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PRIME MINISTER

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ELECTORAL TALK

Australian companies are making a valuable contribution to our national recovery with each new investment decision - regardless of size.

But companies can do more - not just for themselves, but for the benefit of all Australians.

Company management can spend more time and effort in taking employees into their confidence.

Management can spend more time recognising that they have common interests with 'those down on the shop floor'.

Today an increasing number of businesses are making a special effort to inform employees about the company's performance and prospects. An increasing number are starting to issue special reports to employees and involving them in discussions.

Some companies are telling their workforce how inflation affects their particular business; what has happened to the company's trade over the last few years; the prospects for new investment and the prospects of the company providing more jobs.

These companies understand that their workers are not just another ingot of steel or another element of inanimate object in the production process.

Unfortunately, however, there are too many Australian companies who do not pay enough attention to this critical area.

If these companies follow the example of the best, then there would be less time lost through strikes and a reduction in the number of disputes.

Surely the managers who simply see their workforce as a cost in the business of making a product must understand they are retarding national recovery.

This kind of inward looking and inward thinking out-dated industrial relations attitude must have a far reaching affect on the industrial scene in Australia.

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This attitude not only affects their own company's performance but rubs off onto neighbouring companies and others in the same industry.

When a company opens a new plant, or unveils a new development why does it sometimes happen only in front of a bevy of management people, customers, suppliers, industry heads and politicians?

Employees should always be invited. Their wives and children should be part of the ceremony too.

For without these employees - and their families - there would be no new plant, no new technological development - and no industry to run.

Australian companies have a special obligation to help make people understand that there are interests held in common. They are in a unique position to demonstrate that there doesn't have to be competition for influence and power.

I look for evidence that more companies understand that employees and management do have interests in common.

Companies are also in the best position to persuade people of the virtues of the free enterprise system.

In a free enterprise system the employee has a choice of employers, a choice of industry, a choice of products.

Collectively, he exercises a great deal of control over the market place. He controls what products sell, and what remain on the shelf. He therefore affects profits.

Pre-eminently, private enterprise gives employees a standard of living not matched by any other system.

But how many Australian companies really try and persuade their employees who may not believe in the free enterprise system that it does offer the best life for Australians and not just for employers, for management or for company directors.

There is a job which management can undertake in a quiet and logical sense that could help transform society and help make Australia a better place for all of us.