

Embargo: Jim Sunday

PRIME MINISTER'S QUEENSLAND BROADCAST NO 2121

WOMEN

SUNDAY 10 AUGUST 1975

A FEW WEEKS AGO MY WIFE AND ONE OF MY ADVISERS, ELIZABETH REID, RETURNED FROM ~~THE~~^{THE} INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR CONFERENCE IN MEXICO CITY. IT'S NOT MY USUAL STYLE TO PAY PUBLIC TRIBUTES TO MY STAFF, BUT IT'S FAIR TO POINT OUT JUST HOW MUCH CREDIT ELIZABETH REID BROUGHT TO AUSTRALIA DURING THAT CONFERENCE AND HOW MUCH SHE HAS DONE TO HELP THE CAUSE OF WOMEN IN AUSTRALIA AND, INDEED, IN OTHER COUNTRIES. SHE WOULD BE THE LAST PERSON TO CLAIM CREDIT FOR THE MANY REFORMS MY GOVERNMENT HAS INTRODUCED FOR WOMEN, BUT HER VERY APPOINTMENT TO MY STAFF SAYS SOMETHING, I THINK, ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO WOMEN'S NEEDS AND INTERESTS. INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR HAS BEEN A REMARKABLE EXPERIMENT IN GETTING PEOPLE EVERYWHERE TO THINK ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF WOMEN AND PERSUADING GOVERNMENTS TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS MADE SUBSTANTIAL GRANTS TO ORGANISE CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, BOOKS AND DISCUSSIONS DURING THE YEAR. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CONFERENCES WILL BE HELD IN BRISBANE LATER THIS MONTH ON THE THEME OF WOMEN'S HEALTH.

SOME OF YOU MAY FEEL THAT ALL THIS TALK ABOUT WOMEN IS RATHER HIGH-FLOWN AND IMPRACTICAL, AND THAT THE ONLY WOMEN WE ARE CONCERNED TO HELP ARE THE MINORITY OF YOUNG, CAREER-MINDED WOMEN WITH HIGHER EDUCATION. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. I DON'T THINK EVEN THE MOST RADICAL WOMEN'S ORGANISATION WOULD WANT TO FORCE WOMEN INTO ANY ROLE THAT THEY WOULDN'T CHOOSE FOR THEMSELVES. IT MAY WELL BE TRUE THAT IF THEY WERE COMPLETELY FREE TO CHOOSE, MOST WOMEN TODAY WOULD CHOOSE THE TRADITIONAL ROLE - TO BE WIVES, TO BE MOTHERS, TO STAY AT HOME. WOMEN WHO CHOOSE THOSE ROLES, THOSE HONOURABLE ROLES, HAVE AS MUCH RIGHT TO HELP AND GUIDANCE AS ANYONE ELSE. THE POINT IS THAT WOMEN SHOULD BE FREE TO MAKE THEIR CHOICE; THEY SHOULD HAVE EXACTLY THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES AS MEN TO EDUCATION, TO HIGHLY PAID AND SATISFYING JOBS, TO POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND PERSONAL FULFILMENT. IT IS THIS FREEDOM THAT WE WANT TO ENLARGE.

OF COURSE THE MOST OBVIOUS WAY THAT A GOVERNMENT CAN HELP WOMEN IS IN THE MATERIAL THINGS - PAY AND CONDITIONS FOR WORKING WOMEN. YET EVEN THESE OBVIOUS THINGS WERE NEGLECTED FOR MANY YEARS. WITHIN DAYS OF COMING TO POWER IN DECEMBER 1972, THE GOVERNMENT MADE ITS ATTITUDE TO THE QUESTION OF EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN VERY CLEAR. WE SUPPORTED THE A.C.T.U.'S CASE FOR EQUAL PAY AND THE ARBITRATION COMMISSION UNCONDITIONALLY ACCEPTED THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE. EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN UNDER FEDERAL AWARDS HAS NOW BEEN FULLY IMPLEMENTED, AND FROM THIS MONTH THE MINIMUM WAGE APPLIES EQUALLY TO WOMEN AND MEN. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE VASTLY IMPROVED THE STATUS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF WOMEN IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT WHERE WE HAVE FULL RESPONSIBILITY AS A GOVERNMENT - IN THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE.

BUT THIS IS A VERY SMALL PART OF THE PROBLEM. IN BRISBANE TWO YEARS AGO, IN ONE OF MY FIRST SPEECHES ON THIS SUBJECT, I SAID THIS:

"WE HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE INEQUALITY OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY IS DEEPLY EMBEDDED NOT JUST IN THE INSTITUTIONS BUT IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SOCIETY..."

IT'S THAT PSYCHOLOGY, THOSE OLD HABITS OF THINKING, THAT REALLY MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT FOR WOMEN. THERE'S THE FEELING, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT GIRLS SHOULD HAVE A DIFFERENT SORT OF EDUCATION FROM BOYS - THAT THEY SHOULDN'T AIM TOO HIGH, THAT THEY SHOULD STICK TO CERTAIN SUBJECTS AND LEAVE SCHOOL EARLIER - AS INDEED, MOST GIRLS DO. THAT JUST ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH; AND THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION - WHICH MY GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED - IS CURRENTLY SEEKING TO REMOVE DISTINCTIONS IN BOYS' AND GIRLS' SCHOOLING AND PUT THE EMPHASIS ON RAISING THE ASPIRATIONS OF GIRLS. WE ARE ALSO ENGAGED IN A STUDY CALLED WOMEN AND PLANNING. IT'S INVESTIGATING ALL THE OBVIOUS AND NOT-SO-OBVIOUS RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITIES - IN THE WORKFORCE, IN SHOPPING AND RECREATION FACILITIES, IN HEALTH AND WELFARE SERVICES AND TRANSPORT,

TO BE REALISTIC WE HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE GREATEST HELP WE CAN GIVE TO WOMEN - AND NOT JUST WORKING WOMEN - IS IN THE CARE OF BABIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN. GOOD SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL SERVICES AREN'T SUFFICIENT IN THEMSELVES ; THERE MUST BE SPECIAL PROVISION FOR CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE. THIS YEAR WE SET UP THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN - PRE-SCHOOL, DAY CARE, PART-TIME AND EMERGENCY CARE SERVICES, AFTER SCHOOL AND HOLIDAY PROJECTS. WELL OVER 100,000 CHILDREN HAVE BEEN CATERED FOR ALREADY UNDER THIS PROGRAM. IN QUEENSLAND IN THE LAST FINANCIAL YEAR WE PROVIDED MORE THAN \$5½ MILLION TO MEET THE COST OF STAFF IN PRE-SCHOOLS AND PLAY CENTRES OPERATED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS AND TO HELP ESTABLISH 77 NEW PRE-SCHOOL CENTRES THROUGHOUT THE STATE. THIS MONEY HAS BEEN PAID THROUGH THE STATE GOVERNMENT. ON TOP OF THAT WE HAVE MADE DIRECT GRANTS TOWARDS THE COST OF OTHER CHILD CARE CENTRES. WE BELIEVE THAT EVERY AUSTRALIAN CHILD SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO A PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION. EVERY MOTHER WHO NEEDS OR WANTS CHILD CARE FACILITIES SHOULD HAVE THEM. THESE THINGS SHOULDN'T BE PRIVILEGES FOR THOSE WHO CAN PAY.

I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU OF ALL THE OTHER THINGS WE HAVE DONE FOR WOMEN - HIGHER SOCIAL SERVICE PAYMENTS, THE SUPPORTING MOTHER'S BENEFIT FOR SINGLE WOMEN AND DESERTED WIVES, THE NEW WOMEN'S COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE AND THE RAPE CRISIS CENTRE IN BRISBANE. YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THESE BENEFITS AND SERVICES FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICES OR YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. WE ARE THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO TACKLE WOMEN'S PROBLEMS AND LOOK DEEPLY AND SERIOUSLY AT WOMEN'S LONG-TERM NEEDS. BUT THERE IS A LIMIT TO WHAT GOVERNMENTS CAN DO. OUR GREATEST DIFFICULTY LIES IN THE OLD HABITS AND PREJUDICES THAT PERSIST THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY. WOMEN HAVE TO OVERCOME THOSE FEELINGS, THEY MUST CULTIVATE THEIR PRIDE, DIGNITY, AND INDEPENDENCE, AND TRY TO SEE THAT MEN, AND MORE IMPORTANT PERHAPS, THEIR FELLOW-WOMEN, SHARE THOSE FEELINGS AND ASPIRATIONS.
