



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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SPEECH IN SUPPORT OF WENTWORTH CANDIDATE

I have no doubt that the voters in the Division of Wentworth will show next Saturday that Peter Coleman has their support as well as mine - and yours.

Peter Coleman will bring to Canberra a strong voice to support the kind of government that the people of Wentworth want. He is a man of unusually wide experience. He has been closely involved in the legal, cultural, educational and journalistic worlds. Wide experience like his is valuable in government, and it is important that Members of Parliament should be able to bring broad perspective and informed judgments to bear on the issues that come before them.

In addition to this, Peter Coleman knows the political world well. He served in the New South Wales Parliament for ten years as a backbencher, as a Minister and as Leader of the New South Wales Parliamentary Liberal Party. I look forward to his joining the Liberal team in Canberra just as soon as there has been time for the poll to be declared.

Since the last election, the Government has been active to ensure that we keep well on track with the sort of government that Australia and Australians want with the kind of government this electorate wants.

The Liberal Government has a clear and practical vision of the future well-being of the Australian community, not just a section of the community, but everyone, not just narrow economic well-being, but a way of life in a free society in which there are opportunities for all, in which all people have the confidence and security to grasp opportunities, and live their own lives after their own fashion.

This Liberal vision is unique in Australian politics, and it is in harmony with the aspirations of most Australians. No other party has a clear vision of the future of this country or an effective concern for the well-being of the Australian community in its entirety.

Look at the Labor Party. What does Labor offer this country? Without doubt, Labor wants a Socialist Australia. But Labor is not able - or not willing - to tell Australia what its version of Socialism means. The reality is that Socialism is

not only a divisive doctrine it means big bureaucracy, big spending, higher taxes, and over-regulation.

Labor knows that Australia does not want Socialism, that Socialism cannot be made attractive to Australians. And one Labor Senator has said, to the extent that the Socialism of the Labor platform can be implemented, it is 'electoral dynamite'.

Yet Labor continues to retain Socialism as the heart and the basis of their policy, and the Leader of the Opposition keeps affirming his commitment to Socialism. He says that Labor politics need to be guided by what he calls the 'egalitarian and international principals of democratic Socialism'.

All of this is an absurd spectacle in a major party in this country. The plain fact is that the Labor Party is barren in ideas. It is empty of ideals that are relevant to Australia's circumstances and to the aspirations of Australians. The Liberal Party is the only party that knows where it is going. We are the only party with a clear view of the way to build the kind of Australia that the great majority of Australians want.

In building for the future, we are well aware, as I am sure the electors of Wentworth are aware, that good economic management is absolutely crucial. Without a strong economy, every other success turns sour. A government that fails in this fails Australia fundamentally.

The Liberal Government has not forgotten the lessons of the last ten years. We have not forgotten how quickly Labor ran the economy down or how hard it has been to build it up again. We are well aware that we must continue to rein in government expenditure, bring inflation down still further, encourage investment and growth and thus increase employment.

This basic strategy is still the right one. We embarked upon it five years ago when we came to office, and its dividends are becoming increasingly obvious. We have demonstrated decisively that we can deliver the goods, as decisively as Labor demonstrated that it can only deliver economic chaos.

Over the last five years, the growth of Commonwealth Government spending through the budget has been held to an average annual rate of about 1% in real terms. The average rate under Labor was 10%. Our restraint has been a remarkable achievement, and we are determined to keep it up. Inflation has been brought under control by this Government. In the year to last December it was down at 9.2%. And let me repeat that we shall not let up in the fight against inflation.

The encouragement we have given to investment has borne amazing fruit. \$33 billion is committed or at the final feasibility stage in mining and manufacturing alone. Consumer confidence has also been restored. For the three months to February retail sales were almost 15% higher than a year earlier. And the OECD predicts a 4% growth rate in Australia for 1981, against a 1% average in the OECD. I believe it is

to our great credit that although we have a small economy by world standards, we have swum against the tide. And it has done us good - not harm, as the doom merchants in the Labor Party predicted. Mr Hayden's 1978 prediction that the 1980s would be a decade of gloom seemed absurd at the time - and how much more absurd it now is.

Employment growth has always been an integral part of our total economic approach. More than quarter of a million new jobs have been created in the last two years, more than 116,000 in New South Wales. Employment opportunities grew more rapidly in Australia in 1980 than in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany or Japan. None of this is accidental. It all comes from the firm, consistent and sustained applications of Liberal policies. The gains which we have achieved establish a strong base for economic recovery. It is now plain to see that economic recovery is spreading right across this country - in manufacturing as well as in resources. This recovery is already bringing - and will continue to bring - steadily increasing prosperity for all Australians.

Let me say, however, that the present period is critically important in ensuring that the benefits of growth are not thrown away. It always happens, when things start to go well, that some people push relentlessly for themselves, wanting too much, too quickly, caring nothing about others.

Australia cannot afford the strikes we are experiencing or the 35 hour week campaign or the relentless wage pushes that are going on.

The Government stands for the better future of this country as a whole - and for the just claims of young people in particular for employment opportunities. We have made plain our resolve to resist threats to economic recovery. I have no doubt that the voters in Wentworth, like voters throughout Australia, want their government to be willing to take a strong stand, when necessary, to protect the public good. I have no doubt that the country is behind us in our moves to de-register the BLF, just as the country was behind us in the Qantas dispute, and when we brought in the RAAF to fly home stranded passengers from overseas.

The Government will act - and act strongly - when sectional interests threaten the overall well-being of the community. The Liberal Party asks you to give practical expression, in Saturday's election, to your support for this approach. The Government also seeks your support in its call for acceptance by all people for their responsibilities to their fellow Australians. We all know that voluntary acceptance of community responsibility is better than legal sanctions. But the Government will step in if it must in order to deal with threats to economic recovery.

In a similar way, it has been forced to step in to deal with various anti-social tax avoidance schemes. Labor did nothing about tax avoidance when they were in office. Now they say they will cut it out. That is easy to say but it not so easy to find a practical way to catch the guilty without harming the innocent. The plain fact is that no government has taken such a strong stand, nor such a fair stand, against tax avoidance as has the Liberal Government, and we shall continue to do so. But let me also say this, if every piece of anti-social behaviour, whether strikes or tax avoidance or whatever, has to be proscribed by law, then we shall be overwhelmed by laws. Reasonable people in a co-operative community are willing to accept their obligations to others, we must never allow the divisive and selfish forces within our community to get the upper hand, or the basis of freedom may be undermined. A free society must be based on attitudes of mutual respect between people, and upon acceptance of moral responsibility without recourse to law at every point.

We are all Australians, and we want the Australian way of life to continue, this means that we must accept our community obligations. Since the last election, the Government has taken a major step to ensure that its own house is in order and a massive review of the functions and activities of the Commonwealth is now almost complete. The review committee, headed by Sir Phillip Lynch, has been nicknamed the razor gang, and I think that most people see the review as nothing more than a cost-cutting exercise. In fact, it is far more than that, far more. It will lead to expenditure cuts, and these cuts will be significant and useful, but these cuts are incidental to the main purpose of the review.

The essential role of this major review has been to ensure that the Commonwealth bureaucracy is not allowed to grow like Topsy, and that the Commonwealth is not distracted from its proper tasks by a needless duplication of tasks which are more appropriately handled by private functions are effectively and economically discharged. The R.C.F Report will be finalised and acted upon within the next few weeks and this will make plain our commitment to Government that is limited and restrained, but also firm and effective. In case there is any misunderstanding, let me make it clear that the R.C.F. does not seek cut-backs for the sake of cut-backs, at the expense of effectiveness, in functions that belong to the Commonwealth. The review is concerned to achieve the twin goals of effectiveness and economy in the functioning of the Commonwealth.

In social security, for example, the Government remains absolutely committed to making sure that support and assistance will be available to those who need it. Australians are a generous people, and they rightly insist that Governments make good provision for pensioners and disadvantaged. The present Government is not a big spending Government, but neither is it a small spending Government in the help it gives to the elderly, the sick and disabled. During the period of this Government pensions have stood at higher levels in relation to average weekly earnings than at any time in the last 25 years. We are now spending over \$1 billion on overall assistance to the handicapped, a substantial real increase in

the amount of five years ago. Liberals act in these areas, while others just talk, and for our part, we will continue to act.

I want to emphasise that small and limited Government bears no relationship to mean and ungenerous Government. On the contrary, by producing a strong and growing economy, limited Government provides the only foundation for the kind of social security arrangements that Australians want. Economic growth is equally the foundation for pulling tax rates further back.

Through our restraints on expenditure, we have made substantial inroads on marginal tax rates. Since we came to office, we have cut the marginal tax rate on the average wage earner from 44 cents in the dollar under Labor to the present rate of 32 cents, and the highest rate has come down from 65 cents in the dollar to 60 cents. But the real basis for tax cuts lies in economic growth and increasing productivity. For our part, we will be looking for every opportunity to cut taxes during the term of this Parliament.

Overall, then, there is room for tremendous optimism about Australia. Provided that we act together as one people, our future looks magnificent. I only wish that other countries possessed the stability and the prospects, the freedom and opportunities, which we have in Australia. I do not have time to talk of these matters tonight, but there are considerable uncertainties abroad at this time. Look at Poland, or El Salvador, or Afghanistan. There are de-stabilising influences ready to take advantage of any opportunities that arise. I said in Parliament last week that the world would not be the same again if the Soviet Union moved to an invasion of Poland. I just mention these things because we are not insulated from world events in this country.

And I want to take this opportunity to say how pleased Australians can be at the success of our recent negotiations with the United States on B-52's staging through Darwin for training and surveillance flights. The negotiations have established an extremely good relationship between the Australian Government and the Reagan administration in the United States. This relationship is vitally important to Australia. It forms part of a good overall picture for Australia's future.

As Australia embarks on a new age of growth and development, we must keep clearly in view what we want from Government in the 1980's and beyond. The goals of the Liberal Party in Government are clear. They are a strong, growing and secure Australia; an Australia united in a commitment to solving problems by co-operation, not confrontation; a competitive Australia which can hold its own in an increasingly competitive world, an Australia in which individual people can build the kind of lives they want for themselves and their families, not an Australia dominated by bureaucrats and politicians.

We stand for the right of people to choose for themselves and for the opportunities which give meaning to that freedom of choice. We stand for an Australia in which people recognise their moral responsibilities to the best of the community, a nation which is morally and spiritually, as well as materially, strong.

On Saturday, when the electors of Wentworth weigh up the candidates and their parties in this by-election, there is only one choice.

A vote for Peter Coleman and the Liberal Government is the right vote on every score, on every issue.

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