

PRIME MINISTER'S QUEENSLAND BROADCAST NO. 20

QUALITY OF LIFE

SUNDAY, 3 AUGUST 1975

IT'S NO SECRET THAT OUR NEXT BUDGET WILL PUT SOME PRETTY TIGHT RESTRAINTS ON GOVERNMENT SPENDING, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE WON'T BE SPENDING ON THINGS THAT MATTER. OUR OPPONENTS ARE VERY FOND OF KNOCKING ANY SORT OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE, AS IF ALL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE WERE WASTEFUL AND UNNECESSARY. WE HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT THE LIBERALS IN OFFICE WASTED MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN GRANTS TO WEALTHY SCHOOLS, EXPENSIVE SUBSIDIES TO CERTAIN INDUSTRIES AND SUCH EXTRAVAGANCIES AS THE F-111. IT'S QUITE ABSURD WHEN THE QUEENSLAND PREMIER AND THE COUNTRY PARTY PUBLICLY ADVOCATE NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MISSILE SYSTEMS FOR AUSTRALIA - THE SORT OF THINGS THAT WOULD COST BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IF WE WERE MAD ENOUGH TO TAKE THEIR ADVICE - AND THEN COMPLAIN ABOUT LABOR'S SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS AND GRANTS TO THE ARTS. THIS CONSTANT WHINGEING ABOUT GRANTS TO THE ARTS IS ONE VERY GOOD EXAMPLE OF OUR OPPONENTS' HATRED OF ANYTHING THAT REALLY IMPROVES THE LIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY MINORITY GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY.

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THE FACT IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS A NUMBER OF PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO MAKE LIFE HAPPIER AND MORE ENJOYABLE FOR PEOPLE IN SMALL, AND SOME WOULD SAY, RATHER UNUSUAL WAYS. WE SEE THESE AS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S WORK. GOVERNMENT ISN'T JUST A MATTER OF PROVIDING ROADS AND PENSIONS AND EDUCATION. WE WANT TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO ENLIVEN AND INVIGORATE PEOPLE'S LIVES, TO MAKE SURE THAT THE REWARDS AND SATISFACTIONS OF THE ARTS, AND DECENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPORT AND RECREATION AND HOLIDAYS, ARE SHARED BY AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE AND NOT JUST BY A FORTUNATE ELITE. AND THE TRUTH IS THAT IN THE TOTAL SCHEME OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE THESE EFFORTS ARE ACTUALLY VERY, VERY INEXPENSIVE. OUR TOTAL BUDGET FOR THE ARTS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS BEEN \$20 MILLION. THAT'S LESS THAN ONE-TENTH OF ONE PER CENT OF THE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT. THE IDEA THAT SUCH EXPENDITURES ARE INFLATIONARY IN THEMSELVES IS TOO SILLY FOR WORDS. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER ANY SUCH EXPENDITURE SHOULD BE A PART OF A GOVERNMENT'S OVERALL ACTIVITY. I CERTAINLY BELIEVE IT SHOULD. THE FACT THAT THE LIBERALS DID NEXT TO NOTHING IN THESE FIELDS DOESN'T MAKE THEM UNIMPORTANT.

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I SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF DOESN'T DECIDE WHAT GRANTS SHOULD BE MADE FOR THE ARTS. THIS IS NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL, AN INDEPENDENT BODY - IT USED TO BE CALLED THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS - WHICH THE GOVERNMENT SET UP AS A STATUTORY AUTHORITY. OF COURSE IT RECEIVES AN ANNUAL BUDGET FROM THE GOVERNMENT, BUT JUST HOW THOSE FUNDS ARE SPENT IS FOR THE COUNCIL, WITH ITS OWN BOARDS AND EXPERT ADVISERS TO DECIDE. I RECALL SOME LOUD CRIES OF ANGUISH NOT LONG AGO WHEN THE COUNCIL MADE A GRANT OF \$500 TO A DAHLIA FESTIVAL IN VICTORIA. WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S EASY TO MAKE FUN OF PEOPLE WHOSE INTERESTS AREN'T CONFINED TO RACING AND THE STOCK MARKET, BUT THE PARTICULAR FESTIVAL TO WHICH THAT GRANT WAS APPLIED HAPPENS TO BE THE ANNUAL OCCASION OF CENTRAL IMPORTANCE IN THE LIFE OF THE WHOLE BENDIGO REGION. WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT TASTES AND INTERESTS AND IT'S PART OF OUR POLICY TO GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT AND EXPRESSION TO DIVERSE AND EVEN OFF-BEAT ACTIVITIES IF THEY HAVE A LEGITIMATE FOLLOWING AND CAN ENRICH THE LIVES OF OUR CITIZENS. IT DOESN'T COST MUCH, BUT THE RETURNS ARE VERY GREAT.

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LET ME GIVE A FEW EXAMPLES OF WHAT THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL HAS DONE IN QUEENSLAND. THE MAJOR ARTS GRANTS GO TO THE BIG THEATRE AND BALLET COMPANIES AND ORCHESTRAS, BUT IT ISN'T JUST A MATTER OF FUNDING HIGHBROW PURSUITS IN THE BIG CITIES. SMALLER GRANTS HAVE GONE TO THEATRE AND DANCE COMPANIES IN OUTBACK PARTS OF THE STATE, SUCH AS THE MAREEBA REPERTORY SOCIETY, THE TOWNSVILLE LITTLE THEATRE AND THE FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND AMATEUR THEATRICAL ASSOCIATION. MONEY HAS GONE TO LOCAL FESTIVALS AND COMMUNITY ARTS FESTIVALS ALL OVER QUEENSLAND. WE HELPED THE QUEENSLAND BALLET TOUR IN REMOTE AREAS LIKE COOKTOWN AND THURSDAY ISLAND. JAZZ, FOLK MUSIC AND ABORIGINAL ARTS ARE SUPPORTED AS WELL. ALTOGETHER, IN 1974, THE COUNCIL MADE 259 GRANTS IN QUEENSLAND WITH A TOTAL EXPENDITURE OF JUST UNDER A MILLION DOLLARS.

THE OTHER AREA WHERE WE ARE WORKING TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND PEOPLE'S OPPORTUNITIES FOR FULFILMENT AND ENJOYMENT IS TOURISM AND RECREATION. WE SET UP A NEW DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND RECREATION AS SOON AS THE GOVERNMENT CAME TO OFFICE. IT'S SURPRISING HOW MUCH CAN BE DONE WITH SMALL SUMS APPLIED CAREFULLY FOR LOCAL PURPOSES. IT'S NOT NECESSARILY A MATTER OF BUILDING VAST STADIUMS - THOUGH SOMETIMES BIG PROJECTS ARE INVOLVED - BUT MAINLY IT'S HELPING LOCAL GROUPS AND AUTHORITIES IMPROVE EXISTING FACILITIES - A NEW CHANGEROOM, AN EXTRA TENNIS COURT, FLOODLIGHTING FOR AN OVAL. HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES: \$4000 TO PURCHASE A BUILDING FOR A YOUTH CENTRE AT CHARTERS TOWERS, \$6000 FOR SQUASH COURTS AT WINTON, \$42,000 FOR TENNIS AND BASKETBALL COURTS AT GLADSTONE, \$8000 FOR A STADIUM AT MARYBOROUGH. IN ADDITION, WE'RE DEVELOPING A NUMBER OF NATIONAL PARKS, MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES IN QUEENSLAND TO IMPROVE THEM AS TOURIST RESORTS SO THAT ALL AUSTRALIANS CAN ENJOY THE NATURAL BEAUTIES AND PLACES OF HISTORIC INTEREST WITH WHICH THIS STATE ABOUNDS. ALTOGETHER THIS PROGRAM IS COSTING SOMETHING OVER \$230,000 IN QUEENSLAND - A TINY SUM AS GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES GO, BUT ONE THAT'S GETTING RESULTS AND BRINGING PLEASURE TO GREAT NUMBERS OF PEOPLE.

QUITE FRANKLY, WE DON'T SEE THIS KIND OF OUTLAY AS FRIVOLOUS OR UNNECESSARY. LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE, THESE EXPENDITURES HAVE TO BE REVIEWED AT BUDGET TIME, BUT GRANTS OF THIS KIND HAVE AN ESSENTIAL PLACE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S THINKING. FOR ONE THING, OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPORT ARE BUILDING A MUCH HEALTHIER GENERATION FO YOUNG AUSTRALIANS. WE OUGHT TO BE ON GUARD AGAINST MEAN-SPIRITED PEOPLE WHO RESENT THE IDEA OF GAMES AND PLEASURE FOR COMMUNITIES WHICH LACK DECENT FACILITIES FOR SPORT AND RECREATION. IN THE SAME WAY, LET'S BE WARY OF THE PHILISTINES IN OUR MIDST WHO OBJECT TO ANY GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE ARTS. WE CAN BE A PRETTY TOUGH AND CYNICAL PEOPLE WHEN IT SUITS US, BUT THERE HAS TO BE A PLACE IN ANY HEALTHY SOCIETY FOR THE INTANGIBLE THINGS - THE MENTAL, INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL REWARDS THAT THE ARTS CAN BRING. ONE DAY WE MAY COME TO SEE THAT THESE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS OF ALL.
