



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

FRIDAY, 26 MARCH 1982

LIBERAL PARTY LUNCHEON AT CHAUCER'S

I am delighted to be here today to support Lindsay Thompson and his Liberal Government colleagues. It is a matter of particular satisfaction that David Tonkin has ~~come across to~~ join this campaign.

Actually, David and I have something very relevant in common, for we both have had the experience of coming into office after a Labor Government. I am sure that David would wholeheartedly agree that to anyone who has had that experience, it is totally inconceivable how anyone would ever want to vote Labor, or think that Labor should be given a chance to show what it can do.

People often say there are too many elections in Australia, but I don't believe a single person here today underestimates the importance of this election in Victoria. ~~Anybody who thinks~~ it doesn't really matter, or that there really isn't much of a difference between the parties, simply doesn't understand what it is all about. And I have got no doubt that as the actual election day gets closer, as the moment comes when people are making the real choice about how their State is to be governed for the next three years, they will recognise the point that's so obvious to all of us here today, that it really is absurd to think of going past Lindsay Thompson and a Liberal Government for this State.

Lindsay has dedicated much of his life to serving the people of Victoria. He has contributed significantly to the achievements of the Liberal Government. He understands Victoria ~~and the needs of Victorians~~ and his leadership qualities of integrity, honesty and courage are widely recognised. Who can forget the courage of Lindsay Thompson when, at great personal risk, he placed his life in danger to secure the release of the Faraday school children and ~~their young~~ teacher from their kidnappers?

When people look at the parties and the policies, the choice is plain. Before pursuing the Victorian scene further, I want to talk about the reality of Labor in office, a harsh reality which Australians nationally and at a state level have had to face. Whenever and wherever Labor has had the chance to show what it can do, disaster has been the result.

In 1972, a Labor Government in Canberra took over one of the soundest economies in the world, and crushed it almost to the point of extinction. That was the Government which boasted of its special relationship with the unions, which had the President of the ACTU as President of its own Federal Party, which supported massive wage increases and presided over a 28% rise in average weekly earnings in 1974 and a 38% increase in the Federal male minimum weekly award wage rate in the 12 months to March 1975, and yet managed to produce an unprecedented level of industrial disruption - 6.3 million working days were lost through strikes in 1974, far more than any year since. That was the Government that almost doubled taxation, that increased the budget deficit by four times over three years, that more than doubled Australia's inflation rate between 1972 and 1975, and that halved petroleum exploration and development in Australia at a time when the security of overseas oil supplies were under grave threat.

If the memories of Labor's disastrous years in office in Canberra are fading with time, then the shambles of New South Wales and Tasmania is reviving them. Labor in office means chaos in government. The people of New South Wales are now being obliged to pay the price of five years of Labor's mismanagement and incompetence, five years of sweetheart deals with power unions over pay and working hours, five years of failing to face up to reality.

As the Wran Government's carefully developed glamorous image of competence and vision crumbles before the weight of reality, the price the people of New South Wales must pay is now emerging, at times during this week only one-half of the State's electrical generating capacity was functioning. If the proposed power zoning came in, as it did for part of this week, and if the 500,000 workers talked about were stood down for one day a week, and if each of those workers was on A.W.E., some \$32 million could be lost in wages each week, and \$60 million in final output.

The people in New South Wales have suffered more than any other Australians from crippling strikes. Almost half (46%) the working days lost through strikes and industrial disputes in Australia in the 12 months to last November were in New South Wales. They have had to battle to find food in the supermarkets and petrol at the service stations. They remember doing without trains and buses. They feel the economic impact, personally and generally, of Wran's navy - dozens of ships anchored off the congested coal ports of New South Wales, costing millions of dollars in lost export earnings.

Victoria may be an hour behind of New South Wales in time, but in Government, Lindsay Thompson and his Liberal team are light years ahead. Chaos to the north and chaos to the south.

In Tasmania, too, Labor has shown its inability to govern. It has shown itself incapable of dealing with the major issues confronting the State. It trails the nation with Australia's highest unemployment rate of 9.2% in February 1982 and its total inability to handle the issues has been set against the familiar Labor background of overriding power of the Party.

machine and the dictate of the union leaders.

The Victorian election on 3 April is very much about these issues, about Labor's disastrous failures in office. The election is also about objectives and achievements, the Liberal objective to build up Australia, and the solid, documented and uncontestable achievement of Liberal Government in Victoria.

Liberals believe that the way ahead for Australia is through individual achievement. Australia grows and prospers when governments enable people to set their own goals and to strive for the things they want. As Liberals we offer clear and contemporary directions that are proven and accepted by the vast majority of Australians. Our great political obligation is to enunciate those directions clearly and often. Our socialist opponents must not be allowed to conceal the irrelevance, personal interference and constraints on individual initiative which are the features of dull old socialism.

Liberals seek to govern not in the interest of special privileged groups but of all Australians. Liberals seek to underpin achievement with the maintenance of a strong economy based on private enterprise in which people can choose, as consumers, as businessmen, as investors large and small, as developers of our human, technological and natural resources. Liberals believe in encouraging excellence across the range of human endeavour.

We believe in a strong, secure nation, a society which is concerned for the family and cares for the needy and underprivileged. We believe in the strength of a diverse, multi-cultural society of people committed to Australia. We believe in conserving Australia's rich heritage for future generations, in moderate and evolutionary constitutional reform.

These are the enduring philosophies which lie behind all Liberal Governments in Australia. They have underpinned the consistently successful Liberal Government in Victoria where the choice on 3 April is between individual enterprise and stultifying socialist control. The record of Liberal Government is outstanding. Living standards in Australia and in Victoria have doubled over the last three decades. Victorians have the highest average household income of any state. They have the highest level of home ownership of any state which means Victoria just about leads the world in home ownership.

Victoria has been for many years, and remains a fine example of how to develop human and natural resources to the full. Coal and oil resources are being utilised effectively. One third of Australia's manufacturing employment is in Victoria. A quarter of the total value of Australia's agricultural output is produced here.

Lindsay Thompson has shown that he and his team plan to build further upon their successful years in Government. His policy package aims towards continued economic growth. It takes account of people's aspirations and their needs, with initiatives in such areas as education, transport, health and social welfare.

The Commonwealth and Victorian governments complement each other in their policies and actions. In housing the Commonwealth's package is designed to assist young people to buy their first homes, and, once they have done so, to help them, in the early years, to cope with repayments on what is a central feature of most Australians' aspirations - their own home.

Our approaches to industrial relations are also complementary. We both seek to encourage negotiation and conciliation in the resolution of disputes. Lindsay Thompson has been at the forefront in recent attempts to achieve joint Commonwealth-state efforts to find solutions to waterfront and demarcation problems. At the same time, we appreciate the need for firmness to deal with situations and circumstances which affect people through short term industrial disruption and longer term damage to the economy.

The Victorian Government legislated to protect the public interest. Because those firm and responsible measures were available in law, the Newport Power Station was built and Victoria has been spared an electricity disaster the kind New South Wales has been experiencing. Because of those laws, Lindsay Thompson also got work on Loy Yang going again. Because of those laws, he had milk moving again when there was a crippling transport and waterfront dispute.

Mr Cain has committed Labor to abolishing those laws. He would lift the protective shield which Lindsay Thompson's Government has put in place. Mr Cain has not been playing straight. He has scattered promises over months and months, but, gathered together and considered carefully, they represent a huge potential burden for Victorians in both cost and consequences. Lindsay Thompson has calculated that the ALP promises would cost an extra \$3000 million in additional Government expenditure over three years, or a minimum of \$21.00 a week extra for Victorian families.

Mr Cain would turn back the clock by re-imposing probate duty and Labor policy is committed to abolishing per capita grants to non-Government schools, and giving the Government the power to oblige these schools to accept new Government requirements as a condition of receiving any State aid. And, of course, his promises to repeal the vital industrial relations legislation would lay open Victoria to the kind of disruption which the Wran Government invited and has experienced in New South Wales.

What the Labor Party leaves unsaid - and what people simply cannot overlook - is the power of the socialist Left in any Labor Government. The socialist Left's influence can be seen in Mr Cain's promise to initiate negotiations to reduce the working week of Victorian Government employees. Australia cannot afford reduced working hours at a time when our competitiveness needs maximum support. The socialist Left's influence is also evident in Mr Cain's undertaking to establish a \$675 million so-called Victorian development fund which would plunder the State's statutory authorities, socialize investment decisions in Victoria, and replace private enterprise with public control.

Labor Governments are always looking for gimmicks, always looking for ways of getting around Loan Council processes, processes established by common agreement between the Commonwealth and the states to prevent a mad scramble for funds, to ease pressures on interest rates that affect everyone from the biggest of businesses to the smallest of home buyers. Labor Governments may pay lip-service to the agreements by which the Loan Council was established and operates, but they are always seeking to breach the spirit of those agreements. Who will forget the Labor Government in Canberra's attempt in 1975 to arrange a \$US4 billion borrowing for temporary long-term development purposes, or Wran's milking of his statutory authority funds.

Let there be no mistake about it, what Mr Cain proposes to do in Victoria must either be at the expense of other Loan Council borrowings by the State, or it must involve a fundamental breach of the spirit of the agreements that govern the operation of the Loan Council, and lead to renewed pressure on Australia's hard pressed capital markets, and rising interest rates for everyone.

Victoria does not want this kind of socialism. Mr Hawke has called the socialist Left a canker in the Labor Party, and how right he is. It is a canker that has not been excised. Nor can it be. Socialism, and the control of people's lives in a dull conformity, is central of the Labor Party and the socialist Left controls the Party machine and through that, the Parliamentary members.

The achievements of the Thompson Liberal Government are the guarantee of future performance. The Liberal Party has provided stability and drive, it has been responsible for building Victoria up into a State which all Victorians can be proud of. That achievement must not be thrown away, Only a Liberal Government can provide the right policies for the people and families of this State. I urge you to work and vote for Lindsay Thompson for Victoria.