

2

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PRIME MINISTER'S QUEENSLAND BROADCAST No. 7

CENTRALISM

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I thought I'd talk to you about a subject that is dear to the heart of the Queensland Premier - Centralism. Mr. Bjelke-Petersen has a regular obsession with centralism, as we all know. Whenever he objects to something - whether it's a Labor idea or even something from the anti-Labor side - he cries "centralism". I don't mind people having bees in their bonnet, but I think we're entitled to object when their obsessions hold back the development of a State or interfere with Government programs that the people have clearly endorsed.

As far as I can understand, Mr. Bjelke-Petersen means by "centralism" anything that the Australian Government tries to do for the people of Queensland. He used to say Medibank was centralism, but fortunately his Liberal Party colleagues in the coalition saw the clear benefits of Medibank for their State. He said our plans to make Townsville a growth centre were centralism, that our plans to get down the price of land were centralism, and he used this catchcry to deny Queenslanders \$50 million in Federal funds.

The fact is that the powers of the Australian Government in relation to the States are defined in the Constitution. If anyone thinks the National Government is overstepping the mark they can challenge our action in the High Court. That is the real defence against any centralist policies. In our federal system the States, the Commonwealth and Local Government all have a role to play. And we have to play it according to the constitutional rules.

I have said that it's not just Labor policies that Mr. Bjelke-Petersen regards as centralist. He levelled the same charge at Mr. Gorton when he was Prime Minister. Mr. Gorton was convinced that our off-shore mineral resources were the responsibility of the National Government. He was quite right. Anything that has to do with mineral exports or overseas trade is a federal responsibility, and other countries expect to negotiate with the Australian Government in these matters rather than particular States. Mr. Gorton got nowhere in his efforts to assert this very clear principle and Queensland has continued to resist our own efforts to legislate on off-shore sovereignty. Mr. Gorton had the same trouble with the Great Barrier Reef. His attempts to protect the Reef from oil drilling and other damage met strong opposition from Mr. Bjelke-Petersen. The centralist slogan was trotted out again. And it was used when Mr. Gorton sought better treatment for Queensland's Aborigines:

You will remember that the referendum in 1967 - which was carried overwhelmingly in Queensland - gave the Australian Government clear authority to legislate for the welfare of Aborigines and, if necessary, to override State laws. Mr. Gorton sought an end to a number of discriminatory laws on the statute book in Queensland. Mr. Bjelke-Petersen saw this as centralism. It is taking a long time to remove these laws. In the past few weeks my own Government has introduced legislation in the National Parliament for this very purpose.

One of the great phobias of the Premier concerns our efforts to make the High Court the final court of appeal in this country and to end appeals from Australian courts to the British Privy Council. It was the Holt Government back in 1967, that stopped appeals to the Privy Council from the High Court. We think it's time to stop appeals from the Supreme Courts as well. After all, our Australian High Court has a reputation second to none throughout the legal world: its judgments are everywhere respected. How absurd to have a British Court, sitting in Britain, with judges appointed in Britain by the British Government, sit in judgment on Australian courts. Surely it's time - surely we're mature enough to accept - that Australians should no longer litigate their disputes before the Court of another country.

I give you other examples. In his holy war against centralism, Mr. Bjelke-Petersen has opposed our plan for an Australian honours system. Never mind that the old imperial honours are made in the name of an empire that doesn't exist. Never mind that the Queen herself has approved the Order of Australia and will confer the awards herself. Mr. Bjelke-Petersen thinks it's "centralism". He doesn't want an Australian national anthem either - that's "centralist" too - despite the fact that a vast majority of Australians want an anthem of their own. His silliest idea of all was to have Her Majesty described as Queen of Queensland. Imagine if every Canadian province or British county had a separate monarch - a Queen of Ontario, a Queen of Alberta, a Queen of Lancashire. Where would it end?

It's strange, isn't it, that everything Mr. Bjelke-Petersen calls "centralist" is really pro-Australian, a mark of our true nationhood and maturity? I wonder what he's really afraid of. He constantly talks about the meanness and wickedness of Canberra. The fact is that Queensland has received more in assistance - in hard cash - from the present Labor Government than it has received from any previous Government in history. No amount of hedging or qualification, no talk of restrictions or strings or the value of money, can alter the fact that we have been overwhelmingly generous. In the last financial year

Not only does Queensland get much, much more than she did from the Liberals in Canberra; she gets considerably more per head of population than other States get now. Queensland received more than \$382 per head of population in 1973-74 compared with \$343 per head in average payments to all States. Last year our grants for primary and secondary education were up 145 per cent on the year before, tertiary education was up 165 per cent, technical education 110 per cent, welfare housing 20 per cent, aboriginal advancement nearly 30 per cent. Health and welfare, roads and urban and regional development in Queensland are all getting record amounts from my Government.

Next time you hear the Premier talk about centralism, think of those facts - of what the Australian Government has done for Queensland, and the real help we have given despite the Premier's obstruction.