



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

27 OCTOBER 1978

ADDRESS

AT

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN

STATE COUNCIL DINNER

Mr President, I am delighted to have been asked to speak at this State Council dinner, and to have the opportunity to congratulate you on your re-election.

This is your third term as State President in South Australia, and I have very much appreciated your advice and assistance over the last two years.

This is also the first opportunity I have had to thank formally the South Australian Division as a whole for the part they played in our overwhelming success at the last Federal Election.

Last December every sitting Liberal throughout Australia who contested the election was returned. The Labor Party's share of the vote actually fell from 1975, and was the lowest recorded since 1934. And here in South Australia, as in three other States, the Government won three of the five Senate seats.

It was a massive endorsement of the Liberal philosophy and the Government's policies, and a great tribute to all those in the Party Organisation who campaigned so hard.

On the State scene I know that David Tonkin and his team, working closely with your re-structured executive, are on course to win office at the next State elections.

The State Labor government had given you a good omen - they have recently increased their Cabinet to thirteen. But it won't be bad luck that brings the Labor government down. It will be its dismal failure to provide the kind of policies that South Australia needs to get this State moving again.

Only a Liberal Government has the philosophy and the policies to revitalise this state. For our primary interest as a Party is in people: their individual gifts and their right to have the chance to develop them to the full; their freedom to participate fully in the political life of this country; their right to take risks and be rewarded for success; and

their need for compassionate and effective help when in difficulty, help which is provided in ways which enhance rather than diminish self-esteem and dignity.

The Liberal ideal is a stable, humane, and civilised country, enriched by a diversity of cultures and life styles and unified by a sense of national purpose and identity.

The Liberal Party seeks a growing and developing Australia in which private enterprise is able to thrive and expand - helping to provide satisfying work for all Australians.

It was no accident that the founder of our Party, Sir Robert Menzies, chose the name "Liberal", for we are the successors of a long and great tradition.

The Liberal tradition has inspired social reform in Australia for a century. It was the Liberals who introduced votes for women, and later, votes for 18 year olds, the secret ballot, our arbitration system, old age pensions, tariff protection for local industry,

Commonwealth funding for education and, more recently, family allowances, the indexation of pensions, tax indexation and revenue sharing with the States.

The Liberal tradition, with its emphasis on individual rights and needs, and its suspicion of easy, big spending, bureaucratic solutions, is just as relevant today as at any other time in its history.

Just as Liberals centuries ago fought against centralised power, we are today taking up the challenge of curbing the power of big government and big bureaucracy. Just as the great British Liberal, Keynes, helped governments to overcome the Great Depression so Liberals today have forged new policies which are meeting today's challenges, which are overcoming inflation, and returning the dispirited, shaken economy we inherited to full health.

How then do we see the 1980s? We utterly reject the Labor Party's hang-dog attitude which can see nothing but problems. Mr. Hayden keeps calling the 1980s "the decade of despair". In a way I can understand that. It will be a decade of despair for the Labor Party. They are haunted by the prospect of 10 long years and more of opposition.

After the last election, Labor's policies were so utterly discredited that the A.L.P. established a Committee of Inquiry to inquire into itself. The Committee's task was truly herculean.- to get the Labor Party back in touch with the real needs and aspirations of the Australian people. Is it any wonder they have drifted apart?

There was a time when the Labor Party was represented in Parliament by men who had been schooled in the union movement; men who understood the need for a person to get a job and support his family; men who had struggled for better conditions for their fellow workers. But now such men are rejected, thrust aside in favour of proponents of theory and dogma - the very sort of theoreticians dominating the Labor Party's Committee of Self Inquiry.

That Inquiry recently unveiled its schemes for Australia's economic future - a scheme to nationalise major Australian companies. It seems the only way Labor can keep in touch with private industry is to nationalise it.

One of the authors of the scheme said it was about time people woke up to what the Australian Labor Party was all about. Well, I can tell him the Australian people are wide awake to the Labor Party. They know Labor has forsaken the working men and women of Australia. That's why in the last two Federal elections so many Australians voted Liberal. That's why so many Australians will vote Liberal through the 1980s.

The parlous state of the economy which we took over from our predecessors less than three years ago demanded that we give a high priority to getting inflation down. Inflation threatens our living standards, it particularly harms those on fixed incomes, those least able to defend themselves. It destroys the initiative to invest and grow. It destroys jobs. It leads to unemployment. A government that condones inflation condones unemployment. A government that creates inflation as Labor did creates unemployment. We as Liberals should never forget that. Inflation can destroy efforts to improve the well-being of the disadvantaged.

As a government, we have heeded the Henderson Poverty Report's warning to governments against the danger -- and I use Professor Henderson's words: "...of falling into the inflationary trap of attempting to carry out so many social reforms or other public expenditures at once, that they accelerate an inflationary spiral that does more to damage poor people than the assistance provided by the reform".

Our view that the fight against inflation is crucial is held by many world governments. The case is so compelling that it is even recognised by socialist governments.

Let me quote from the British Prime Minister's October speech to the British Labor Party's Annual Conference: "The beginning for the Government is how do we keep inflation down". "It is the Government's inescapable responsibility to keep down inflation, not against anybody, but in the interests of the whole of the people of this country".

In Australia, we have already had great success in reducing inflation. By maintaining our policies, we will force inflation down further.

Our fight against inflation has not prevented the Government from undertaking a wide range of initiatives and reforms. The more we reduce inflation, the more we can push ahead strongly and rapidly in realising our goals for Australia.

The challenge of the 1980s is not some unrealistic Utopia - some pie-in-the-sky dream utterly divorced from reality. We have a vision of Australia's future - it is a vision we will achieve.

Our vision is of an Australia which is a country of growth and development, of prosperity and enlightenment, of stability and security, of compassion and effective help for those in need - a country in which the quality of freedom and opportunity for individual Australians has no equal -- anywhere.

We ask only one thing of this nation -- for the men and women of Australia to recognise their common interests; to recognise that by working together with determination and common purpose there is nothing this nation cannot achieve.

As Liberals, we believe this vision will be achieved -- by Government policy, by the actions of voluntary organisations, and above all by the conscious commitment of individual Australians leading us to a more caring, more responsible, more creative, more tolerant, more self-reliant nation.

We are already on the way to realising this great ideal. It is our goal to build a vigorous vital economy, sure of its own strength - developing through the capacity of its people.

We want a more competitive society, with less government restrictions, where new businesses are encouraged. We have moved to lift the heavy hand of bureaucracy.

Our goal is a society in which satisfying and fulfilling work is available for those who seek it. Our economic policies are moving Australia in that direction. We are overcoming the ills and difficulties of Labor's excesses.

Our goal is to provide effective and compassionate assistance to those in need and our welfare programmes are doing this. Our introduction of the family allowance is one of the greatest social welfare innovations made in Australia in this century.

The new programmes we have introduced for migrant and ethnic communities are a long-needed breakthrough in this area.

Our goal is a free and tolerant society which protects the basic rights of people. A society where privacy is respected, where the rule of law prevails, where justice is available to all, where bureaucracies are responsive to people's needs, and there is redress for ill-considered decisions by public servants.

Our goal is a society where industrial disputes shall be settled by consultation and reason and if that fails the rule of law will prevail.

We look to a decade in which employers and employees will recognise their common interests, and that the greatest gains for all Australians come from increasing the nation's wealth.

We have already made great advances in this area by providing protection for conscientious objectors; by introducing secret postal ballots for union elections; by establishing the Industrial Relations Bureau.

Our goal is to respond to the problems created by our complex industrial society. We are determined that, together with voluntary welfare associations, we will meet the problems of drug abuse, of family breakdown, of frustration and alienation.

Our goal is a healthy Australia with health services equal to any in the world - provided at a reasonable cost. We have already made substantial reforms to Australia's health services.

Our goal is an Australia enjoying a high standard of education, which meets the needs of our multicultural society; an education system that contributes to a vigorous, vital and inventive people wanting to work for themselves and their families.

The Williams Report, examining the problems of education and training, will assist us to move the education system further towards this objective.

The realisation of all these goals depends significantly on the achievement of our economic objectives. Only a stable, prosperous economy in which inflation has been overcome and confidence fully restored will provide all the resources necessary to achieve our ends.

Australians have every reason for great confidence in the future. The recent favourable trends in the economy are the result of this Government's policies: inflation is down; interest rates are moving down; the rural sector has very good prospects; with a more stable cost base, we are competitive again and are getting our manufacturers back into world markets. It gives us a chance to sell at home and abroad.

Falling interest rates will stimulate activity for businesses of all sizes. It will make it easier for Australians to purchase homes. We have made significant progress and this steady improvement will continue.

Let us not just pay lip-service to the goals and aspirations we all share, for they are not mere abstract notions suitable only for reflective speeches by Prime Ministers. We need - all of us - to relate these goals to our everyday lives.

Let me give some examples. We all believe in there being more jobs available for Australians out of work. It is time union leaders showed real concern for the unemployed by moderating wage claims to prevent working men and women being priced out of the labour market.

We all believe in the handicapped receiving a fair deal. It is time more employers showed real concern for the handicapped by offering them work as vacancies become available.

We all believe in a fair and equitable taxation system. It is time so many Australians stopped indulging in blatant and artificial tax avoidance schemes.

We all believe in conservation and the need to protect our environment. It is time we all made a real effort to stop littering Australia and polluting our environment.

We all believe in a great country. It is time we stopped knocking Australia.

Achieving the goals and aspirations we share is not just a task for Government. It is a task for Government and people; for the Commonwealth and the States; for the young and old; for all Australians wherever they may be.

The Australian Government seeks a partnership with the community; between government, employers and employees; between Government agencies and voluntary organisations; between legislators and individual Australians. With such a partnership, with such a commitment, there is nothing Australians cannot achieve.