

22 June 1975

LAST FRIDAY, WITH THE PREMIER OF NEW SOUTH WALES AND THE LORD MAYOR OF SYDNEY, I SIGNED AN AGREEMENT BY WHICH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL PROVIDE \$17 MILLION FOR THE RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT OF WOOLLOOMOOLOO. THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THAT OCCASION AND THIS. BOTH BRING TO AT LEAST PARTIAL FRUITION, UNDERTAKINGS MADE IN 1972.

THOSE UNDERTAKINGS MEANT A REVERSAL OF EXISTING PLANS UNDER THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. IT WAS PROPOSED, YOU WILL REMEMBER, THAT NEW COMMONWEALTH OFFICES WERE TO BE BUILT IN WOOLLOOMOOLOO - A FULL TWO MILES FROM THE SYDNEY B.P.O. THAT WAS HARDLY A MODEL OF DECENTRALISATION. IT TOOK NO ACCOUNT OF THE GROWING PRESSURE ON THE FACILITIES AND SERVICES OF THE CENTRAL CITY AREA AND OF ITS TRANSPORT SYSTEM. IT TOOK NO ACCOUNT OF THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF WOOLLOOMOOLOO AS A RESIDENTIAL AREA. IT TOOK NO ACCOUNT OF THE CONVENIENCE OR AVAILABILITY OF STAFF. IT TOOK NO ACCOUNT OF THE PLACE AND PACE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA OR OF THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE IN THE WESTERN REGION.

SO FRIDAY'S OCCASION AND TODAY'S BOTH FULFIL SPECIFIC UNDERTAKINGS GIVEN BY TOM UREN AND ME IN 1972.

THERE IS MORE TO IT THAN THAT HOWEVER. BOTH THESE MATTERS REPRESENT A CRUCIAL PART OF OUR WHOLE PROGRAM - OUR BELIEF THAT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT MUST BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE PLACES WHERE MOST AUSTRALIANS LIVE, IN CITIES AND CENTRES.

IT'S FITTING ENOUGH THAT THIS FIRST PART OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICES IN PARRAMATTA - THE TAXATION CENTRE - SHOULD BE OPENED ON THE LAST DAY OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR AND READY FOR BUSINESS ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE NEW FINANCIAL YEAR. THERE ARE 500 STAFF OF THE TAXATION OFFICE ALREADY HERE. THIS OFFICE REPRESENTS THE FIRST MAJOR PRACTICAL STEP TOWARDS IMPLEMENTING OUR POLICY OF DISPERSING THE PUBLIC SERVICE TO SUB-METROPOLITAN AND REGIONAL AREAS. THIS OFFICE HERE WILL BE THE LARGEST BRANCH OF ANY DEPARTMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE OUTSIDE CANBERRA. AS FAR AS THE TAXATION OFFICE ITSELF IS CONCERNED, THIS MOVE IS THE FORERUNNER OF A PLANNED DISPERSAL TO CENTRES IN CAMPBELLTOWN, ALBURY-WODONGA, AND TO DANDENONG AND BROADMEADOWS IN MELBOURNE. THIS CENTRE ITSELF IS EVENTUALLY PLANNED TO HOUSE 5,000 PUBLIC SERVANTS.

ONE VERY IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS PROGRAM OF DISPERSAL IS TO BREAK DOWN ANY FALSE BARRIERS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE COMMUNITY WHICH IT SERVES AND OF WHICH IT IS AN INTEGRAL PART. THERE IS NOTHING MORE UNREAL, IN SOCIAL TERMS, IN ECONOMIC TERMS, IN POLITICAL TERMS, THAN TO DRAW DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN PUBLIC EMPLOYEES AND PRIVATE EMPLOYEES.

WE HAVE A MIXED ECONOMY AND EACH SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY IS INTERDEPENDENT. THIS BUILDING MAY BE A GOVERNMENT BUILDING, BUT ITS COMPLETION DEPENDS UPON SCORES OF PRIVATE CONTRACTS - THE BUILDING ITSELF, THE EQUIPMENT IN IT, THE SERVICING OF IT AND THE PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN IT. A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF WHAT IS CALLED 'GOVERNMENT SPENDING' ENDS UP IN FACT AS PRIVATE SPENDING.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS IS EQUALLY UNREAL WHEN IT COMES TO EMPLOYMENT.

FOR EXAMPLE, MEDIBANK COMES IN TOMORROW - OR AT LEAST IN NEW SOUTH WALES, PART OF IT. HOW UNREAL IT IS TO SUGGEST THAT OFFICERS IN THE PRIVATE HEALTH FUNDS, BECAUSE CLASSIFIED AS PRIVATE EMPLOYEES, ARE IN SOME WAY DIFFERENT, MORE PRODUCTIVE THAN THEIR COLLEAGUES IN MEDIBANK. INDEED LARGE NUMBERS OF EMPLOYEES HAVE TRANSFERRED FROM ONE BUREAUCRACY, IF YOU LIKE, TO ANOTHER; YESTERDAY'S PRIVATE FUND EMPLOYEE IS TOMORROW'S MEDIBANK'S EMPLOYEE. HIS VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY REMAINS THE SAME; THE COMMUNITY PAYS NOT ONE CENT MORE FOR HIS WORK OR FOR THE SYSTEM IN WHICH HE WORKS.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE - THE EMPLOYEES IN THIS BUILDING ARE NOT ONLY PUBLIC SERVANTS, BUT TAXPAYERS LIKE THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY, EVEN THE TAX COLLECTOR PAYS INCOME TAX. IN A COUNTRY LIKE AUSTRALIA, WHERE ONE QUARTER OF US ARE ON THE PUBLIC PAYROLL - FEDERAL, STATE OR LOCAL - IT IS A VERY FALSE DIVISION INDEED TO MAKE BETWEEN PRIVATE EMPLOYEES AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES. I FIND IT NOT ONLY UNREAL, BUT RATHER REPREHENSIBLE AS AN ATTEMPT TO DIVIDE A COMMUNITY ON A VERY FALSE AND FOOLISH DISTINCTION. I CANNOT SEE TO WHOSE ADVANTAGE IT IS, POLITICALLY OR ANY OTHER WAY, TO GENERATE THIS DIVISION, TO CREATE THIS DISTINCTION. THE IDEA OF THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE BEING AN ISOLATED ELITE IN CANBERRA IS A MYTH.

THE PROGRAM OF DEPARTMENTAL DISPERSAL IN AREAS LIKE THIS SO THAT PUBLIC SERVANTS ARE SEEN TO BE WHAT THEY TRULY ARE - A REAL AND INDISPENSABLE PART OF THE REAL COMMUNITY AND OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY - WILL, I TRUST, HELP DISPEL THAT MYTH.

I HAVE SAID THAT THIS BUILDING PUTS INTO PRACTICE OUR BELIEF IN NATIONAL INVOLVEMENT, NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN AUSTRALIAN CITIES AND CENTRES. THERE IS OF COURSE, ANOTHER SIDE TO THE COIN. WHEN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT BECOMES INVOLVED, IT MUST ALSO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE LOCAL CONSEQUENCES OF ITS PLANS.

THE GROWTH THAT COMES FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRE LIKE THIS AND OUR OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THIS REGION PLACES ADDITIONAL PRESSURE ON LOCAL RESOURCES AND LOCAL SERVICES.

THERE HAS TO BE A FOLLOW THROUGH AND A FOLLOW-UP. I ACKNOWLEDGE THIS AND THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS ITS RESPONSIBILITIES. THERE WILL BE A NEED FOR CONTINUING CLOSE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT. IF I MIGHT GIVE A NEGATIVE EXAMPLE, A LONG WAY FROM PARRAMATTA - TOWNSVILLE.

THE GREAT GROWTH IN TOWNSVILLE IN THE LAST DECADE HAS SPRUNG DIRECTLY FROM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES - THE ARMY BASE, THE AIR FORCE BASE, THE UNIVERSITY, THE MARINE INSTITUTE AND WE UNDERTOOK IN 1972 TO MAKE TOWNSVILLE, ALONG WITH ALBURY-WODONGA, A NEW GROWTH CENTRE - THAT IS TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BURDENS ON LOCAL SERVICES AND AMENITIES RESULTING FROM NATIONAL ACTIVITY.

NON-CO-OPERATION BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THAT STATE HAS SO FAR THWARTED THAT UNDERTAKING. IT IS CRUCIAL FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS REGION THAT WE HAVE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT HERE.

IF THAT IS FORTHCOMING, THE PROGRAMS OF WHICH THIS CENTRE IS JUST A PART, ONE OF THE FIRST FRUITS, WILL WORK GENUINELY FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THIS HISTORIC CITY, ITS PEOPLE AND THE REGION ITSELF.