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Radio talk by Don Dunstan 5-K.A.

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GOOD EVENING:

LAST FRIDAY I WAS IN MELBOURNE FOR THE FOURTH CONFERENCE OF FEDERAL AND STATE LABOR LEADERS. WE STARTED HAVING THESE MEETINGS IN 1967 WHEN IT WAS DECIDED THAT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF, IN ADDITION TO NORMAL LABOR PARTY CONFERENCES WHERE MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS ARE MADE, THE PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS COULD MEET TOGETHER FROM TIME TO TIME AND DISCUSS MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. AND LAST FRIDAY WHAT MOST INTERESTED US MUTUALLY WAS THE FACT THAT THERE IS VERY LITTLE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

NOW THAT SOUNDS A PRETTY DULL TOPIC TO SPEND A WHOLE DAY DISCUSSING, BUT IN FACT IT IS ONE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE. AT THE MOMENT IN AUSTRALIA WE HAVE A SITUATION WHERE THERE IS CONTINUAL WRANGLING BETWEEN THE LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTY GOVERNMENTS ABOUT WHO HAS WHAT MONEY TO SPEND. BUT THOSE GOVERNMENTS GIVE ABSOLUTELY NO THOUGHT AT ALL TO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, WHAT PRIORITIES THERE ARE, OR HOW TO GET AN EFFECTIVE JOB DONE IN AREAS WHERE FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES OVERLAP.

AT THE LEADERS' CONFERENCE WE DECIDED THAT A NEW ERA OF JOINT COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CO-OPERATION IS ESSENTIAL. TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE PROPOSE THAT JOINT SECRETARIATS IN EACH AREA OF COMMON INTEREST BETWEEN THE STATES AND THE COMMONWEALTH SHOULD BE SET UP. THIS WOULD MEAN THAT FEDERAL AND STATE EXPENDITURES ON, SAY, EDUCATION, HEALTH SERVICES, OR SOCIAL SERVICES TO NAME JUST THREE, COULD BE WORKED OUT IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE OVER-LAPPING DOES NOT RESULT, AS IT DOES NOW, IN UNNECESSARY EXPENDITURES WHILE REAL AREAS OF NEED GO ON IGNORED. WE HAVE HAD BAD CASES OF THIS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. ONE SCHOOL WAS GIVEN UNDER THE COMMONWEALTH'S EDUCATION AND SCIENCE GRANTS SCHEME AN EXPENSIVE TELESCOPE AND BUILDING TO HOUSE IT, WHILE STUDENTS WERE BEING TAUGHT IN WOODEN SHELTER SHEDS.

AS THINGS STAND NOW, AND AS A DIRECT RESULT OF LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTY POLICIES, OR LACK OF THEM, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE HAD TO RESORT TO OPPRESSIVE AND UNFAIR TAXATION TO MEET THEIR EXPANDING RESPONSIBILITIES. BUT EVEN SO THEY HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GAIN ENOUGH TO MEET THE ENTIRELY REASONABLE DEMANDS MADE ON THEM BY THE PUBLIC FOR PUBLIC SERVICES. FURTHERMORE, THEY CANNOT MEET THEIR INCREASING DEBT CHARGES. AND SO WHAT WE DECIDED IN MELBOURNE WAS THAT STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MUST BE ASSISTED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN THOSE AREAS WHERE EXPENDITURE WILL INEVITABLY RISE MORE RAPIDLY THAN INCOME AND POPULATION. FURTHERMORE, STATES MUST BE GUARANTEED NO LOSS OF PRESENT REVENUES, MUST BE RELIEVED OF THEIR GROWING INTEREST BURDEN, AND MUST BE GIVEN NON-REPAYABLE COMMONWEALTH GRANTS FOR THEIR CAPITAL WORKS.

NOW THAT SOUNDS AS IF THE STATES SHOULD BE ASKING FOR A LOT MORE THAN THEY'RE AT PRESENT GETTING. AND SO THEY SHOULD. THE FACT IS THAT THE COMMONWEALTH MUST ACCEPT INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY IN A LARGE NUMBER OF AREAS. BUT IT IS NOT THE KIND OF THING LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTY PREMIERS HAVE BEEN PUSHING FOR VERY HARD, MAINLY BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO ROCK THE CANBERRA BOAT ANY MORE THAN IT'S ROCKING NOW. IN EACH OF THE AREAS WHERE THERE SHOULD BE INCREASED COMMONWEALTH RESPONSIBILITY, GRANTS SHOULD NOT BE ON CONDITIONS SET SOLELY BY THE COMMONWEALTH, BUT RATHER ON CONDITIONS ARRIVED AT AFTER FULL STATE AND COMMONWEALTH CONSULTATIONS. WHAT WE ARE PUTTING UP AS ^ASOLID PROPOSALS IS SIMPLY THIS: CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA AT ALL LEVELS, SO THAT AN EFFECTIVE JOB ^{OF WORK} CAN BE DONE.

TO GO FURTHER, AND IN THE BROAD FRAMEWORK OF THE PROPOSED JOINT-SECRETARIATS, WE DECIDED THAT THE COMMONWEALTH SHOULD ACCEPT FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR UNIVERSITIES AND TERTIARY EDUCATION AND FOR TEACHER TRAINING. THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION AND

PRE-SCHOOL COMMISSION ALREADY PROPOSED BY LABOR SHOULD ENSURE THE RIGHT EXPENDITURES ON BUILDINGS, EQUIPMENT AND STAFF. AN AUSTRALIAN HOSPITALS COMMISSION SHOULD PROMOTE MODERNISATION AND REGIONALISATION OF HOSPITALS. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY FOR A COUNTRY WHICH IS ONE OF THE MOST URBAN IN THE WORLD, THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT SHOULD ASSUME AS MUCH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CITY DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT AS DO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN CANADA AND IN WEST GERMANY. THEY ARE COUNTRIES WITH A FEDERATED SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT LIKE OURS, AND THEY'VE HAD ENOUGH INTELLIGENCE TO FIND OUT HOW TO WORK WITHIN THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM.

IN AUSTRALIA, THE LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTY GOVERNMENTS HAVE EITHER DONE NOTHING AT ALL IN THESE AREAS, OR AT MOST HAD A FEW MEETINGS OF MINISTERS WHERE PIOUS RESOLUTIONS WERE MADE AND VERY LITTLE ELSE WAS DONE.

AT THE MOMENT THERE IS ONE CLEAR WAY TO FINANCE THE MODERNIZATION OF CITY TRANSIT SYSTEMS. THE MONIES RELEASED BY THE APPROACHING COMPLETION OF INTER-CITY RAIL STANDARDISATION COULD BE TURNED TO MODERNISING INTERNAL CITY PUBLIC-TRANSIT SYSTEMS. ANOTHER AREA CRYING OUT FOR INCREASED COMMONWEALTH RESPONSIBILITY AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF WATER, POWER AND MINERAL RESOURCES AND OF INDUSTRY. PROPER PRIORITIES MUST BE SET; AN IMPROVED GROWTH RATE MUST BE ACHIEVED. AND WITH THE PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, AGAIN COMMONWEALTH AND STATE GOVERNMENTS SHOULD BE GIVING JOINT LEADERSHIP IN INCREASING PRODUCTION, ARRANGING MARKETING, AND OVERSEEING RESTRUCTURING.

FINALLY OUR MELBOURNE LEADERS' CONFERENCE DEALT WITH THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY AND MARGINAL POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA. AGAIN IT IS A PROBLEM THAT CRIES OUT FOR JOINT STATE-COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION. THERE ARE NEARLY ONE MILLION AUSTRALIANS WHO COULD BE DESCRIBED AS POVERTY-STRICKEN, AND THE COMMONWEALTH

IS CAUSING HARDSHIP TO THEM AND MAKING BURDENS FOR STATE BUDGETS THROUGH INADEQUATE CASH SOCIAL SERVICE PAYMENTS AND BY ALLOWING LARGE GAPS IN WELFARE SERVICES. WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW: CANADA'S. AS IN CANADA, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST NOW TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN CONSULTING AND REIMBURSING STATE GOVERNMENTS, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES FOR THE PROVISION OF FOOD, SHELTER, CLOTHING, TRANSPORT, HEALTH CARE AND TOOLS OF TRADE.

WE HAD A SUCCESSFUL LEADERS' MEETING IN MELBOURNE LAST FRIDAY, AND ONE THING WAS MADE CLEAR: UNDER THE PRESENT LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTY GOVERNMENTS IN AUSTRALIA WE'RE JUST BUMBLING ALONG, HOPING THAT SOMEHOW SOMETHING WILL TURN UP TO KEEP US A "LUCKY COUNTRY". AND IN THE MEANTIME, ALL THE REAL PROBLEMS OF GOVERNMENT - HOW WE'RE TO MAKE OUR FEDERAL SYSTEM WORK IN A MODERN WORLD - ARE BEING SHELVED. IT IS NOT THE LABOR PARTY'S INTENTION TO SHELVE THEM. IT IS SEEKING THE SOLUTIONS NOW, AND ONE SOLUTION IS A FAR FAR GREATER DEGREE OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL CO-OPERATION, EXTENDING FROM YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL ACROSS TO THE STATE PARLIAMENT AND ACROSS TO CANBERRA.

GOOD NIGHT.