

QUEENSLAND BROADCAST NO. 14

MEDIBANK (2)

SUNDAY 22 JUNE 1975

I SPOKE TO YOU ABOUT MEDIBANK IN THE VERY FIRST OF THESE BROADCASTS I GAVE THREE MONTHS AGO. I WANT TO RETURN TO THE SUBJECT THIS WEEK BECAUSE OF THE INCREDIBLE MUDDLE IN WHICH THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT NOW FINDS ITSELF THROUGH ITS EFFORTS TO SABOTAGE THE SCHEME. IT'S NOW LIKELY THAT QUEENSLAND WILL BE THE ONLY STATE PREPARED TO DENY ITS CITIZENS THE BENEFITS OF THE HOSPITAL SIDE OF MEDIBANK - THE ONLY STATE TO HOLD OUT.

YOU SHOULD BE QUITE CLEAR IN YOUR MINDS THAT WHATEVER THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT MAY OR MAY NOT DO - AND THEY'VE HAD MANY MONTHS TO MAKE UP THEIR MINDS - THE MEDICAL SIDE OF MEDIBANK WILL START AS PLANNED ON TUESDAY WEEK. FROM THAT DAY ON, EVERY AUSTRALIAN, EVERY QUEENSLANDER, WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY INSURED FREE OF CHARGE, FOR ALL MEDICAL TREATMENT. ALL OF US NOW HAVE OUR MEDIBANK CARDS. PEOPLE WILL PAY NOTHING FOR THEIR MEDICAL INSURANCE TO COVER DOCTORS' BILLS. IF THE DOCTOR SENDS HIS BILL TO MEDIBANK, PATIENTS WILL PAY NOTHING FOR THE DOCTOR'S SERVICES. THAT'S GOING AHEAD AS PLANNED. IT IS ONE OF THE VERY GREAT SOCIAL REFORMS UNDER THIS LABOR GOVERNMENT.

WHAT IS AT STAKE IN QUEENSLAND IS THE HOSPITAL SIDE OF MEDIBANK. NOW I KNOW THAT QUEENSLAND ALREADY HAS FREE PUBLIC HOSPITALS, THANKS TO A PREVIOUS STATE LABOR GOVERNMENT. BUT THAT'S NO REASON WHY QUEENSLANDERS SHOULD BE DENIED THE EXTRA MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN REVENUE, THE EXTRA RANGE OF SERVICES AND OTHER BENEFITS THAT WOULD COME FROM FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE MEDIBANK ARRANGEMENTS.

ONLY THIS WEEK, IN ADELAIDE, I SIGNED WITH THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PREMIER, MR DUNSTAN, THE AGREEMENT MAKING SOUTH AUSTRALIA THE FIRST FULL PARTICIPANT IN THE MEDIBANK SCHEME. I SIGNED A SIMILAR AGREEMENT WITH TASMANIA. THESE AGREEMENTS MEAN THAT NOT ONLY WILL SOUTH AUSTRALIANS AND TASMANIANS BE ENTITLED TO FREE TREATMENT IN ^{STANDARD} STATE HOSPITAL WARDS; THEY'LL BE GETTING FREE OUTPATIENT SERVICES AND LOWER HOSPITAL CHARGES FOR INTERMEDIATE AND PRIVATE WARDS. ON TOP OF THAT, PRIVATE HOSPITALS - NOT JUST PUBLIC HOSPITALS - WILL BE GETTING A BETTER DEAL; ANOTHER \$16 A DAY FOR EVERY PATIENT IN THEIR CARE. FOR THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT THERE'LL BE A SAVING OF \$28 MILLION A YEAR - MONEY WHICH THE STATE CAN SPEND IN ANY AREA OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY - ON BETTER HOSPITAL EQUIPMENT OR MORE HOSPITAL STAFF, OR ON OTHER THINGS THE PEOPLE NEED, LIKE SCHOOLS, RAILWAYS, ROADS, HOUSING.

3.

THERE'LL BE SIMILAR BENEFITS FOR EVERY
OTHER STATE THAT JOINS. THERE'LL BE SIMILAR BENEFITS
FOR QUEENSLAND IF QUEENSLAND JOINS. YOU'LL HAVE NOTICED
THAT SOME OF THE STATES THAT WERE HOLDING OUT -
PUTTING UP ALL SORTS OF UNACCEPTABLE, LAST-MINUTE
CONDITIONS, CONDITIONS INTENDED TO DESTROY THE WHOLE
CONCEPT OF A FREE HOSPITAL SERVICE - ARE NOW ANXIOUS TO
COME IN. WELL, GOOD LUCK TO THEM - BETTER LATE
THAN NEVER. BUT REMEMBER: FOR EVERY DAY THAT QUEENSLAND
STAYS OUT, FOR EVERY DAY THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT
DITHERS AND ARGUES, THE QUEENSLAND PEOPLE WILL PAY
HEAVILY. IF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT FAILS TO JOIN MEDIBANK
THEY'LL BE SACRIFICING AN EXTRA \$50 MILLION A YEAR IN
REVENUE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT.

.../4

YOU'D WONDER HOW ANY STATE COULD JUSTIFY SUCH AN ATTITUDE. IN THE PAST FEW DAYS WE HAVE HEARD THE PREMIERS CRYING FOR MORE MONEY. WHY DON'T THEY USE THE MONEY WE OFFER THEM? WHY LET THIS OBSESSION WITH STATE RIGHTS STAND IN THE WAY OF THE PEOPLE'S NEEDS? THE FACT IS THAT WE GAVE THE STATES A VERY FAIR FINANCIAL DEAL AT THE PREMIERS' CONFERENCE THIS WEEK. UNDER THE ^{Liberal} LEGISLATION PASSED FIVE YEARS AGO, THE STATES WOULD HAVE BEEN ENTITLED TO \$2997 MILLION NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR; THEY WILL IN FACT BE GETTING \$3220 MILLION. THEY WILL HAVE 36 PERCENT MORE MONEY TO SPEND IN REVENUES IN THE COMING YEAR THAN IN THE YEAR JUST ENDING. QUEENSLAND'S GRANTS HAVE INCREASED FROM \$414 MILLION THIS YEAR TO \$564 MILLION NEXT YEAR. AND IF QUEENSLAND JOINED THE HOSPITAL SIDE OF MEDIBANK, THE STATE WOULD GET AN EVEN BETTER DEAL - WITH HOSPITAL PATIENTS THE FIRST TO BENEFIT. DON DUNSTAN IS A BONNY FIGHTER FOR HIS STATE, BUT HE DOESN'T GO ALONG WITH THIS STATE RIGHTS NONSENSE. HE'S JUST CALLED AN ELECTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA OVER ANOTHER ISSUE INVOLVING FINANCIAL AID FOR HIS STATE - THE ISSUE OF RAILWAYS. HE'S NOT PREPARED TO ALLOW A HANDFUL OF CONSERVATIVES IN THE UPPER HOUSE TO BLOCK WHAT HE CALLS "THE BEST FINANCIAL DEAL IN THE STATE'S HISTORY." NOR IS HE PREPARED TO REJECT THE BENEFITS OF MEDIBANK.

5.

THROUGHOUT THIS MEDIBANK ARGUMENT YOU HEAR A GREAT DEAL OF NONSENSE ABOUT MY GOVERNMENT WANTING TO TAKE OVER THE RUNNING OF STATE HOSPITALS. WE DON'T. WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO IS RESTORE IN EVERY STATE THE FREE HOSPITALS THAT EXISTED YEARS AGO. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN EVERY STATE HAD FREE HOSPITALS BECAUSE THE COMMONWEALTH AND STATE GOVERNMENTS WERE SHARING THE COST. THAT WAS THE RESULT OF AGREEMENTS WITH THE STATES MADE BY THE CHIFLEY LABOR GOVERNMENT IN 1947. THOSE AGREEMENTS WERE BROKEN OFF IN THE 1950'S BY THE MENZIES GOVERNMENT, WHEN THERE WAS A COUNTRY PARTY MINISTER FOR HEALTH. THE TRAGEDY IS THAT SOME LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTY POLITICIANS ARE STILL TRYING TO BLOCK THIS SIMPLE, NECESSARY MEASURE. THEY'VE DESTROYED ONE FREE HOSPITAL SCHEME. WE MUSTN'T LET THEM DESTROY THIS ONE.

.../6

IT'S PLAIN TO SEE THAT MR BJELKE-PETERSEN IS COMPLETELY AT ODDS WITH HIS TREASURER, HIS JUSTICE MINISTER AND HIS HEALTH MINISTER OVER MEDIBANK. HIS MINISTERS CAN SEE QUITE CLEARLY WHAT MEDIBANK WILL MEAN IN TERMS OF REAL BENEFITS FOR QUEENSLAND. THEY SEE NOTHING SINISTER IN THE DEAL, NO HIDDEN STRINGS. THEY'RE BEING MUCH MORE REALISTIC ABOUT THIS THAN THE PREMIER. IT'S NOT SO LONG SINCE MR BJELKE-PETERSEN WAS FLYING TO PERTH TO PATCH UP A SQUABBLE BETWEEN THE COALITION PARTNERS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA. BEFORE THAT HE WAS TRYING TO ESTABLISH THE COALITION IN TASMANIA. IT'S ABOUT TIME HE SET HIS OWN HOUSE IN ORDER. IT'S A GREAT PITY HE CAN'T SETTLE THE SQUABBLE IN HIS OWN COALITION - A DISPUTE WHICH WILL PROVE VERY COSTLY AND DAMAGING TO QUEENSLAND IF THE COUNTRY PARTY GETS ITS WAY IN CABINET AND THE BENEFITS OF MEDIBANK ARE DENIED TO THE QUEENSLAND PEOPLE.
