



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LABOR CENTENARY
ADELAIDE - 11 MAY 1991**

I have had the honour this year, as leader of the Australian Labor Party, of speaking at Party functions throughout Australia celebrating our centenary year.

Throughout Australia, trades unions and working people generally made an historic decision in 1891.

In the wake of the massive industrial upheavals of that time, they decided to pursue their goals through political, and not just industrial, means.

They decided to establish a political party.

No one place, so single State can make an unchallenged claim to be the birthplace of our great Party.

- Barcaldine in May 1891 saw the historic strike by the Shearers' Union, and the equally historic decision by the Government of Queensland led by that arch-Tory Sir Samuel Griffith to send in the troops against the strikers.
- Collingwood on 17 April 1891 saw John Hancock's famous by-election victory that made him the first member of the Victorian Parliament elected on a definite Labor platform
- Thirteen days earlier, Balmain on 4 April 1891 saw the establishment of the first branch of the Labor Electoral League in New South Wales - the precursor of Labor's tremendous electoral success in June 1891, when 35 Labor candidates were elected as members of the NSW Parliament

It was in January 1891 that South Australian Labor reached its first major landmark.

On 7 January 1891, at the Selborne Hotel in Pirie Street, the United Trades and Labor Council formally established the United Labor Party to endorse candidates on a Labor platform for parliamentary election.

At the first available opportunity, in the election of 1893, Labor won 10 of the 54 seats in the House of Assembly.

My friends,

It is right that one hundred years later we ask ourselves what is the significance today of these landmark decisions by our predecessors.

It was basically a simple decision based on simple facts.

At Barcaldine, Collingwood, Balmain and Adelaide, working people recognised that the only way to protect their rights, to advance the cause, to get better working conditions, to raise living standards for themselves and their families, was through action in Parliament - not through the weapon of the strike but through the challenge of the ballot box

When I spoke last weekend at Barcaldine, I said there were three important lessons that can be drawn from this crucial decision.

First, there is the lesson of that fundamental commitment to Parliament.

Australia today is one of the world's great parliamentary democracies. The commitment and determination of the Australian Labor Party has helped to make it so.

The second enduring lesson learned from 1891 concerns the vital link between industrial labour and political Labor.

The strength of one remains the strength of the other.

It is true that all Labor Governments have an overriding responsibility to the nation as a whole. We can never succeed if we merely represent sectional interests.

Yet it is equally true that cooperation between the union movement and Labor Governments remain crucial to the success of both - and vital to the health of the wider community.

I am deeply proud that, 100 years after the unions created the Labor Party, our constructive cooperation has never been better exemplified than it is today through the Accord.

The third lesson of 1891 is a lesson for our adversaries as much as for ourselves.

This Party and this Labor movement could never have survived for a century unless we had learned the hard lessons of adversity.

Time and time again, over the last 100 years, Labor has been written down and written off - and time and time again we have rebounded from adversity to success.

My friends,

There is a further point of historical interest that can be recorded tonight.

Last Wednesday - May 8 - the Federal Labor Party equalled the record period of continuous Labor rule set in the 1940s by the Curtin and Chifley Governments.

John Curtin became Prime Minister on 7 October 1941 - a few months short of fifty years ago.

Ben Chifley was defeated at the general election of 10 December 1949.

The intervening 8 years, 2 months, and 3 days were days of unrivalled Labor achievement - guiding Australia through the perils of war and laying the basis for post-war reconstruction in a fairer and progressive Australia.

I was elected Prime Minister on 5 March 1983 and last Wednesday saw my Government attain that milestone of 8 years, 2 months and 3 days of consecutive and continuous Labor Government.

There is nothing special about milestones. This is not an occasion for beating the drum or waving the banner.

All I want to say on this occasion is a message that reinforces the message of our Party's centenary.

Look back over the last decade or so and you find a decade of Labor political dominance, throughout Australia.

We should be proud of what we have done - proud that we have been able to win, and win again, the confidence of the Australian people

- and proud that we have been able to deliver, and deliver again, on our commitment to those in whose interests we govern.

But look back over the last ten decades since our foundation and you see many tough times - many years when Labor was in the wilderness - years when we fought each other as vigorously as we fought our opponents - years when we could not for the life of us persuade the Australian people that we were ready for the challenge and the responsibility of government.

Labor knows what it is to go through hard times.

We have never been handed political or electoral success on a plate.

We have always had to fight, and to fight hard, in the interests of the people whom we represent.

Tonight, it is important that we remember - and that we remind our opponents - that we know how to fight and that we know how to fight back.

As far as the Federal Party is concerned, I will fight and fight hard to ensure our record of achievement remains unbroken.

With your help, we will succeed.

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