



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
TENTH ANNIVERSARY DINNER
30 MAY 1986

I AM DELIGHTED, AT LAST, TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADD, IN PERSON, MY TRIBUTE TO NEVILLE WRAN, HIS GOVERNMENT AND THE NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY, AS WE CELEBRATE THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ELECTION ON 1 MAY 1976.

I SAY 'AT LAST', BECAUSE I WAS UNABLE TO BE PRESENT ON THE EARLIER OCCASIONS AT WHICH SO MANY, NOT ONLY FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY, BUT CITIZENS FROM ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY, JOINED IN THE CELEBRATION OF A TRULY HISTORIC EVENT AND REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT.

AND WHILE I CERTAINLY REGRET THAT OTHER OFFICIAL COMMITMENTS PREVENTED ME FROM BEING PRESENT ON THOSE GREAT OCCASIONS, THERE IS HOWEVER, AN ADDED SIGNIFICANCE TO THIS PARTICULAR OCCASION TONIGHT.

FIRSTLY, IT BECOMES EVEN MORE APPROPRIATE FOR ME TO SPEAK IN TERMS OF THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PAST TEN YEARS IN NEW SOUTH WALES - ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE LABOR PARTY THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE WHOLE OF AUSTRALIA AND FOR ALL THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA.

AND ABOVE ALL, ONE MONTH INTO THE SECOND DECADE OF THE WRAN LABOR GOVERNMENT, WE CAN LOOK AHEAD - AND IN CELEBRATING THE LAST TEN YEARS, THINK AHEAD FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS.

AND I SAY WITHOUT HESITATION THAT IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE EXPERIENCE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PAST TEN YEARS, HERE IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AND FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS OF A GREAT NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP, THAT WE CAN LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT TEN YEARS WITH CONFIDENCE - CONFIDENCE THAT WHAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE TOGETHER IN THOSE YEARS HAS LAID STRONG AND ENDURING FOUNDATIONS FOR WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE, TOGETHER, FOR THE PEOPLE OF NEW SOUTH WALES AND FOR THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

TO MEASURE PROPERLY THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WRAN ACHIEVEMENT, YOU ONLY HAVE TO RECALL THE DATE, THE TIME, OF THAT ELECTION TEN YEARS AGO - THE FIRST OF MAY 1976.

IT WAS OF COURSE LESS THAN SIX MONTHS AFTER THE GREAT TRAGEDY AND GREAT CATASTROPHE OF 1975.

I WONDER HOW MANY OF US IN THIS ROOM REALLY BELIEVED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO ELECT A LABOR GOVERNMENT ANYWHERE IN AUSTRALIA, MUCH LESS IN ITS MOST POPULOUS STATE, IN THE ATMOSPHERE AND MOOD OF THOSE TIMES?

YET IT HAPPENED; AND THE REST IS HISTORY.

AND IT HAPPENED, MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, BECAUSE OF THE FAITH, PURPOSE, DEDICATION AND DETERMINATION OF ONE MAN - NEVILLE WRAN.

AND IT WAS ONE OF THAT HANDFUL OF EVENTS IN RECENT TIMES, THAT CAN BE TRULY SAID TO HAVE CHANGED THE COURSE OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORY.

AND ITS CHIEF EFFECT, BEYOND ITS IMPACT IN NEW SOUTH WALES ITSELF, WAS TO GALVANIZE AND REVITALISE THE LABOR PARTY THROUGHOUT THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF AUSTRALIA.

IN THESE DAYS OF OUR ELECTORAL ASCENDANCY, IT IS DIFFICULT TO RECALL THE DESPAIR AND FRUSTRATION OF EARLY 1976.

AS NATIONAL PRESIDENT, I CAN REMEMBER IT ONLY TOO WELL.

BUT IT WENT DEEPER THAN DESPAIR ABOUT OUR GRIM ELECTORAL PROSPECTS.

BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE DISMISSAL OF THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT AND THE ELECTORAL AVALANCHE THAT FOLLOWED, THERE WAS IN MANY SECTIONS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT A LOSS OF FAITH IN THE SYSTEM OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY ITSELF.

MORE THAN ANY OTHER EVENT, THE WRAN VICTORY OF 1 MAY 1976 STOPPED THE HAEMORRHAGING OF SUPPORT FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM AND THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCESSES AND LABOR'S ROLE WITHIN THAT SYSTEM.

MORE THAN ANY OTHER EVENT, IT RESTORED OUR FAITH, NOT ONLY IN THAT SYSTEM BUT OUR FAITH IN OURSELVES AND IN OUR CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY.

AND FOR THAT, EVERY LABOR GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS BEEN ELECTED IN AUSTRALIA SINCE 1976, INCLUDING MY OWN - INDEED, ESPECIALLY MY OWN - IS DIRECTLY AND DEEPLY IN NEVILLE WRAN'S DEBT.

BUT OF COURSE, AN ELECTORAL VICTORY, OF ITSELF, WOULD HAVE MEANT LITTLE OR NOTHING, IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOLLOWED UP BY SUBSTANTIAL ACHIEVEMENT.

AND THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WRAN GOVERNMENT LIES IN BOTH THE STYLE AND THE SUBSTANCE OF ITS ACHIEVEMENT, AND THE PATTERN IT SET FOR LABOR GOVERNMENTS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA.

THERE WERE TWO KEY ASPECTS OF THE WRAN GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH, WHICH FIRMLY ESTABLISHED A MODEL FOR REFORM LABOR GOVERNMENTS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA.

FIRST, THEY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MISTAKES HAD BEEN MADE IN THE PAST - NOT IN THE SUBSTANCE OF THE GREAT REFORMS WHICH THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT SET OUT TO ACHIEVE AND DID IN FACT ACHIEVE TO A REMARKABLE AND ENDURING EXTENT - BUT MISTAKES IN THE METHODS AND PACE OF REFORM.

THIS GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES DEMONSTRATED TO ALL AUSTRALIANS THAT LABOR WAS CAPABLE OF LEARNING FROM ITS MISTAKES.

SECONDLY, THEY DEMONSTRATED THAT, GIVEN THE RIGHT APPROACH, REFORM COULD BE ACHIEVED EVEN IN THE FACE OF A HOSTILE POLITICAL CLIMATE AND AN UNFAVOURABLE ECONOMIC CLIMATE.

IT IS TOO EASILY FORGOTTEN THAT THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS OF THE WRAN GOVERNMENT COINCIDED WITH THE YEARS OF THE FRASER GOVERNMENT, CULMINATING IN THE WORST ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CRISIS IN AUSTRALIA FOR FIFTY YEARS.

AND THE BASIS OF THE APPROACH TO REFORM IN NEW SOUTH WALES WAS ALWAYS CO-OPERATION - AND IN PARTICULAR, CO-OPERATION BETWEEN BUSINESS, UNIONS AND GOVERNMENT.

THE PRESENCE HERE TONIGHT OF SO MANY LEADERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, AND THE CONTINUING SUPPORT THIS GOVERNMENT RECEIVES FROM BUSINESS, IS ITSELF EVIDENCE OF THE SUCCESS OF THAT APPROACH.

BUT IN MORE SUBSTANTIAL TERMS, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SYDNEY AS THE FINANCIAL CENTRE OF AUSTRALIA, THE REJUVENATION OF THE HUNTER VALLEY AND THE ILLAWARRA AND THE STRONG GROWTH OF THE INDUSTRIAL BASE OF NEW SOUTH WALES, ALL REPRESENT THE FRUITS OF THE EMPHASIS ON CO-OPERATION RATHER THAN CONFRONTATION.

IT WAS A MATTER OF GENUINE NATIONAL IMPORTANCE AND NATIONAL BENEFIT THAT WHEN, AFTER MARCH 1983, WE WERE ABLE TO SET THE NATIONAL AGENDA FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, NATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND NATIONAL RECOVERY, THE APPROACH HAD BEEN TRIED AND HAD SUCCEEDED IN THE LARGEST STATE.

AND THE NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PAST THREE YEARS - ABOVE ALL THE CREATION OF 670,000 NEW JOBS - COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WITHOUT NEW SOUTH WALES, WITHOUT A LABOR GOVERNMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

I NEED ONLY INSTANCE THE CONTRAST OF THE ONE MAINLAND STATE IN WHICH THE POLITICS OF CONFRONTATION STILL PERSIST. IT'S NO COINCIDENCE THAT QUEENSLAND, UNDER THE PRESENT DISPENSATION, HAS BEEN UNABLE TO SHARE FULLY IN THE FRUITS OF NATIONAL RECOVERY AND HAS FALLEN BEHIND THE REST OF AUSTRALIA IN ALMOST ALL THE MAIN INDICATORS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ADVANCE.

I NEED ONLY BRIEFLY INDICATE THE MAIN AREAS OF REFORM ACHIEVED BY THE WRAN GOVERNMENT - A GREAT DEAL OF IT THROUGH PIONEERING LEGISLATION WHICH LEADS THE AUSTRALIAN STATES.

- . THE COMPLETE OVERHAUL OF THE STATE'S FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION, LEADING MALCOLM FRASER HIMSELF TO CONCEDE THAT NEW SOUTH WALES WAS THE BEST MANAGED STATE IN AUSTRALIA;
- . THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM;
- . THE SWEEPING ELECTORAL REFORMS, ABOVE ALL, THE BRINGING OF DEMOCRACY TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS LONG HISTORY;
- . THE REVITALISATION OF SYDNEY - FINANCIAL, PHYSICAL, CULTURAL, AND MOST OF ALL, AS A PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK FOR ALL TO ENJOY;
- . PIONEERING ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS AND THE CREATION OF A GENUINE MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY;
- . AUSTRALIA'S MOST ADVANCED CONSUMER PROTECTION LEGISLATION;
- . COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION PROGRAMS - THE THREE-FOLD INCREASE IN THE AREA OF NATIONAL PARKS, THE PROTECTION OF THE STATE'S RAINFORESTS AND COASTLINE;
- . AND MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, THE PROGRAMS FOR THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE - THE STATUS OF WOMEN, THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, CARE FOR THE AGED, SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE YOUNG UNEMPLOYED.

IN SHORT, THE WRAN LABOR GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED NEW SOUTH WALES WITH A DECADE OF CONTINUOUS, COMPREHENSIVE AND CONSISTENT REFORM UNEQUALLED, FOR DURATION AND DEPTH, BY ANY STATE IN OUR FEDERAL HISTORY.

AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND - NEVER MORE SO THAN TODAY, IN 1986 - THAT THE BASIS OF THIS PROGRAM OF LABOR REFORM HAS, AT ALL TIMES, BEEN SOUND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT - AS I HAVE SAID, THE KIND OF DISCIPLINE WHICH EXTRACTED EVEN MALCOLM FRASER'S GRUDGING ADMIRATION.

AND FROM THIS DECADE OF ACHIEVEMENT - THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STEADY, CONSISTENT REFORM AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF WIDELY FLUCTUATING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, ESPECIALLY IN THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS - CARRIES IMPORTANT LESSONS FOR ALL AUSTRALIA TODAY.

AND THE CHIEF LESSON IS THAT WORTHWHILE AND ENDURING PROGRESS AND REFORM WILL ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY GOVERNMENTS, IN CO-OPERATION WITH ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY, WHO HAVE THE WISDOM AND THE COURAGE TO FACE UP TO THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REALITIES - NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REALITIES - OF THE TIME.

THIS SENSE OF REALITY - ITS ABILITY TO FACE UP TO THE PROBLEMS AS THEY EXIST - HAS BEEN THE HALLMARK OF THE WRAN LABOR GOVERNMENT.

IT HAS BEEN THE KEY TO ITS SUCCESS AS A GENUINE REFORM GOVERNMENT.

AND IT IS A TRIBUTE TO THE COMMONSENSE OF THE PEOPLE OF NEW SOUTH WALES THAT IT HAS ALSO BEEN THE KEY TO THE GOVERNMENT'S REMARKABLE ELECTORAL SUCCESS.

AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

NOW OF COURSE THERE IS ALWAYS A PRICE TO BE PAID FOR SUCCESS OF THE MAGNITUDE ACHIEVED BY NEVILLE WRAN AND HIS TEAM. THERE IS A POLITICAL PRICE. THERE IS A PERSONAL PRICE.

IN NEVILLE'S CASE, I DO NOT BELIEVE ANY AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL LEADER HAS BEEN CALLED UPON TO PAY A HIGHER PERSONAL PRICE, IN TERMS OF SCRUTINY AND OF OBLOQUY.

BUT NO-ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS ANYTHING ABOUT THE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA, AND PARTICULARLY LABOR'S ROLE IN THE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA, WILL BE SURPRISED OR MYSTIFIED BY THIS PROCESS.

IT IS THE OLDEST STORY IN OUR POLITICAL HISTORY - THE DOUBLE STANDARD AGAINST LABOR, WITH THE ULTIMATE AIM OF DENIAL OF LABOR'S LEGITIMACY.

WE HAVE SEEN IT AGAIN AND AGAIN THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY.

WE SEE IT AT A DIFFERENT LEVEL - AND I HAVE TO SAY IN A QUITE SHAMEFUL AND SHAMELESS FORM - IN SOME OF THE POSTURINGS FROM THE PRESENT OPPOSITION - AND EVEN FROM SOME PEOPLE WHO SHOULD, AND I BELIEVE DO, KNOW BETTER - ABOUT TAXATION REFORM.

AND NEVILLE HAS BEEN JUDGED AGAIN AND AGAIN BY THAT DOUBLE STANDARD. INDEED, UNIQUELY, HE SUBMITTED HIMSELF TO THAT JUDGEMENT.

HIS INTEGRITY HAS BEEN TESTED AND RETESTED - AND YOUR PRESENCE HERE TONIGHT IS ITSELF THE TANGIBLE TESTIMONY THAT HE HAS NEVER BEEN FOUND WANTING.

IN HIS POLITICAL CAREER AND IN HIS PERSONAL CONDUCT, HE HAS DEMONSTRATED TO THE HIGHEST DEGREE THAT BRAND OF COURAGE DESCRIBED BY ERNEST HEMINGWAY AS 'GRACE UNDER PRESSURE'.

AND THAT HAS BEEN AN ENDURING SOURCE, NOT ONLY OF HIS OWN STRENGTH, BUT THE STRENGTH OF THE GOVERNMENT WHICH HE LEADS.

AND I'M DELIGHTED TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TONIGHT TO ADD MY TRIBUTE AND ACKNOWLEDGE OUR INDEBTEDNESS.

ONE OF THE MESSAGES NEVILLE RECEIVED ON 1 MAY WAS ONE WHICH RAN "IF A WEEK IN POLITICS IS LIKE A YEAR ANYWHERE ELSE, THANK YOU FOR 520 GREAT YEARS".

AND TEN YEARS IS A LIFE-TIME IN MODERN GOVERNMENT.

BUT NOT THE LEAST REMARKABLE ATTRIBUTES OF THE WRAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN THAT ITS VIGOUR AND DRIVE HAS NOT BEEN DISSIPATED BY THE PASSAGE OF THE YEARS.

EVEN THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD - NOT AN UNDULY SYCOPHANTIC SOURCE - ACKNOWLEDGES THIS IN AN EDITORIAL LAST MONTH.

IT SAID "AFTER 10 YEARS MOST GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE A TERMINAL CASE, BUT THIS IS NOT TRUE OF THE WRAN GOVERNMENT".

YOUR GOVERNMENT, NEVILLE, HAS NOT ONLY PROVIDED NEW SOUTH WALES WITH UNPRECEDENTED STABILITY OVER A DECADE, BUT A CAPACITY FOR SELF-RENEWAL AND REJUVENATION.

AND WHEN WE LOOK AROUND THE LABOR GOVERNMENTS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA, IN THE FOUR STATES AND THE NATIONAL CAPITAL, YOU HAVE TO BE STRUCK BY AN EXTRAORDINARY PHENOMENON.

AND IT THIS. IN THE SPACE OF A MERE DECADE, A WHOLE NEW GENERATION OF LABOR PARLIAMENTARIANS HAS COME FORWARD TO LEAD LABOR GOVERNMENTS, A NEW GENERATION OF LABOR MEN AND WOMEN WHO, COLLECTIVELY AND IN THEIR SEPARATE ADMINISTRATIONS, IN SYDNEY, IN MELBOURNE, IN ADELAIDE, IN PERTH AND IN CANBERRA, FORM THE MOST TALENTED, THE MOST VIGOROUS AND MOST COMPETENT POLITICAL LEADERSHIP THIS NATION HAS EVER HAD.

THE ELECTION - AND THE EXAMPLE - OF THE WRAN GOVERNMENT WAS A CATALYST IN HELPING BRING THIS NEW GENERATION FORWARD INTO THE SERVICE OF OUR PARTY AND OUR NATION.

THAT IS AS STRONG A REASON AS ANY FOR CELEBRATING THIS TENTH ANNIVERSARY.

IN TIMES LIKE THESE, THE DECISIONS WE MUST MAKE, AS GOVERNMENTS AND AS A COMMUNITY, ARE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT, REQUIRING ALL OUR SKILL, DETERMINATION, DEDICATION, AND FORESIGHT. WE MUST MUSTER AND MARSHAL ALL OUR COMBINED TALENTS AND RESOURCES.

I REPEAT, THE TEN YEARS SINCE NEVILLE WRAN'S ELECTION HAVE PRODUCED, IN OUR LABOR GOVERNMENTS, THE MOST TALENTED AND DEDICATED LEADERSHIP IN AUSTRALIA'S HISTORY.

AND THAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE FACT IN AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL LIFE TODAY - A FACT OF MONUMENTAL IMPORTANCE FOR OUR FUTURE - FOR THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIA UNDER LABOR GOVERNMENTS IN THE YEARS AHEAD.
