



PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH TO GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT FACTORIES - AVALON

16 NOVEMBER 1984

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY TO CELEBRATE THE ROLL-OUT OF THE FIRST F/A-18 HORNET ASSEMBLED IN AUSTRALIA.

THIS AIRCRAFT HAS PROBABLY ATTRACTED MORE PRAISE THAN ANY PREVIOUS FIGHTER PLANE.

I DON'T WISH TO COMPETE WITH THE SUPERLATIVES WHICH WERE LAVISHLY DISTRIBUTED AT THE HAND-OVER LAST MONTH IN ST LOUIS OF THE FIRST RAAF HORNET. INSTEAD I WANT TO EMPHASISE THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE UPGRADING OF AUSTRALIA'S DEFENCE CAPABILITY AND THE ROLE IN THIS PROGRAM OF THE F/A-18.

PROVIDING FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE IS THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL OF ALL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES.

THE GOVERNMENT IS ADDRESSING THIS RESPONSIBILITY IN A SENSITIVE AND EFFECTIVE MANNER.

FIRST, WE HAVE GIVEN VERY HIGH PRIORITY TO PROMOTING FRIENDLY AND CO-OPERATIVE RELATIONS WITH AND AMONG THE COUNTRIES IN OUR IMMEDIATE REGION. THOSE RELATIONS TODAY ARE MARKED BY AN UNPRECEDENTED DEGREE OF CLOSENESS AND MUTUAL CONFIDENCE. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO REDUCING THE RISK OF ARMED CONFLICT.

SECOND, WE HAVE SUPPORTED MEASURES THAT PROMOTE A STABLE INTERNATIONAL ORDER, ESPECIALLY THE STABILITY OF THE STRATEGIC NUCLEAR BALANCE. WE HAVE DONE THIS THROUGH:

- . PROMOTING EFFECTIVE ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT MEASURES; LABOR WILL NEVER CONTEMPLATE A NUCLEAR WEAPONS OPTION FOR THIS COUNTRY;
- . THROUGH ENSURING THAT ANZUS IS A CLOSE AND EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP;
- . AND THROUGH OUR INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN SITUATIONS OF ACUTE INTERNATIONAL TENSION.

THIRD, THERE IS AUSTRALIA'S DEFENCE EFFORT ITSELF. HERE WE ASPIRE TO A CAPABILITY THAT IS VISIBLY DEFENSIVE AND SUFFICIENTLY POTENT TO BE A CREDIBLE DETERRENT.

IN GOVERNMENT WE HAVE INCREASED DEFENCE SPENDING, SUBSTANTIALLY. IT IS OUR FIRM INTENTION TO MAINTAIN SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN DEFENCE SPENDING AND A GREATER DEGREE OF DEFENCE SELF-RELIANCE.

IN OUR FIRST TWO BUDGETS WE HAVE INCREASED DEFENCE EXPENDITURE AT AN AVERAGE RATE OF ABOUT 3.7 PER CENT IN REAL TERMS. THIS COMPARES WITH AN AVERAGE INCREASE UNDER THE FRASER GOVERNMENT OF ABOUT 2.5 PER CENT. THIS SHOWS THE NONSENSE OF OUR OPPONENTS' TALK ABOUT OUR SO-CALLED 'CUTS' IN DEFENCE SPENDING. THE FACT IS THAT UNDER LABOR DEFENCE SPENDING HAS INCREASED MORE RAPIDLY THAN UNDER OUR PREDECESSORS.

THE GOVERNMENT IS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OUR CURRENT FAVOURABLE SECURITY OUTLOOK TO CONCENTRATE ON INVESTMENTS THAT WILL CONSOLIDATE AND ENHANCE OUR DEFENCE CAPABILITY OVER THE LONGER TERM - PARTICULARLY INVESTMENTS IN MAJOR EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES.

THE F/A-18s ARE PERHAPS THE MOST IMPRESSIVE AND TANGIBLE EXPRESSION OF THIS POLICY TO DATE. THEY WILL MAKE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO OUR ABILITY TO PRESENT OURSELVES AS A FORMIDABLE AND INDEPENDENT DEFENCE PRESENCE IN OUR REGION.

THE VERSATILITY OF THE F/A-18s, AS A TACTICAL FIGHTER, IN ALL WEATHER CONDITIONS, ITS MANOEUVRABILITY AND ITS EASE OF MAINTENANCE ALL MAKE IT PARTICULARLY SUITED TO OUR NEEDS. THIS AIRCRAFT IS ALSO IN THE FOREFRONT OF TECHNOLOGY AND, BECAUSE OF ITS ADVANCED DESIGN, WILL BE ASSURED OF LONG SERVICE WITH THE RAAF.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE F/A-18 INTO THE RAAF WILL ALSO GREATLY BENEFIT THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE INDUSTRY. THIS IS BY FAR THE LARGEST SINGLE DEFENCE PROJECT EVER MANAGED IN AUSTRALIA AND IT WILL PROVIDE THE DOMINANT WORKLOAD FOR THE AUSTRALIAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY FOR QUITE A FEW YEARS TO COME.

THE AUSTRALIAN AEROSPACE INDUSTRY IS ALSO BENEFITTING SUBSTANTIALLY FROM THE F/A-18 PROGRAM. THE GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDING CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAINING TO THE VALUE OF \$94.5 MILLION FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF COMPONENT PARTS AND FOR THE ASSEMBLY OF ENGINES AND AIRCRAFT.

THIS WORK, AND ASSOCIATED OFFSET WORK, WILL INVOLVE SOME 2,000 JOBS IN THE INDUSTRY OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

THE AUSTRALIAN BUILDING INDUSTRY WILL ALSO BENEFIT FROM THE PROJECT AS THERE WILL BE EXTENSIVE WORK THIS YEAR TO PREPARE THE RAAF BASE AT WILLIAMTOWN, NSW, FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE F/A-18 AND TO RE-DEVELOP THE RAAF BASE AT TINDAL IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.

IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW LEVEL OF SECURITY FOR THE NORTH AND FOR AUSTRALIA AS A WHOLE, THE F/A-18 WILL PLAY A VITAL ROLE FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

THE GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT FACTORIES AND ALL THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROJECT CAN BE PROUD OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THAT ACHIEVEMENT.
