction of our opponents, the attacks, the obstruction in the Parliament, in the papers, in the courts. We won on these platforms and we will win again on these platforms. If we weaken, if we are divided on them we won't survive ourselves and nobody else will do any better, either, in any section of the Party.
