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Title:

Speech at the laying of the Foundation Stone of the new Trades Hall

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SPEECH AT THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE NEW TRADES HALL
BY DON DUNSTAN, PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

8/10/71.

SENATOR BISHOP,

PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES,

BROTHERS AND FRIENDS:

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE THIS AFTERNOON AT THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE OF OUR NEW TRADES HALL.

SIR CHARLES CAMERON KINGSTON WAS THE PREMIER WHEN THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE OLD TRADES HALL WAS LAID IN 1895, AND ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT A LABOR PREMIER HE WAS THE FIRST PREMIER OF THE STATE TO GIVE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL A RUN FOR ITS MONEY. SINCE I BELIEVE WE'LL BE DOING THE SAME THING IN 1973 I THINK IT'S A GOOD OMEN THAT I AM ABLE TO BE HERE AT A SIMILAR CEREMONY.

PAGE 2.

WE ARE IN A PRETTY PECULIAR POSITION IN AUSTRALIA TODAY, AND IN MANY RESPECTS IT'S NOT UNLIKE THE TIME STANLEY BRUCE WAS PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA, IN THE LATE 'TWENTIES. THAT WAS A PERIOD WHEN THE NATIONALIST PARTY SAID THAT A ONE POUND PENSION WOULD MAKE PROSTITUTES OUT OF WIDOWS, BECAUSE HAVING GOT IT, THEY'D BE RELUCTANT TO MARRY AGAIN. IT WAS A TIME WHEN THE FIRST WORKERS COMPENSATION ACT WAS CALLED BY THE NATIONALISTS, AND BY THE INDUSTRIALISTS WHO SUPPORTED THEM, "A RUSSIAN PLOT TO CORRUPT THE FREEDOM OF AUSTRALIAN CAPITALISM". IT WAS A TIME WHEN UNION LEADERS WERE IN CONSTANT FEAR OF ARBITRARY DEPORTATION BY BRUCE'S GOVERNMENT, AND THE LEGAL BATTLES THAT ENSUED, FOUGHT TO A LARGE MEASURE BY BERT EVATT, CREATED LEGAL HISTORY AND PRECEDENT.

PAGE 3.

WE ARE, IN SOME SENSES, IN A SIMILAR POSITION TODAY, WITH THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT IN CANBERRA CONSTANTLY FLYING KITES OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INDUSTRIAL LAW AND ORDER ELECTION CAMPAIGN. BUT AT THE HEART OF THE MATTER, IN RELATION TO INDUSTRIAL MATTERS, THEY'RE CLUTCHING AT STRAWS. THE FACT IS THAT AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF THE MOST ABYSMAL LEADERSHIP THIS COUNTRY HAS EVER KNOWN - TWENTY YEARS OF FINANCIAL INEPTITUDE, SOCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY, AND INTERNATIONAL IDIOCY - THEY ARE FINDING THAT THE PATCHWORK SYSTEM THEY'RE RUNNING IS BREAKING DOWN. AND NOT ONLY IS IT BREAKING DOWN AT THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL - IT IS BREAKING DOWN AT THE POLITICAL. AS I'VE SAID BEFORE, THERE IS NOW SO MUCH BACK STABBING IN LIBERAL CANBERRA, THAT YOU CAN REALLY SAY THE GOVERNMENT IS SPINELESS. IT'S BEEN FILLETED.

PAGE 4.

THERE IS INDUSTRIAL UNREST IN AUSTRALIA NOW - NO ONE CAN DENY IT. BUT IT MUST BE RECOGNISED FOR WHAT IT REALLY IS - AND THAT IS THE CLEAR RESULT OF POSSIBLY THE MOST SHORT SIGHTED FEDERAL BUDGET EVER TO BE PUT BEFORE THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA. AND THERE IS ONLY ONE REMEDY FOR THIS - THE ELECTION OF A FEDERAL LABOR GOVERNMENT NEXT YEAR THAT IS CAPABLE OF RUNNING A COUNTRY WITH AN EYE TO THE FUTURE, IN SOCIAL, INTERNATIONAL AND ECONOMIC TERMS.

NOW THERE IS A MYTH IN AUSTRALIA, PUT ABOUT BY THE TROGLODYTE SECTION OF THE EMPLOYERS THAT A LABOR GOVERNMENT MEANS INDUSTRIAL UNREST. THE MORE EXPERIENCED, INTELLIGENT AND CLEAR SIGHTED EMPLOYERS DO NOT ARGUE THIS AT ALL. NEVERTHELESS, THE CAPACITY OF THE OLD GUARD TO TRY AND WHITE ANT A LABOR ADMINISTRATION IS EVER PRESENT.

WE'VE EVEN HAD TWO WELL DOCUMENTED EXAMPLES OF IT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. FROM DJAKARTA I'VE HAD REPORTS OF HOW ONE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS GENTLEMAN OF CLEAR POLITICAL BIAS HAS 'TIPPED BUCKETS' ON OUR PLANS TO MANUFACTURE COMPONENTS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA FOR INDONESIAN ENTERPRISES. AND THE CRAZY THING ABOUT THIS SITUATION WAS THAT UNKNOWN TO HIM HE WAS IN FACT ARGUING AGAINST BUSINESS FOR ONE OF THE FIRMS OF WHICH HE IS A DIRECTOR. ANOTHER EXAMPLE OCCURRED A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO WHEN A STORY WAS PUT ABOUT BY A VERY HIGHLY PLACED INDUSTRIAL OFFICER TO THE EFFECT THAT BECAUSE OF INDUSTRIAL TROUBLE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA A NEW HEAVY INDUSTRY PLANT WOULD NOT BE COMING HERE. HE SAID THIS ON THE VERY DAY WE WERE SIGNING THE INDENTURES WITH THE COMPANY. FURTHER, LAST TUESDAY THE TENDERS FOR THE BUILDING WERE AWARDED, AND NEXT WEDNESDAY THE FIRST SITE MEETING TAKES PLACE.

NOW THESE ARE VERY MINOR AND UNIMPORTANT DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY TWO PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY HURT THEMSELVES MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE. BUT, NEVERTHELESS THERE IS A MYTH PUT ABOUT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA CONCERNING OUR INDUSTRIAL SITUATION AND HOW IT IS SOMEHOW WORSE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE. BUT WHAT ARE THE FACTS? WELL, THEY'RE THESE: SOUTH AUSTRALIA, BECAUSE OF WHAT ARE BY AND LARGE SUCCESSFUL LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS, HAS THE BEST INDUSTRIAL RECORD IN AUSTRALIA. AND THESE ARE THE LATEST FIGURES:

WE HAVE 9.1% OF THE AUSTRALIAN WORKFORCE BUT ONLY 2.8% OF WORKING DAYS LOST.

AND COMPARE THAT WITH ANY OTHER STATE -

NEW SOUTH WALES' WORKFORCE IS 37.8% - WITH 64.7% WORKING DAYS LOST.

VICTORIA'S WORKFORCE IS 28.2% - WITH 18.4% WORKING DAYS LOST.

QUEENSLAND'S WORKFORCE IS 12.5% - WITH 7.00% WORKING DAYS LOST.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S WORKFORCE IS 8.6% - WITH 4.3% WORKING DAYS LOST.

WHILE TASMANIA'S WORKFORCE IS 2.9% - WITH 1.2% WORKING DAYS LOST.

IN FACT, THESE FIGURES SHOW THAT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA WE HAVE A BETTER INDUSTRIAL RECORD THAN ANY OTHER STATE. AND THIS IS CLEARLY THE RESULT OF EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATION, RESPONSIBILITY ON BEHALF OF MANAGERMENTS, AND GOOD ORGANISATION WITHIN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.

IT'S A FAR CRY FROM THE DAYS OF BRUCE, WHEN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT WAS SEEN AS A BLACK OR RED SCOURGE ON THE FAIR FACE OF AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL. NOW, ANY RESPONSIBLE INDUSTRIALIST KNOWS THAT THE DESIRES OF HIS WORKFORCE MUST BE HEEDDED ALONG WITH THOSE OF HIS SHAREHOLDERS. I HOPE THIS WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE CASE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AND I BELIEVE THAT THE WORK TO BE DONE IN THIS BUILDING WILL ASSIST IN THIS PROCESS.