

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR E. G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,
TO THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY STATE COUNCIL, N.S.W. BRANCH,
SYDNEY, 13 APRIL, 1975

SINCE I ADDRESSED YOU LAST YEAR, OUR OPPONENTS HAVE CHANGED LEADERS BOTH IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND IN CANBERRA. THE INTERESTING THING IS THAT THE NEW LIBERAL LEADER IN N.S.W. PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE IN DESTROYING THE FEDERAL LIBERAL LEADER. I DON'T WANT TO GET STUCK INTO MR SNEDDEN, BUT THERE ARE IMPORTANT LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM WHAT WAS DONE TO HIM. 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 AS POSSIBLE. MR SNEDDEN FELL INTO THEIR TRAP. HE HAS PAID THE HEAVIEST POSSIBLE POLITICAL PRICE FOR LETTING HIS STATE COLLEAGUES MAKE THE RUNNING.

WHEN THE SENATE VACANCY OCCURRED WITH LIONEL MURPHY'S MOVE TO THE HIGH COURT BENCH THERE WAS ONLY ONE PROPER COURSE OPEN TO THE NEW LIBERAL PREMIER OF N.S.W. AND TO THE N.S.W. PARLIAMENT. THAT WAS TO OBSERVE THE ESTABLISHED CONVENTION AND TO APPOINT A LABOR REPLACEMENT. ANY OTHER COURSE NOT ONLY SET ASIDE A VALUABLE CONVENTION BUT SET ASIDE THE CLEAR WISHES OF THE PEOPLE OF N.S.W. RECORDED AT THE DOUBLE DISSOLUTION LAST MAY. MR LEWIS THOUGHT HE COULD PLAY IT SMART. MR SNEDDEN KNEW WHAT THE RIGHT COURSE WAS, BUT FAILED TO BRING MR LEWIS INTO LINE. MORE THAN ANY OTHER FACTOR, THAT FAILURE SPARKED THE EVENTS WHICH LED TO MR SNEDDEN'S DOWNFALL AS LEADER. HIS FAILURE TO ASSERT ANY AUTHORITY AS THE NATIONAL LIBERAL LEADER, HIS SURRENDER TO MR LEWIS' MAVERICK BEHAVIOUR, GAVE HIS OPPONENTS IN THE LIBERAL PARTY THE AMMUNITION THEY NEEDED TO SHOOT HIM DOWN - AND THEY DID.

NOW THERE IS A LESSON FOR US ALL TO LEARN. AFTER THE QUEENSLAND ELECTIONS, AND WHEN THE POLLS BEGAN TO GO AGAINST US THERE WERE SOME PEOPLE IN THE STATE BRANCHES WHO THOUGHT THAT THE SAFE COURSE WAS TO GO IT ALONE, TO STAND ASIDE FROM A LABOR GOVERNMENT IN CANBERRA. 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 IS TRUE OF BOTH THE GREAT PARTIES BUT 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 IS CARRYING OUT THE PROGRAM OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY - ONE PROGRAM, FOR ONE PARTY. WE ARE ALL GOING TO BE JUDGED BY OUR SUCCESS OR FAILURE WITH THE 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. ONE IS 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 - LIKE 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 CHALLENGED, THE PROGRAMS MOST LIKELY TO BE REVERSED BY OUR OPPONENTS ARE THOSE WHICH BENEFIT THE INARTICULATE UNDER-PRIVILEGED. 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.

WHO IS POLITICALLY EXPENDABLE FOR MR FRASER? - ALL THOSE UNDER-PRIVILEGED GROUPS WHO WERE ENTIRELY NEGLECTED IN THEIR 23 YEARS, 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 IS SUPPORTED BY THE N.S.W. GOVERNMENT. ALL THESE PROGRAMS BENEFIT THE RELATIVELY INARTICULATE OR UNDER-PRIVILEGED. 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 WILLX

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND ANY CONSISTENCY IN THE APPROACH OF THE N.S.W. GOVERNMENT TO OUR PROGRAMSX IT WOULD BE WRONG FOR ME TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE STORY HAS BEEN ONE OF TOTAL NON-COOPERATIONX THERE HAS, IN FACT, BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF CO-OPERATION, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS TOO OFTEN BEEN NEEDLESS DELAY EVEN IN AREAS WHERE THE N.S.W. GOVERNMENT HAS ULTIMATELY DECIDED TO COME TO THE PARTYX

IT WOULD BE CHURLISH NOT TO ACKNOWLEDGE ONE MATTER IN WHICH THERE HAS BEEN PRAISEWORTHY CO-OPERATION FROM THE N.S.W. GOVERNMENT - MAKING AVAILABLE HIGHLY QUALIFIED PEOPLE TO ASSIST IN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONSX A NOTABLE EXAMPLE WAS THE WORK OF MR JUSTICE MEARES OF THE SUPREME COURT ASSISTING SIR OWEN WOODHOUSE OF THE NEW ZEALAND COURT OF APPEAL ON THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY ON NATIONAL COMPENSATIONX

I MAY SAY THERE HAS BEEN IN CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE MOVEMENT A DISAPPOINTING LACK OF SUPPORT FOR OUR PROPOSALSX WE HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT FOR A PARTY OF CHANGE AND REFORM THERE IS, SURPRISINGLY, A GREAT DEAL OF CONSERVATISM WITHIN OUR RANKSX

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO THINK THAT JUST BECAUSE CERTAIN FORMS OF COMPENSATION EXIST THROUGH THIRD PARTY INSURANCE AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION THEN NOTHING MORE NEED BE DONE. "WHATE'ER EXISTS IS RIGHT" - AN AMAZING ATTITUDE TO BE FOUND IN A REFORMING PARTY. 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. AS I SAID IN THE POLICY SPEECH OF 1972:

"WE WILL ESTABLISH A NATIONAL COMPENSATION SCHEME TO REDUCE THE HARDSHIPS IMPOSED BY ONE OF THE GREAT FACTORS FOR INEQUALITY IN SOCIETY - INEQUALITY OF LUCK."

HERE AGAIN THE BENEFICIARIES OF A LABOUR REFORM ARE NOT WELL-ORGANISED AND ARE NOT ABLE TO DRUM UP PRESSURE. BY CONTRAST THE OPPONENTS OR OBSTRUCTIONISTS ARE WELL-ORGANISED - SOME UNIONS, LAWYERS, INSURANCE COMPANIES. SOME-ONE 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.

THIS IS NOT ONLY A MORAL OBLIGATION FOR MEMBERS OF A PARTY LIKE OURSELVES; IT'S 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. THE WAY TO WIN A N.S.W. STATE ELECTION IS TO SHOW THAT A 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 SHIBBOLETHS 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 THAT ALL OF US HAVE TO PUT THE CASE AS FULLY AND FORCEFULLY AS WE CAN. SILENCE, OBSTRUCTION, CONSERVATISM OR TIMIDITY ON SUCH MATTERS AS NATIONAL COMPENSATION OR EQUAL ELECTORATES WILL NOT GAIN VOTES IN A STATE ELECTION - NOT LEAST BECAUSE THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, AND I MYSELF, WILL NOT CEASE TO ADVOCATE THEM. WE ARE NOT GOING TO BACK-TRACK ON THE PLATFORM OR ON THE UNDERTAKING GIVEN IN THE POLICY SPEECHES. WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE; 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.

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