



# PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

AUSTRALIA: APPROACHING 1988  
MELBOURNE - 5TH APRIL 1986

MR CHAIRMAN, MR PREMIER, MINISTERS, PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, FRIENDS.

FIRST, MR CHAIRMAN, LET ME THANK AND CONGRATULATE THE VICTORIAN BRANCH FOR BRINGING US TOGETHER, IN THIS VERY REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY OF VICTORIANS AND AUSTRALIANS, WITH THE TIMELY THEME OF APPROACHING 1988 - THE BICENTENNIAL YEAR OF THIS NATION.

I SAY 'TIMELY', BECAUSE, WITH THE YEAR ITSELF LESS THAN TWO YEARS AWAY, AND WITH PLANNING AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES WELL ADVANCED AT BOTH THE NATIONAL AND STATE LEVELS, THERE IS A NEED FOR US ALL TO BEGIN TO THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF THIS EVENT - ITS MEANING AND PURPOSE FOR AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE.

WITHOUT THAT CONTENT OF THOUGHT AND SELF-EXAMINATION, THE CELEBRATIONS THEMSELVES, HOWEVER MEMORABLE I HOPE AND BELIEVE THEY WILL BE FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS, WOULD BE HARDLY OF MORE SIGNIFICANCE TO AUSTRALIA THAN THE VISITATION OF HALLEY'S COMET - SOMETHING WORTH SEEING OF COURSE, AND SIGNIFICANT IN ITSELF BUT ESSENTIALLY IRRELEVANT TO OUR COUNTRY'S FUTURE.

AND NOW IS THE TIME - WELL BEFORE THE DAWN OF 1988 - TO BEGIN THAT PROCESS OF NATIONAL STOCK-TAKING - WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AND WHERE WE ARE GOING - SO THAT BY THE BICENTENNIAL YEAR THERE WILL HAVE EMERGED A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING, BY ALL AUSTRALIANS, OF THE MEANING AND TRUE SPIRIT OF THE BICENTENARY.

MUCH OF THAT MEANING AND SPIRIT IS I BELIEVE, ENCAPSULATED IN THE THEME NOW ESTABLISHED FOR THE BICENTENNIAL.

ONE OF THE EARLIEST DECISIONS I TOOK ON BECOMING PRIME MINISTER THREE YEARS AGO WAS TO CHANGE THE DESIGNATED THEME.

YOU MAY REMEMBER THAT UNDER THE PREVIOUS DISPENSATION IT HAD BEEN DESIGNATED AS "TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF AUSTRALIAN ACHIEVEMENT". I HAD ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT INAPPROPRIATE - NOT BECAUSE OF ANY LACK OF LEGITIMATE PRIDE IN WHAT WE HAVE

ACHIEVED (QUITE THE CONTRARY), BUT BECAUSE, IN MY VIEW AND IN MY COLLEAGUES' VIEW, IT WAS FAR TOO NARROW - AND INDEED BACKWARD-LOOKING, A FOCUS.

SO AT MY SUGGESTION, ON AUSTRALIA DAY 1984, THE BICENTENNIAL AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED A NEW THEME - OR TO BE MORE CORRECT - REVERTED TO ITS ORIGINALLY PREFERRED THEME - "AUSTRALIANS LIVING TOGETHER".

AND I THINK THE REALLY IMPORTANT POINT TO NOTE IS THAT THIS REPRESENTS MUCH MORE THAN A STATEMENT ABOUT AUSTRALIA AS IT HAS GROWN OVER THE LAST 200 YEARS. IT IS THAT, BUT MUCH MORE.

IT IS AN AFFIRMATION FOR THE FUTURE.

BECAUSE, OUR CAPACITY TO LIVE TOGETHER, TO WORK TOGETHER IN OUR INCREASINGLY DIVERSE SOCIETY, IN A GENUINELY MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY, IS THE VERY CONDITION FOR OUR FUTURE SUCCESS AND SURVIVAL AS A COHESIVE COMMUNITY.

SO THE BICENTENNIAL THEME, "LIVING TOGETHER" IS NOT JUST A DESCRIPTION OF MODERN AUSTRALIA IN 1988 BUT, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, A PRESCRIPTION FOR AUSTRALIA FAR BEYOND 1988.

AND I BELIEVE THAT THE AUSTRALIAN ACHIEVEMENT OVER THE LAST 3 YEARS HAS PROVIDED AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF THAT PRESCRIPTION IN ACTION.

MY FRIENDS, IT IS EXACTLY 3 YEARS NEXT WEEK SINCE THE HISTORIC NATIONAL ECONOMIC SUMMIT.

BEHIND THE CONCEPT OF THE CONFERENCE LAY MY LONG-HELD BELIEF THAT AUSTRALIA COULD NO LONGER AFFORD TO GO DOWN THE PATH OF CONFRONTATION AND FRAGMENTATION WHICH HAD EMBITTERED AND DISFIGURED SO MANY ASPECTS OF OUR NATIONAL LIFE, FOR MUCH OF THE PREVIOUS DECADE.

AND I SAID WHEN OPENING THE SUMMIT ON 11 APRIL 1983 THAT THE NEED FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WENT FAR BEYOND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS WE THEN FACED - AND NEED I REMIND YOU THAT AUSTRALIA WAS THEN EXPERIENCING ITS WORST ECONOMIC CRISIS FOR 50 YEARS.

I SAID THEN THAT WHAT WAS AT STAKE WAS NOT ONLY THE URGENT AND IMMEDIATE TASK OF ACHIEVING ECONOMIC RECOVERY, BUT THE FOUNDATIONS WE COULD LAY FOR THE WHOLE FUTURE OF THIS GREAT COUNTRY OF OURS INTO THE 21ST CENTURY.

YOU WILL RECALL THAT THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF SCEPTICISM AND CYNICISM ABOUT OUR APPROACH, AT THE TIME - AND IT WAS NOT CONFINED TO THE RANKS OF OUR POLITICAL OPPONENTS, WHO OF COURSE HAD A DEEP VESTED INTEREST - AS THEY STILL HAVE - IN THE FAILURE OF OUR APPROACH.

IN SOME QUARTERS, THE WHOLE THING - FROM THE CONCEPT OF THE SUMMIT TO THE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS WHICH EMERGED FROM THE COMMUNIQUE AND THE ACCORD - WAS DISMISSED AS MERE RHETORIC - SOMETHING THAT COULD NOT WORK, SOMETHING THAT COULD NOT LAST.

LET ME SAY THIS: IF THE IDEA OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AS THE PRECONDITION FOR NATIONAL RECOVERY AND NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION WAS MERE RHETORIC, THEN IT SPEAKS VOLUMES FOR THE PRACTICAL POWER OF RHETORIC IN THE ECONOMIC, INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THIS NATION.

BUT OF COURSE, IT WAS NOT RHETORIC AT ALL. THE WORDS, THE APPROACH, THE CONCEPT CLOTHED CLEAR AND PRACTICAL PROPOSALS, AND EFFECTIVE MACHINERY, FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF OUR NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

AND I EMPHASISE THE TWIN NATURE OF THE GOALS - THE SOCIAL GOALS HAND IN HAND WITH THE ECONOMIC GOALS; SUSTAINED AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH AS THE MEANS TO OUR WIDER SOCIAL ENDS AND OBJECTIVES OF A FAIRER, MORE EQUITABLE SOCIETY.

WHO COULD NOW DISMISS AS RHETORIC AN APPROACH THROUGH WHICH MORE THAN 600,000 JOBS HAVE BEEN CREATED WITHIN 3 YEARS?

- . AN APPROACH WHICH HAS REDUCED INDUSTRIAL DISPUTATION TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL FOR 16 YEARS;
- . AN APPROACH WHICH HAS RESTORED THE PROFIT SHARE AND REDUCED REAL UNIT LABOUR COSTS TO THE LEVELS OF THE LATE 1960'S AND EARLY 1970'S;
- . AN APPROACH WHICH HAS RESTORED AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS TO THE LEVELS OF 15 YEARS AGO; AND
- . AN APPROACH WHICH HAS CREATED THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY A NEW AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE NEED FOR FUNDAMENTAL RESTRUCTURING OF KEY SECTORS OF THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY.

THESE ARE THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE ECONOMIC RECORD OF THE PAST 3 YEARS.

BUT WHAT IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT NOW, AS WE APPROACH 1988, AND AS WE PLAN FAR BEYOND 1988, IS THE CAPACITY OF OUR APPROACH TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE FUTURE.

THE PRICES AND INCOMES ACCORD IS OF COURSE THE CENTRAL PART OF OUR APPROACH - THE KEYSTONE OF THE ARCH.

BUT THE ACCORD ITSELF IS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING.

IT PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE - THOUGH BY NO MEANS AN EXCLUSIVE ROLE - IN THE REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT OF STRONG GROWTH WITHOUT INCREASED INFLATION. IT WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY THAT ROLE. BUT THE SUBSTANTIAL IMPORTANCE OF THE ACCORD NOW LIES IN ITS CAPACITY TO PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK OF CERTAINTY AND PREDICTABILITY, YET AT THE SAME TIME TO PROVIDE A FLEXIBILITY TO COPE WITH UNFORSEEN CHANGES IN ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES.

THIS IS WHY IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE ACCORD SHOULD BE MAINTAINED.

YET WE NOW KNOW THAT OUR POLITICAL ADVERSARIES PROPOSE TO STRIKE AT THE VERY HEART OF THE ACCORD AND UNDERMINE THE FOUNDATIONS UPON WHICH ALL THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR HAS BEEN BUILT.

I MUST SAY I FIND IT ALL VERY FASCINATING.

THE POLICY MAKING PROCESSES OF THE LIBERAL PARTY ARE NOW QUITE REMARKABLE. THESE DAYS, IT APPEARS, THEY DECIDE HOW TO MARKET A POLICY BEFORE THEY MAKE THE POLICY.

PERHAPS SOMEWHERE IN THE INNER RECESSES OF THE LIBERAL PARTY SECRETARIAT - I SUPPOSE WE CAN CALL THEM THE "FACELESS MEN" - THERE IS A DOCUMENT CONTAINING THE LIBERAL WAGES POLICY. BUT THE PARLIAMENTARY LIBERAL PARTY HAS YET TO BE INFORMED. MR VALDER HAS YET TO TELL THEM NOT ONLY HOW TO VOTE, BUT WHAT THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE VOTING ON. NO DOUBT THE POLICY WILL BE LEAKED IN DUE COURSE.

BUT AT PRESENT THEY HAVE NO POLICY.

YET THEY DO HAVE, AS YOU NOW KNOW, A STRATEGY TO MARKET THEIR NON-EXISTENT POLICY.

YOU HAVE ALL BEEN WARNED.

YOU ARE TO BE NEUTRALISED!

SERIOUSLY LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WHAT AN EXTRAORDINARY BUSINESS IT ALL IS!

NO POLICY, NO PROPOSAL, NO PLAN - BUT A MARKETING STRATEGY.

AND, THIS, FROM THE ONCE GREAT LIBERAL PARTY - THE PARTY OF MENZIES, THE PARTY EVEN OF BOLTE.

I MIGHT SAY IN PASSING THAT I CAN UNDERSTAND FROM A CERTAIN BIZARRE INCIDENT THIS WEEK, HOW SIR HENRY BOLTE MUST HAVE FELT WHEN THE FINANCIAL REVIEW, A MONTH OR SO AGO HEADLINED AN EDITORIAL "SIR HENRY BOLTE TURNS IN HIS GRAVE".

BUT THE EDITORIAL DEALT COMPREHENSIVELY WITH THE APPALLING DECLINE IN STANDARDS AND CAPACITY OF THE LIBERAL PARTY - AND THEREFORE WAS IN ALL OTHER RESPECTS COMPLETELY ACCURATE.

BUT WHILE WE STILL AWAIT - IN BREATHLESS EXPECTATION, I AM SURE - THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE LIBERAL WAGES POLICY, WE KNOW ONLY TOO WELL WHAT IT REALLY MEANS.

WHATEVER ITS FINAL FORM, ITS MEANING AND PURPOSE WOULD BE RETURN TO THE CONFRONTATIONISM OF THE 1970'S AND ALL THAT THAT PRODUCED.

SO WHAT EMERGES WITH CRYSTAL CLARITY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE ALTERNATIVE IS NO ALTERNATIVE AT ALL - NEITHER IN TERMS OF MEN OR IN TERMS OF MEASURES.

I DO NOT DISGUISE, FOR A MOMENT, THAT WE FACE, AS A GOVERNMENT AND AS A NATION, A TIME OF DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX DECISION MAKING.

I DO NOT DISGUISE THAT SOME OF THESE DECISIONS MAY BE UNPALATABLE - UNPALATABLE TO MAKE, UNPALATABLE FOR SOME OF US TO TAKE.

BUT THE IMPORTANT THING FOR US, FOR AUSTRALIA - AND FOR THE LABOR GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA, FOR THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY, FOR THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR MOVEMENT AND FOR THE WHOLE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY - IS THAT THE CRUCIAL DECISIONS ARE MADE WITHIN A COHERENT AND CONSISTENT FRAMEWORK, WORKING TOWARDS COHERENT AND CONSISTENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OBJECTIVES. A COHERENT FRAMEWORK AND A CLEAR COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM GOALS ALONE CAN ENSURE THAT THE DECISIONS, HOWEVER DIFFICULT, ARE THE CORRECT DECISIONS.

WE HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT FRAMEWORK. WE ARE COMMITTED IRREVOCABLY TO THOSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES - THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OBJECTIVES OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY AND THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR GOVERNMENT.

AND IN CONTINUING THE WORK OF ACHIEVING OUR GOALS, I BELIEVE THAT THE SPIRIT OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY, WHICH HAS BEEN AT THE HEART OF SO MUCH THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED DURING THE PAST 3 YEARS, WILL BE JUST AS IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY, IN THE YEARS TO 1988 AND BEYOND.

THERE IS NO WAY AHEAD - AT LEAST NO VIABLE WAY AHEAD FOR AUSTRALIA - BY ANY REVIVAL OF THE CONFRONTATION AND FRAGMENTATION OF THE PAST, OR BY THE PURSUIT OF PURELY SECTIONAL SHORT-TERM INTERESTS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, A VITAL ASPECT OF THE PROCESS OF CO-OPERATION AND CONSULTATION WE HAVE ESTABLISHED OVER THE LAST 3 YEARS HAS BEEN THE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN OUR LABOR GOVERNMENTS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA.

MR PREMIER, I CONGRATULATE YOU AND YOUR MINISTERIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES ON THIS 4TH ANNIVERSARY OF YOUR ELECTION AND ON A MAGNIFICENT RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LABOR'S CAUSE IN VICTORIA AND IN AUSTRALIA.

I SHOULD MENTION HERE THAT TOMORROW NIGHT THE PREMIER WILL JOIN ME IN LAUNCHING THE NATIONAL DRUG OFFENSIVE - A PROGRAM FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AND RELENTLESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ILLEGAL DRUG TRAFFIC IN AUSTRALIA. THIS IS A MATTER OF PROFOUND IMPORTANCE TO OUR FUTURE AND OUR CHILDRENS' FUTURE - AND ONE WHICH, OF COURSE, UTTERLY TRANSCENDS ANY POLITICAL OR REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS. AND I ACKNOWLEDGE THE WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT AND CO-OPERATION WE ARE RECEIVING FROM ALL STATE GOVERNMENTS IN THIS GREAT NATIONAL EFFORT.

BUT, AS MUCH AS THE IN THE WIDER ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES OF OUR TIME, THE SUCCESS OF THAT EFFORT REQUIRES, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE CO-OPERATION AND SUPPORT OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.

IT NEEDS THE VERY KIND OF COMMUNITY CO-OPERATION SUPPORT AND GOOD WILL WHICH BROUGHT US OUT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AFTER MARCH 1983 AND WHICH WE STILL NEED - AS A NATION - TO ENSURE THAT OUR EFFORTS ARE AS EFFECTIVE IN THE FUTURE, AND TO ENSURE THAT THOSE EFFORTS ARE NOT DISSIPATED IN SECTIONAL POINT SCORING.

I HAVE SAID MANY TIMES, AND I SAY AGAIN TO THIS REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY, THERE IS NO AUTOMATIC GUARANTEE OF SUCCESS FOR NATIONS - OR FOR THAT MATTER, POLITICAL PARTIES - IN OUR HIGHLY COMPETITIVE AND CHALLENGING WORLD.

WE MAY DESERVE SUCCESS BUT WE CANNOT COMMAND IT. IT HAS TO BE WORKED FOR, AND WORKED AT, UNREMITTINGLY.

AND I BELIEVE THAT NOW, AS MUCH AS AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, THE KEY TO ALL WE HOPE FOR, ALL WE STRIVE FOR, IS THE MAINTENANCE AND FOSTERING OF THE SPIRIT AND FACT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND NATIONAL CO-OPERATION.

I AM CONVINCED THAT THAT SPIRIT OF CO-OPERATION IS THE NECESSARY FOUNDATION FOR THE SUCCESS WE ALL SO DEEPLY DESIRE FOR OUR COUNTRY, AND FOR THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF WHAT IS NOW A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE AND A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN EXPERIMENT. IT IS ACKNOWLEDGED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD TO HAVE BEEN A REMARKABLE SUCCESS IN THE PAST THREE YEARS. THE TASK AHEAD IS TO BUILD ON THAT SUCCESS, IN ADVANCING AND ENHANCING THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIMENT OF A GENUINELY MULTICULTURAL NATION - PERHAPS, IN THAT RESPECT THE MOST DIVERSE ON EARTH - LIVING TOGETHER, WORKING TOGETHER, BUILDING TOGETHER AN EVEN FAIRER, MORE SECURE AND MORE EQUITABLE SOCIETY IN THIS GREAT COUNTRY OF OURS.

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