



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

MONDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 1983

### LABOR'S CENTRALISM

It is clear that a Labor Government would centralise power in Canberra and ride rough-shod over the States.

Mr Hawke has made his attitude quite plain. He has said that he believes "that Australians would be better served by the elimination of (State) Government(s)."

His Deputy, Mr Bowen, was equally derogatory about State's rights when he spoke on Wednesday of the "nonsense of contradictory State rights and State jealousies".

Mr Hawke's comments, in speaking to Queenslanders on Queensland television, three weeks ago, that he "... will not be a person who tries to impose decisions upon Queensland or any other State" are without credibility.

He spoke on that occasion with one voice - and yet at other times, he has spoken with a different voice.

He has already made it clear that he will impose decisions upon Western Australia and Tasmania.

As late as yesterday, Mr Hawke declared his intention to intervene in South-West Tasmania and override the decision of the State Government.

The building of the Gordon-below-Franklin dam, whatever we may think of it, is directly a matter for the State. Even Mr Hayden recognised this when he wrote in a letter 18 months ago that "the main fundamental matters of concern are very much a State responsibility and outside of the constitutional authority of the national Government".

The Constitution is a solemn contract which sets down the various responsibilities between the State and Commonwealth Governments and the balance of power between them.

The only way it can be altered is by the deliberate decision of the people.

Mr Hawke seems determined to ignore this fundamental safeguard. He seeks to use the external affairs power of the Commonwealth in a way quite unprecedented to override the rights of the State.

The external affairs power comes into operation when the Commonwealth Government accedes to an international treaty or convention. Mr Hawke has said that he wants to use the authority that the Commonwealth attracts by acceding to a treaty to override the State Government.

This would set a precedent of the most dangerous kind.

Under Mr Hawke's view, a Commonwealth Government could sign any treaty with any country on any matter and thereby attract the authority to override a decision of a State Government. That is socialism at its worst.

The other assertion that Mr Hawke has made in respect of the Commonwealth's power to intervene is that a Labor Government could use a tied grant to get its way, even a condition attached to a grant which bore no relationship to the subject matter of the grant, and that is what Mr Hawke has suggested.

If one looks at how Mr Whitlam sought to centralise power, one of the principal mechanisms used then was the use of specific purpose grants under S96 of the Constitution. That was dangerous enough.

But when Mr Hawke suggested on Tasmanian radio on 11 February that he may use the provision of tied grants to Tasmania to force the Tasmanians not to proceed with the dam, he was going very much further indeed.

He was in fact saying that a Labor Government would be prepared to use its powers under S96 of the Constitution to interfere in any State matter.

That would put to an end the balance of Federal-State relations and destroy Federalism in Australia.

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