



EMBARGO: AGAINST DELIVERY

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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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1979 VICTORIAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN OPENING

We are eighteen days away from a crucial election, an election which will decide the future of this State, an election which is vital for Victoria. We want a government committed to Liberalism. We want a government committed to free enterprise. We want a government committed to the right of people to achieve their own goals in their own way. We want a Hamer government.

Dick Hamer is vital for Victoria. Just look at the alternative. Does Victoria want a socialist government? Does Victoria want a government in the grip of the extreme left wing? Victoria needs the philosophy, the policies, the people, that only the Liberal Party can provide.

Only Dick Hamer and the Liberals will take Victoria confidently into the 1980's, with a humane and progressive government.

The economic record of the Hamer government speaks for itself. It's kept Victoria prosperous. It's kept Victoria in the forefront of Australia's economic activity. But Victoria's successes have not just been in the economic area. The Victorian Liberals have demonstrated their commitment to improving the quality of life in this State, to improving health and education, to conserving the environment - and our historical and cultural heritage, our great buildings and historic sites, to providing a new deal for our ethnic communities, and working with the Commonwealth to make the Galbally Report a total success; to protecting the civil rights of individuals. Those are just some of the achievements made by the Liberal Government.

But what of the future? Under a Liberal Government, Victoria's future is one of progressive reform and continued economic prosperity. It's because of industry's confidence in the Liberal approach of the Commonwealth and the State Government that so many new major projects are planned for Victoria. There's ICI's \$500 million petrochemical plant at Point Wilson, GMH's \$210 million engine plant based in Victoria, ALCOA's \$350 million aluminium smelter, and the massive expenditure which Esso-BHP will make in Bass Strait.

Would Labor get any of these projects underway? No. Labor says it's "moderate", but Labor always says it's "moderate" -- at election time. We saw how Mr. Whitlam's Labor Party pretended to be moderate in the run up to the 1972 election. And we saw how quickly they cast aside their cloak of respectability. Labor stopped development dead in its tracks. In three years income tax more than doubled from \$4 billion to over \$9 billion. In one year alone, income tax grew by 40 percent. Our income tax reforms have saved taxpayers \$3 billion a year. In three years under Labor, government expenditure soared from \$10 billion to nearly \$22 billion. In one year alone outlays grew by 46 percent.

We have reduced the rate of growth of government expenditure to 7.7 percent. Under Labor unemployment rocketed, rising by nearly 200,000 in one year. Labor created unemployment in Australia. The Whitlam Labor government which set this record said it was "moderate".

We saw Mr. Wran's Labor Party preach responsibility when it had a majority of only one. We are now seeing Mr. Wran, with a clear majority, paying off his debts to the left wing. He took the power workers' demand for a 37 1/2 hour week out of the hands of the Industrial Commission to give it to them on a Parliamentary platter, as an entree to a 35 hour week.

But we must be fair. At least the left wing in New South Wales had to wait until after the election to be paid off. In Victoria, the left wing has already won.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Wilkes, has said that he will ignore the Arbitration Commission, and give wage increases to Latrobe Valley power workers, regardless of the decision by the full bench of the Commission.

It's official Labor Party policy to remove all present legal restraint on industrial disputes conducted by trade unions. Labor wants to put unions above the law. Would Labor protect the people of Victoria against union militants? No. Is there a guarantee that Newport would go ahead under Labor? No.

The union leadership knows that Labor's posturing on Newport is only political expediency. As the Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union said on the 27th of March: "Frank Wilkes is prepared to make statements for political expediency... the Parliamentary wing of the Labor Party had changed its stance (on Newport) three times since 1971..."

The Labor Party would try to buy industrial peace by caving in to every union demand. It's prepared to appease the unions by bankrupting the enterprises that provide the jobs for Victorians, by promoting inflation which would harm the weak and the poor most of all.

The left wing goes quiet just before election time, but just a few months ago, they showed their strength. They defeated a motion condemning infringements of human rights in the Soviet Union. There couldn't be any such infringements because the Soviet government said so. The left wing also defeated a motion which tried to water down Labor's commitment to nationalise industry. The left wing wasn't having any of that. They insisted that the commitment to total nationalisation remain in its pristine form - the same form that it had in 1921. What a way to step into the future.

The Labor Party is ready to leap with verve and gust - back into the 1920's. While Labor is looking backwards, the Liberals are ready for the challenges of the 1980's. We are now moving into a new period of economic recovery. Inflation has been reduced. Australian businesses are once again competitive. Investment has increased dramatically. Exports are rising, and business confidence has returned. There are heartening signs of improvement on the employment front. For the first time in five years, civilian employment, seasonally adjusted, have risen for each of the last seven months. Overtime and vacancies seasonally adjusted, are also improving.

For Victorians to benefit from this recovery, we need a State government which is prepared to co-operate with the Commonwealth government's policies, not undermine them.

The Labor Party would turn back the clock. It would destroy the advances already made in Victoria. It would damage the future of this State. Only under the Liberals who have provided stability and good sense in government for almost a quarter of a century will Victoria continue to build on its achievements.

When it really comes right down to it, that's what this election is about. Do we want a Liberal government, committed to people, to people's creativity, to people's needs, to people's interests? Or, do we want a Labor Party committed to the destructive dogma of socialism, a Party that has time and time again been rejected by the people of Victoria?

The Liberal Party has governed Victoria well, providing stability and prosperity. I have no doubt that the Liberal Party will lead Victoria into the 1980's.

But we can't just sit back. We all have to go out and tell people about what the Liberal Party believes in, what the Party has achieved, about the Liberal vision for Victoria's future.

It's been this vision, it's been our capacity to govern well, and the dedication of those committed to the Liberal way of life, that has given us victory after victory in Victoria. We are doing it again because the Liberals and Dick Hamer are vital for Victoria.