



MR YEILD

PRIME MINISTER

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ELECTORATE TALK

To people around the world, Australia appears to be the lucky country. We are a resourceful and talented people. We have abundant farmland. We are one of the great rural producers. We have mineral resources that the the envy of the world and vast reserves of oil and gas.

Australia, too, is fortunate to have a stable political structure, and we are moving to a sound economic base. What then can hold Australia back? The opportunities are surely great.

I often think that in our day-to-day living, in our desire to try and make a better life for ourselves and our families, we sometimes seem to forget that above all we are Australians. Too often we see ourselves simply as "politicians", or "bosses", or "unionists", or "truck drivers", or "teachers" or as members of one political party or another. We forget we are all part of one community, one nation.

This blinkered view of our role in the community can lock us in to fixed positions and narrow thinking. It makes it very difficult to sort out problems and achieve a true consensus. The problem is compounded when leaders - from all walks of life - become locked into constituencies which expect certain responses. This reduces the scope for change, for compromise and for discussion.

Look at some of the things concerning management, unions and government...things like penalty rates and wage systems. Why did it take so long for people to sit down together on this, at the National Labour Consultative Council? Why did it take so long to get that first step on a question that ultimately affects every Australian family? The need to break down the rigidity in industrial relations is one of Tony Street's wider responsibilities. He's working to build an environment in which disputes are less likely, rather than to merely react to disputes as they occur. Again, it's a matter of unlocking ourselves from fixed and rigid positions.

The structure of the union movement in Australia is something that affects every Australian - not just rank-and-file unionists. It is Government policy, ACTU policy and Labor Party policy to move towards industry based unions. But the entrenched power of officials in craft structured unions makes such a move very difficult.

The belief that our interests are competing interests - State against Commonwealth, State against State, management against unions and country against city - is perhaps the greatest inhibition to building an even greater nation.

The true interests of Australians are not competitive, they are complementary. If an industry is more profitable, it can sell more of its goods - employers benefit and Australia benefits. Then farmers make profit, country towns come alive and that flows through to the city factories and service industries.

When we take pride in Australian products, we buy Australian, we support our own people throughout Australia. In their hearts I believe that Australians have an intense sense of patriotism, loyalty and love for our country. But we don't often speak about it. We rarely articulate it in any form except perhaps when we return from overseas when we hear people say "I wouldn't live anywhere else".

In that sense, we are often our worst enemies - by talking ourselves down or selling ourselves short.

In 200 years Australians have achieved great things. We have built a great nation. But by constantly remembering that we are Australians first and last we can make this country as others see it - the lucky country.