

EMBARGOED AGAINST
DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE LEBANESE COMMUNITY,
SYDNEY, 7 NOVEMBER 1984

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I AM DELIGHTED TO ONCE AGAIN HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE AMONG
MY LEBANESE FRIENDS.

AS A GOVERNMENT WE HAVE ALWAYS FELT THAT THE LEBANESE
COMMUNITY COUNT AMONG THEIR NUMBER SOME OF LABOR'S CLOSEST
FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS. WE APPRECIATE THIS.

THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO VERY MINDFUL THAT THE LEBANESE
COMMUNITY BRING A PROUD AND RESOLUTE TRADITION TO AUSTRALIAN
SOCIETY.

YOU, MORE THAN MOST, APPRECIATE THAT THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR
THIS COUNTRY IN TRYING TO BUILD OUR SOCIETY AROUND
CONFRONTATIONIST STYLES OF GOVERNMENT.

THE TRAGEDY WHICH HAS BEEN SUFFERED FOR SO LONG AND SO
PAINFULLY BY THE PEOPLE OF LEBANON HAS BEEN DEEPLY ETCHED IN
THE AUSTRALIAN IMAGINATION.

THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S, AND MY OWN PERSONAL COMMITMENT, TO SECURING A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE CRISIS IN LEBANON IS WELL KNOWN. WE CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL THAT THE TROOPS OF ALL FOREIGN COUNTRIES IN LEBANON SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN. ONLY WHEN THIS HAPPENS WILL THE PEOPLE OF LEBANON BE ABLE TO RESUME A NORMAL AND PEACEFUL LIFE.

YOU KNOW FROM YOUR OWN BITTER EXPERIENCE THE FUTILITY AND THE TRAGIC COST OF CONFLICT AND CONFRONTATIONIST STYLES OF GOVERNMENT.

LABOR IN GOVERNMENT HAS FORSWORN SUCH APPROACHES AND HAS INSTEAD BROUGHT TO THE FORE THE CO-OPERATIVE, HARMONIOUS INSTINCTS AUSTRALIANS HAVE ALL TOO RARELY BEEN ALLOWED TO GIVE FULL PLAY.

UNDER LABOR ALL AUSTRALIANS ARE WORKING TOGETHER.

ONE OF THE LEBANESE COMMUNITY'S GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS HAS BEEN THAT, WHILE NEVER FORGETTING YOUR OWN RICH CULTURAL TRADITIONS, YOU HAVE BECOME IN THE BEST SENSE OF THE TERM REAL AUSTRALIANS.

INDEED IT IS AS AUSTRALIANS THAT I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK TO YOU TONIGHT.

FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS THE GREAT ISSUE OF THE DAY, THE MATTER CLOSEST TO THE EVERYDAY CONCERNS OF ALL OF US, MUST BE THE ECONOMY.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE LONG AND PROUD HISTORICAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE LEBANESE PEOPLE WITH COMMERCE AND TRADE, AND INDEED IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THE LEBANESE COMMUNITY COUNTS AMONG ITS NUMBER SOME OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMEN, I AM SURE YOU WOULD ALL BE CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO CONDUCT ECONOMIC POLICY IN A WAY WHICH WILL ALLOW OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO PROSPER AND EXPAND.

IT IS ONLY THROUGH EXPANSION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO CREATE JOBS IN THE NUMBERS WHICH AUSTRALIANS DESIRE AND DESERVE.

THE BUSINESS SECTOR KNOWS THAT IT HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM A LABOR GOVERNMENT. INDEED IT KNOWS THAT OUR POLICIES ARE COURAGEOUS, FAR SIGHTED, PRODUCTIVE AND IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF ALL AUSTRALIANS. GONE ARE THE DAYS OF DIVISIVENESS AND DISCORD - WHEN GOVERNMENT SOUGHT TO PIT WORKERS AGAINST THEIR EMPLOYER; AND USED BANKRUPTCY AND UNEMPLOYMENT TO ACHIEVE POLICY OBJECTIVES. THIS GOVERNMENT IS A GOVERNMENT OF CONSENSUS; OF RECONCILIATION; AND OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION.

THE GOVERNMENT MADE ITS APPROACH PLAIN AT THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE LAST YEAR.

WE REALISED THEN THAT CHANGES WERE REQUIRED TO MODERNISE AUSTRALIA'S INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE; TO END THE SENSELESS SQUABBLES BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES OVER THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NATION'S WEALTH; AND TO PUT ECONOMIC POLICIES IN PLACE WHICH WOULD GET AUSTRALIA MOVING AGAIN. WE CAME TO OFFICE WITH A PROGRAM OF ACTION TO ACHIEVE THOSE ENDS.

BUT WE DID NOT SET ABOUT SEEKING SIMPLY TO IMPOSE OUR WILL ON THE COMMUNITY. THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A RECIPE FOR MORE DISCORD; MORE UNCERTAINTY; MORE DELAY BEFORE DESIRABLE CHANGES COULD BE IMPLEMENTED; MORE UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION. INSTEAD WE SET ABOUT PROVIDING A STEADY AND PREDICTABLE POLICY ENVIRONMENT.

BY ITS ACTIONS THE GOVERNMENT HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT IT SUPPORTS AND ENCOURAGES A HEALTHY BUSINESS SECTOR. OUR COHERENT ECONOMIC STRATEGY:

- HAS BEEN A KEY FACTOR IN THE STRENGTH OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY;
- HAS PROVIDED A STABLE AND PREDICTABLE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH BUSINESS CAN PLAN AHEAD ON THE BASIS OF PREDICTABLE COST INCREASES;

- HAS POSITIVELY ENCOURAGED BUSINESS INVESTMENT INCLUDING THROUGH MEASURES INTRODUCED IN THE BUDGET; AND
- HAS INVOLVED BUSINESS AS AN ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTOR IN THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION ON GOVERNMENT POLICY.

PRIOR TO THE GOVERNMENT COMING TO OFFICE, THE ECONOMY HAD BEEN SHRINKING, THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAD RISEN TO A LEVEL NOT SEEN SINCE THE DEPRESSION, OUR RATE OF INFLATION WAS AROUND TWICE THAT OF OUR TRADING PARTNERS, CONSUMER CONFIDENCE HAD PLUMMETED. THE BUSINESS TRADING ENVIRONMENT WAS HIGHLY UNCERTAIN AND BUSINESS CONFIDENCE WEAK.

SINCE THEN THE SITUATION HAS DRAMATICALLY IMPROVED. CONFIDENCE HAS BEEN RESTORED. WE HAVE BEGUN TO MAP OUT A PROCESS OF MANAGED AND MEASURED STRUCTURAL CHANGE. ECONOMIC RECOVERY HAS BEGUN INDEED. REAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT DURING THE LAST FINANCIAL YEAR GREW BY 10 PER CENT AND THIS GROWTH WAS BROADLY BASED. SOME 264,000 NEW JOBS HAVE BEEN CREATED, AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAS FALLEN FROM 10.2 PER CENT IN APRIL LAST YEAR TO 8.8 PER CENT.

AT THE SAME TIME AS ACHIEVING THIS, WE HAVE ALSO SEEN THE ANNUAL INFLATION RATE MORE THAN HALVED TO THE POINT THAT I CAN CONFIDENTLY SAY TO YOU THAT DURING THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR IT WILL BE LESS THAN 5 PER CENT.

AT THE SAME TIME INDUSTRIAL DISPUTATION HAS FALLEN TO ITS LOWEST ANNUAL LEVEL SINCE 1969, INTEREST RATES HAVE FALLEN SIGNIFICANTLY, AND THE BUDGET DEFICIT HAS BEEN REDUCED SUBSTANTIALLY. ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED AT THE SAME TIME AS PROVIDING MOST WAGE EARNERS WITH A TAX CUT OF \$7.60 A WEEK IN THE 1984-85 BUDGET, AND PUTTING IN PLACE A NUMBER OF NOTEWORTHY PROGRAMS AIMED AT ASSISTING THE NEEDY.

UNLIKE THE PROSPECT WHEN THE GOVERNMENT TOOK OFFICE, ALL AUSTRALIANS CAN LOOK FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE TO THE FUTURE. THE ECONOMY IS FORECAST TO GROW IN REAL TERMS AT AROUND 4 TO 5 PER CENT THIS FINANCIAL YEAR, WITH A FURTHER INCREASE IN EMPLOYMENT OF MORE THAN 2 PER CENT. INFLATION WILL REMAIN UNDER CONTROL, AT VERY LOW LEVELS COMPARED TO THE PERIOD BEFORE WE TOOK OFFICE.

ALLOWING FOR SEASONAL INFLUENCES CONSUMER CONFIDENCE IS POSSIBLY AT ITS HIGHEST EVER RECORDED LEVEL. AND BUSINESS, RESPONDING TO THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE ECONOMY, IS DEMONSTRATING ITS CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE BY INCREASING INVESTMENT.

AS A RESULT OF THE SUCCESS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES, PARTICULARLY THE PRICES AND INCOMES POLICY, THERE HAS BEEN A DRAMATIC TURNAROUND IN BUSINESS PROFITABILITY. INDEED, THE SHARE OF COMPANY INCOME IN THE NATIONAL INCOME IS APPROACHING LEVELS NOT SEEN SINCE THE LATE SIXTIES AND EARLY SEVENTIES.

THE REAL COST OF EMPLOYING LABOUR PER UNIT OF OUTPUT HAS
FALLEN SUBSTANTIALLY AND IS NOW AT THE LEVEL OF THE EARLY
1970s.

IN SHORT THE GOVERNMENT ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO HAVING
A STRONG AND PROFITABLE AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS SECTOR. ONLY
WITH THIS CAN WE HOPE TO MAXIMISE AUSTRALIA'S LONG-TERM
GROWTH POTENTIAL AND RESTORE PROSPERITY TO OUR COUNTRY.

WE STILL HAVE MUCH TO DO IN THIS REGARD. SUBSTANTIAL
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS STILL REMAIN. THE DEPRESSING COSTS OF
HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUE TO BE INFLICTED ON TOO MANY
AUSTRALIANS.

HOWEVER, WITH THE SUCCES OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES THUS
FAR, AND WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTION AND THAT OF THE REST OF THE
COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THAT OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, WE
CAN ALL FACE THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE.

THANK YOU.

.....