

Legislative  
Cabinet  
PNG

Equal pay - textiles  
Medicare

39

SUGGESTED LINE FOR LAUNCESTON MATRICULATION COLLEGE

Speech Notes.

Thursday  
26/6/75

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION INTRODUCED A VERY ORIGINAL NOTE INTO THE CAMPAIGN WHEN HE SPOKE TO THE TASMANIAN PRESS CLUB HERE IN LAUNCESTON ON TUESDAY. HE RAISED THE ISSUE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS.

NOW THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE. IT IS AN ISSUE THAT WILL BE CENTRAL TO THE POLITICAL DEBATE IN AUSTRALIA AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIVES. THE NOVEL THING ON TUESDAY WAS THAT IT SHOULD BE RAISED BY MR FRASER IN THE WAY HE DID IN THE FORM OF AN ATTACK UPON THE LABOR GOVERNMENT.

YOU ARE GOING TO HEAR A GREAT DEAL ALONG THIS LINE BEFORE THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION WHEN MOST OF YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EXERCISE THE MOST BASIC OF ALL DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS - THE RIGHT TO VOTE.

THAT RIGHT TO VOTE AT 18 ~~WAS~~ WAS GIVEN BY THE VERY FIRST (?) PIECE OF LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN THE FIRST SESSION OF PARLIAMENT AFTER WE FIRST BECAME THE GOVERNMENT. ANY OF YOU WHO ARE VOTING ON SATURDAY HAVE THAT RIGHT BECAUSE A LABOR GOVERNMENT GAVE IT TO YOU AFTER 23 YEARS OF REFUSAL TO ALLOW IT BY THE LIBERALS. INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND HUMAN FREEDOMS ARE THE MOST PRECIOUS THINGS WE HAVE.

BUT WOULDN'T YOU SAY THAT PERHAPS THE MOST SACRED OF THEM ALL, WOULDN'T YOU PUT AT THE TOP OF THE LIST YOUR RIGHT NOT TO BE DRAFTED INTO MILITARY SERVICE - THAT IS, YOUR RIGHT OVER THE USE OF YOUR OWN BODY?

MR FRASER WAS MINISTER FOR THE ARMY AND THEN MINISTER FOR DEFENCE - UNTIL HE FELL OUT WITH JOHN GORTON AND DESTROYED HIM - IN A GOVERNMENT WHICH INTRODUCED THE FIRST PEACE TIME CONSCRIPTION IN AUSTRALIA'S HISTORY. IF MR FRASER WAS STILL IN GOVERNMENT, EVERY BOY IN THIS ROOM WOULD BE LIABLE FOR TWO YEARS COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE. IT IS ALL TOO EASILY FORGOTTEN. IT IS ALL TOO EASILY FORGOTTEN THAT MORE THAN HALF OF THOSE WHO WERE KILLED IN VIETNAM - THE FORGOTTEN FIVE HUNDRED - WERE CONSCRIPTS - AND THAT TWO-THIRDS OF THOSE WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM - THE FORGOTTEN WAR - WERE CONSCRIPTS.

FOR ALL BUT 18 MONTHS OF OUR WRETCHED INVOLVEMENT IN THAT WRETCHED WAR, MR FRASER PRESIDED AS ARMY MINISTER AND DEFENCE MINISTER OVER THE CONSCRIPT SYSTEM. THE FIRST ACTION LANCE BARNARD TOOK AS A MINISTER ON THE DAY HE AND I FORMED THE GOVERNMENT - WAS TO END CONSCRIPTION. WE DIDN'T WAIT FOR THE PARLIAMENT TO MEET. IT WAS DONE BY THE STROKE OF A PEN.

ON THE SAME DAY WE ENDED THE LAST VESTIGES OF AUSTRALIA'S MILITARY COMMITMENT IN INDO-CHINA AND WE FREED FROM PRISON ANY MEN WHO WERE SERVING TERMS FOR REFUSING MILITARY SERVICE. WE WIPED FROM THE RECORDS THEIR CONVICTIONS SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SPEND A LIFETIME OF CIVIL HANDICAP BECAUSE OF THEIR CONVICTION - THEIR CONVICTION IN BOTH SENSES OF THE WORD - CONVICTION AS CRIMINALS FOR STANDING UP FOR THEIR CONVICTIONS.

DON'T FORGET VIETNAM - IT WAS A WAR THE LIBERALS FOISTED UPON AUSTRALIA AND AS THE RECORD OF HOW WE GOT INVOLVED, WHICH I AS AN INDEPENDENT HISTORIAN COMPILED AND PUBLISHED A FORTNIGHT AGO SHOWS - A WAR WE GOT INTO THROUGH LIBERAL LIES AND LIBERAL DECEIT AND LIBERAL STUPIDITY. DON'T FORGET CONSCRIPTION OR WHAT IT MEANS TO YOUR CIVIL LIBERTIES, ESPECIALLY WHEN ONE OF ITS GREATEST ADVOCATES, MR FRASER, TALKS ABOUT FREEDOM.

LET ME MENTION SOME OTHER BASIC RIGHTS. IS THERE ANYTHING MORE FUNDAMENTAL THAN EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW? THERE CAN BE NO EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW UNLESS THERE IS EQUALITY OF ACCESS TO THE COURTS. WITHOUT THAT EQUALITY THERE WILL ALWAYS BE ONE LAW FOR THE RICH AND ANOTHER FOR THE POOR. WE HAVE SET UP THE LEGAL AID SERVICE TO PROVIDE THAT EQUALITY.

THERE IS THE BASIC QUESTION OF RIGHTS FOR ABORIGINES.  
A THE SMART ALECKS <sup>in a Sydney newspaper last Sunday</sup> ~~FROM THE SYDNEY PRESS~~ HAD ONE  
~~OF THEIR~~ JOKE~~S~~ AT TASMANIAN EXPENSE BY CHI-ACKING  
THE VISIT HERE DURING THE CAMPAIGN BY MY MINISTER  
FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, LES JOHNSON. <sup>He</sup> ~~THEY~~ THOUGHT <sup>apparently</sup>  
THAT THERE WERE NO ABORIGINES IN TASMANIA BECAUSE  
OF THE DREADFUL THINGS WE DID OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

<sup>Govt</sup>  
IN FACT THERE ARE IMPORTANT PROGRAMS OPERATING IN  
THIS AREA FOR ABORIGINES. BUT THE POINT I WANT  
TO MAKE IS, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY,  
AUSTRALIA HAS A GOVERNMENT WHICH IS TRYING TO RESTORE  
BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS TO ABORIGINES AND TO REPAIR  
AUSTRALIA'S REPUTATION.

ANOTHER BASIC HUMAN RIGHT IS POLITICAL AND NATIONAL  
INDEPENDENCE. ON 16 SEPTEMBER WE SHALL BE GIVING  
INDEPENDENCE TO MORE THAN TWO MILLION HUMAN BEINGS,  
THE TWO AND A HALF MILLION PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE  
WORLD'S LARGEST REMAINING COLONY, PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

FOR MOST OF THE YEARS THE LIBERALS WERE IN POWER,  
UNTIL 1971 AT THE EARLIEST, THE MINISTER FOR WHAT  
WAS THEN CALLED EXTERNAL TERRITORIES USED TO TALK ABOUT  
INDEPENDENCE FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA IN TERMS OF THE  
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY - IF THEN. TALK ABOUT ALL  
POWER BEING VESTED IN CANBERRA!

IT WILL BE ONE OF THE PROUDEST THINGS OF MY LIFE TO HAVE ACHIEVED WHAT A MERE 5 YEARS AGO WAS DENOUNCED AS WILDLY IRRESPONSIBLE - TO DIVEST CANBERRA OF AUTHORITY OVER THE LIVES OF TWO AND A HALF MILLION PEOPLE.

IN THE MATTER OF MOST IMMEDIATE CONCERN TO YOU AT THE MOMENT - YOUR OWN EDUCATION, IS THERE ANY RIGHT MORE IMPORTANT THAN EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR A DECENT EDUCATION? WHEN HE WASN'T MINISTER FOR ARMY PRESIDING OVER CONSCRIPTION OR MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PRESIDING OVER THE WAR IN VIETNAM, MR FRASER WAS MINISTER FOR EDUCATION.

HE WAS VIOLENT IN HIS OPPOSITION TO THE NEEDS CONCEPT IN EDUCATION WHICH HAS BEEN PUT INTO EFFECT BY THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION. HE WAS OPPOSED TO THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION ITSELF, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WHICH HAS TRANSFORMED EDUCATION IN OUR NATION. HE WAS OPPOSED TO FREE EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION. THESE ARE THINGS WE HAVE ESTABLISHED, THINGS WHICH HAVE GUARANTEED TO EVERY AUSTRALIAN BOY AND GIRL, A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY.

THIS IS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR. ONE OF THE GREAT RIGHTS THAT WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR FOR GENERATIONS IS EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK. ALMOST ALONE OF THE ADVANCED WEALTHY COUNTRIES, AUSTRALIA UNDER THE LIBERALS, REFUSED THIS RIGHT TO WOMEN. WE ESTABLISHED THAT RIGHT.

YOU HAVE TO JUDGE WHETHER THAT IS A RIGHT WORTH HAVING, BECAUSE IT DOES BRING WITH IT SOME DIFFICULTIES. YOU HAVE BEEN HEARING A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE DAMAGE OUR TARIFF CUT OF 25% DID TO THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY HERE IN LAUNCESTON. THE FACT IS THAT THE REAL REASON WHY THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY DEVELOPED IN PLACES LIKE LAUNCESTON WAS THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO CALL UPON GROUPS OF UNSKILLED WOMEN WORKERS WHO WOULD ACCEPT LOW WAGES BECAUSE THERE WAS NO OTHER FORM OF EMPLOYMENT AVAILABLE. ONCE THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL PAY WAS ESTABLISHED BY MY GOVERNMENT THIS NO LONGER APPLIED. THE TARIFF CUTS HAVE BEEN A MARGINAL FACTOR IN FORCING THE RESTRUCTURING<sup>OR</sup> OF THE AUSTRALIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY. THE TRUTH IS THAT IF ONE TRIED TO RESTORE THE AUSTRALIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY TO ITS EARLIER SITUATION, ONE WOULD HAVE TO TAKE AWAY EQUAL PAY - NOT JUST IN TEXTILE BUT IN ALL INDUSTRY, FOR ALL WOMEN.