



EMBARGO: 1.30 p.m.

FILE

PRIME MINISTER

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ADDRESS TO THE VICTORIAN YOUNG LIBERALS

It's very good to be here today, and speaking at this venue. I know that the economy is improving, that confidence is increasing and that we have made major social reforms, but I never thought that I'd be able to say that the Liberals have arrived at Camelot. Outside this building, however, there are still a great many things to achieve, and this Party, with its commitment with its philosophy, and its policies will achieve them.

We will achieve them because our primary concern as a Party is with people - with people's gifts and talents, and their right to develop them to the full; with people's freedom to determine their own lives and the life of this country; with people's right to take risks and be rewarded for success; with people's need for help and compassion when in difficulty - help which does not diminish their dignity but enhances it.

We believe that it is people that are valuable, that it is people's opportunities that should be expanded, not the power and intrusiveness of the state. As John Stuart Mill said, "A state that dwarfs its men in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands - even for beneficial purposes - will find that with small men no great thing can be accomplished."

The Liberal idea is a stable, humane and civilised society, a society enriched by a diversity of cultures and lifestyles, a society unified by a national purpose and identity, a society in which people can accomplish great things.

The Liberal tradition has been an inspiration to social reform in Australia for a century. It was the Liberals who introduced: votes for women and eighteen year olds; the secret ballot; the arbitration system; old age pensions; tariff protection for local industry; and Commonwealth funding for education. Under this Government we have introduced such fundamental reforms as family allowances, the indexation of pensions, tax indexation and revenue sharing with the States.

The fundamental commitment of the Liberal tradition, a belief in people and their potential, their creativity, is as important to the future of our country - and to this State - as it has ever been. That's why it's so important that we win the election coming up in Victoria. That's why Victorian Young Liberals, with their commitment to Liberalism should do their utmost to return the government. It's not a matter of power for power's sake - it's a matter of whether Victoria is governed by a Party committed to people, or by a Party committed to imposing a stifling and corrosive ideology.

Frankly, it would be astounding if a Party that had been in government for over two decades did not have its rough patches. But make no mistake about it - the yawning gap between the principles of the Liberal Party and those of the A.L.P. is just as wide as it has ever been.

Liberals are committed to curbing the power of big government, to checking the encroachments of the bureaucracy. The A.L.P. wants more government more intrusive bureaucracy.

In Victoria, the A.L.P. has again reaffirmed without any qualification its desire to socialise the means of production, distribution and exchange. Just two weeks ago, the State A.L.P. refused to amend the original 1921 wording of their policy on nationalisation. What a decisive step forward into the future that was.

The Liberals are committed to individual freedom, and have supported the cause of Soviet defenders of human rights. At its conference a fortnight ago, the Labor Party in Victoria refused to condemn the Soviet Government's infringements of human rights. Despite the mountains of evidence from objective, impartial sources, the A.L.P. preferred to believe the official Soviet line.

The Liberals have been forging new policies, which are meeting today's challenges. The A.L.P. is still caught up in the toils of old dogma, failed policies discredited plans. It's no wonder that Labor has consistently adopted a negative approach to Australia's future. Mr Hayden has called the 1980's "the decade of despair", "the decade of gloom", "the dismal decade." The only phrase Mr Hayden has not yet used is "a decade of doom," and with the Labor Party looking down the barrel of ten years and more of Opposition, I've no doubt we'll see that phrase creep into Mr Hayden's vocabulary before long.

We utterly reject the Labor Party's policy of defeatism and despondency. We reject their policies, which generated an explosion of prices, wages and government spending, which gravely weakened the economy.

One of the first tasks we faced was to get inflation down, and governments around the world are coming to accept the correctness of this priority. For instance, the British Labor Prime Minister, Mr Callaghan, said in October:

"The beginning for the Government is now 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."

We have already had great success in reducing inflation, and by maintaining our policies we will force inflation further down. The more we can get inflation down, the more quickly we implement the programmes that will realise our goals for Australia. The goals for which we are striving are not pie-in-the-sky, or unrealistic. As Liberals, we have a vision of Australia's future. 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 individuals has no equal - anywhere.

To make this vision a reality, the actions of government, of voluntary organisations, of individual Australians, must be spurred forward by a common commitment, leading us to be a more caring, more responsible, more creative, more tolerant, more self-reliant nation.

After three years of Liberal government, we have already started on the road to realising this great ideal. It is our goal to build a vigorous economy, strengthened through the initiative and capacity of its people, and through emphasis on competition and private initiative rather than government restrictions. We are making progress towards this goal. Lower inflation is making our industry competitive again. Manufacturers are looking again to export markets.

I know that at least one major motor vehicle manufacturer is rebuilding its export organisation, and an industry survey found that during the September quarter Australian exporters of manufactured goods reported an increase of 5 percent in export deliveries the first reported upturn since September 1972.

Mining and oil exploration and development are rising sharply. Two companies alone have committed themselves to spending \$1,000 million in Bass Strait and off Western Australia, directly because of the Government's realistic energy and oil pricing policy.

Our goal is a society in which satisfying work is available to those who seek it, a society in which Australian youth can realise their aspirations to live a fulfilling life doing productive creative work.

Our economic policies are establishing the foundations of a strong and diversified economy which will meet these needs. We reject the self-serving and defeatist pessimism of the Labor Party - the creators of unemployment in this country, the men who now hypocritically and falsely talk about a lost generation.

The facts are there if they would only face up to them. Last year, about 250,000 young people left school, according to surveys by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. By February 1978, 135,000 had already found work; by September this had risen to 180,000; 40,000 young people either continued their education or did not seek employment. This means that of 1978's original 250,000 school leavers, 30,000 had not found jobs by September this year. What is more, by October, no more than 17,500 of last year's school leavers were registered with the C.E.S.

This number is far too large - but to talk - as Labor persists in doing - of a lost generation - is in utter defiance of the facts. For those of our young people that do need help in getting a job, for those of our young people that need training or job experience, we have a coherent and extensive network of training programmes. Overall, the Government is spending \$240 million on employment and training.

Our NEAT Scheme, the Special Youth Employment Training Programme, and a number of other programmes are providing meaningful help to those who do not have jobs - particularly to the young unemployed. At the end of October 1978, six times as many people were being trained under NEAT as at the end of December 1975, and we have changed NEAT to give a much greater emphasis to on-the-job training - training more directly related to industries' needs.

Our programmes to assist young people include the introduction of a Special Youth Employment Training Programme. More than 80,000 young people have already been assisted by this programme, since it was introduced in October 1976, and there are another 35,000 people in training under the scheme at the moment. A further 45,000 young people have been assisted under the Community Youth Support Scheme and the Educational Programme for Unemployed Youth has provided remedial education assistance for over 3,600 young people who have never had a fair go in their whole lives. In all, more than 300,000 people have been helped through these schemes.

We have never been for one moment complacent about these schemes, and in the next few weeks, Tony Street will have a complete review of the various training programmes before Cabinet. If the programmes can be effectively improved, if they can be expanded, if they can be developed, they certainly will be.

We are also awaiting the report of the inquiry under Professor Williams, which was set up in October 1976. That inquiry was established because we were concerned to make sure that our educational system was adequately designed to meet the educational needs and preferences of the individual and the requirements of the labour market. The results of that long and difficult inquiry should be available shortly, and we are looking for a constructive report which will clearly involve the states and many sections of the community in its implementation.

It is our goal, in cooperation with the States, to take new initiatives to secure Australia's future growth and development. Just three weeks ago, the Commonwealth and the States, showing a common commitment and a common purpose, agreed that for the first time state authorities can borrow over \$1,700 million overseas to develop such essential facilities as railways, ports, power projects, water supplies and pipelines.

For Victoria, this will mean further progress for the crucial Loy Yang power project, and a new world trade centre in Melbourne which will bring business and capital to the State - and to Australia.

Our goal is to help people buy their own homes, and because of our success in combating inflation, interest on housing loans have been falling. In the course of this year, home interest rates have fallen by 1 percent. On a home loan of say \$25,000, being repaid over 25 years this means a saving in the order of \$17 a month - \$5,000 over the period of the loan. In a full year, this is a total saving of around \$150 million to families with home loans.

Our goal is to provide effective and compassionate assistance to those in need - and government welfare programmes are constantly being re-designed to achieve this end. By introducing the family allowance by indexing pensions, by reforming the outdated means test, by providing a completely new deal for the handicapped, by extending the supporting parent's benefit to sole fathers, this Government has already established a record of innovation and compassion in its welfare services.

As a result of the Galbally Report, new programmes are being introduced for our migrant and ethnic communities which will provide a real breakthrough in overcoming the language barrier, and helping newly arrived migrants to adjust quickly and smoothly to Australian society.

Our goal is a free and civilised society in which the basic rights of our citizens are protected. We are working towards a society in which justice is available to all, in which the rule of law prevails for all; in which minorities have no cause for fear; in which bureaucracies are responsive to people's needs, and there is redress for ill-considered decisions by public servants.

Our goal is a society in which employers and employees thrash out their differences through consultation and conciliation, working together for the benefit for employees, management, shareholders and consumers alike.

At the same time, we recognise that where conciliation fails, the rule of law must prevail. The reforms already introduced in industrial law have made significant advances by providing protection for conscientious objectors, by introducing secret postal ballots for union elections, by requiring unions to have their accounts audited and report regularly to their membership, by establishing the Industrial Relations Bureau and the National Labour Consultative Council.

Our goal is to find solutions to the problems created by our complex industrial society. Together with the States and voluntary welfare organisations, we are acting to 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 -with the consumer retaining a right of choice. The substantial reforms we have made in health insurance and preventive medicine have advanced Australia a significant distance towards this goal.

Our aim is for Australia to enjoy a high standard of education, which encourages Australians to be inventive, constructive and self-reliant; which meets with the needs of our multi-cultural society; and which provides all Australians with indispensable basic skills.

The steady improvements which have been achieved will continue. We have made significant progress in the last three years. The goals to which we aspire will be achieved. But this is not just a job for Government. What we must all do is to relate these goals to our daily lives. In some cases, some fundamental rethinking is required.

Let us look at a few examples. It is the goal of all Australians to see that jobs are available for those looking for work. It is time union leaders showed real concern for the unemployed by restraining their wage claims, so that working men and women stop being priced out of the labour market.

All Australians believe that the handicapped should receive a fair deal. It is time more employers showed real concern for the handicapped by finding them work as vacancies occur.

We all believe that Australia should grow and develop in strength and prosperity. It is time all Australians encouraged and welcomed the generation of healthy profits by business and industry - the profits that are essential to investment, the profits that are essential to jobs. We all believe we live in a great country - it is time we stopped knocking Australia.

Our nation has the undoubted capacity to achieve the goals and aspirations we share. 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 unity of purpose, these goals can be attained.

In realising this promise, in achieving these goals, the Government seeks a partnership with the community, between Commonwealth, State and local government; between employers and employees; between Government agencies, voluntary associations and individual Australians.

With such a partnership, with a real sense of common purpose, and pride in our country, with a deep commitment to the future of our country, there is nothing Australia cannot achieve.