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Title:

Speech at Australian Chamber of Commerce dinner, Adelaide

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1978

84

SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN, AT AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE DINNER, ADELAIDE.

2/5/73.

MR. BLYTON, MY LORD MAYOR, MR. BEVAN, MR. BASHFORD, MR. RUNDLE.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR INVITING ME HERE THIS EVENING AND FOR
ASKING ME TO PROPOSE THIS TOAST.

I'M DELIGHTED TO DO SO BECAUSE, AS PREMIER AND DEVELOPMENT MINISTER
I'M VERY WELL AWARE OF THE GREAT VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND ITS MEMBERS.

I ALWAYS GET RATHER IRRITATED BY PEOPLE, AND THERE ARE QUITE A
FEW OF THEM ABOUT, WHO THINK THAT BODIES SUCH AS THIS CHAMBER AND
THE GOVERNMENT ARE NOT ONLY SEPARATE BUT NECESSARILY HOSTILE.
IT'S A RIDICULOUS NOTION AND A HARMFUL ONE.

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THE DAYS WHEN CAPITAL WAS CAPITAL, LABOUR WAS LABOUR, GOVERNMENT
WAS GOVERNMENT AND NEVER THE THREE SHOULD MEET ARE LONG GONE.

EACH IS INCREASINGLY AND INEXTRICABLY INTER-DEPENDENT.

IF OUR SOCIETY IS TO FUNCTION PROPERLY, INDEED, IF IT IS TO WORK
AT ALL, THERE MUST BE CLOSE, CONTINUING LIAISON BETWEEN GOVERNMENT
AND ORGANISATIONS LIKE THE CHAMBER.

OBVIOUSLY, WE CAN'T ALWAYS AGREE. YOU, FROM TIME TO TIME, WILL
HAVE REPRESENTATIONS TO MAKE ON BEHALF OF YOUR MEMBERS THAT MAY
NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO A GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF WHAT IT THINKS IS
THE BROADER INTEREST: OR TO PUT IT A BIT MORE BLUNTLY, WE HAVE
OUR BLUES. BUT TO ASSUME FROM THAT THAT WE'RE ALWAYS OPPOSED IS
FOLLY.

I HEAD A LABOUR GOVERNMENT, BUT I HAVEN'T HESITATED TO GET ADVICE
AND SUPPORT FROM LEADERS OF COMMERCE.

IF WE HAVE A VIABLE PROJECT THAT WILL BE OF BENEFIT TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA AS A WHOLE I'M QUITE HAPPY TO SEE IT GO AHEAD, PROPERLY CONTROLLED, WITH JOINT PUBLIC - PRIVATE PARTICIPATION WHERE THAT'S THE WAY TO GET IT OFF THE GROUND.

AND I FOR^ESEE THIS BECOMING INCREASINGLY THE PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE FUTURE. THERE'S A VERY BIG JOB TO BE DONE IN AUSTRALIA IF THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE PEOPLE ARE TO BE MET. AND CO-OPERATION IS THE BEST WAY TO GET IT DONE.

LET ME GIVE ONE EXAMPLE. THERE IS INCREASING AWARENESS THAT A SYSTEM OF PRICE CONTROL IS NOT ONLY DESIRABLE THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA BUT ESSENTIAL IF WE ARE TO CONTROL INFLATION.

IT'S NECESSARY FOR THE GENERAL GOOD. BUT ITS INTRODUCTION WILL BRING BENEFITS IN PLANNING AND FORECASTING FUTURE DEVELOPMENT TO COMMERCE GENERALLY, AS WELL AS RELIEF TO THE WAGE-EARNER.

I THINK THIS IS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD AND APPRECIATED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. IT IS NOT AS WIDELY ACCEPTED INTERSTATE.

WHEN THE 1948 REFERENDUM SEEKING TO GIVE POWER OVER PRICE CONTROL TO THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT FAILED, CONTROL WAS CONTINUED BY THE STATES. OVER THE YEARS NUMBERS OF THEM DROPPED IT, AND ONLY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA WAS IT MAINTAINED TO ANY MARKED EXTENT, THOUGH THERE WAS LIMITED CONTROL IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN VERY GOOD TO US AND A POWERFUL WEAPON IN KEEPING OUR GENERAL COSTS LOWER THAN THOSE OF OTHER STATES. THIS ENABLED US TO GET FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT.

IT HAS MADE US MORE COMPETITIVE IN THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STAKES. IT SAVES SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS MORE THAN \$8 MILLION A YEAR WITH SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS ON A NUMBER OF OTHER ITEMS SUBJECT TO CONTROL OR JUSTIFICATION ON WHICH SALES STATISTICS ARE NOT DIRECTLY AVAILABLE.

THE SYSTEM WORKS BECAUSE THE PRICES COMMISSIONER IS ACCEPTED BY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AS BEING COMPLETELY FAIR AND BECAUSE VARIATIONS ARE MADE ON THE BASIS OF A THOROUGH EXPERT INVESTIGATION.

BUT, USEFUL AS THIS SYSTEM HAS BEEN TO US, IT REPRESENTS ONLY A FRACTION OF THE SAVINGS THAT COULD BE MADE ON A NATIONAL BASIS.

WE ARE LIMITED IN WHAT WE CAN DO BECAUSE THE BULK OF MANUFACTURED GOODS SOLD LOCALLY COME TO US FROM OTHER STATES. SECTION 92 OF THE CONSTITUTION ENFORCING FREEDOM OF INTERSTATE TRADE AND COMMERCE MEANS THAT PRICE CONTROL AT PRESENT CANNOT EXTEND TO WHOLESALE PRICES OF INTERSTATE GOODS BUT ONLY TO RETAIL MARGINS.

JOINT COMMONWEALTH - STATE ACTION IN ONE OF THE VARIOUS POSSIBLE FORMS IS REQUIRED.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS PLEDGED TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRICES JUSTIFICATION SYSTEM. VICTORIA AND NEW SOUTH WALES - WHO HAVE PREVIOUSLY OPPOSED IT - ARE NOW SHOWING INTEREST.

THERE IS, AT LAST, A PREMIERS' CONFERENCE ARRANGED TO DISCUSS IT.

THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS READY, WILLING AND ANXIOUS TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN GETTING ACTION TO REDUCE PRICES. THAT WILL BE MY ATTITUDE AT THE MEETING WITH MR. WHITLAM. WE HAVE, THROUGH THE ARBITRATION SYSTEM, MACHINERY TO REGULATE WAGES. BUT WE WILL ONLY GET EFFECTIVE ACTION TO CONTROL THE SORT OF COST-PUSH INFLATION THAT HAS BEDEVILLED THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY IN RECENT YEARS (AS DISTINCT FROM THE DEMAND INFLATION OF THE EARLY 1950'S) IF WE ARE ABLE TO REGULATE PRICES AS WELL.

IT IS NOT THAT ACTION ON PRICES IS DESIRABLE, IT IS NECESSARY.

THE POINT I WOULD MAKE TO THIS AUDIENCE IS THAT ITS SUCCESS WILL OBVIOUSLY DEPEND TO A LARGE DEGREE ON CO-OPERATION FROM LEADERS OF COMMERCE THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA. COMMERCE HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM A PRICES POLICY. IT HAS A LOT TO GAIN.

IT'S ANOTHER CASE WHERE THERE IS A JOB TO BE DONE AND WHERE CONSULTATION AND CO-OPERATION IS REQUIRED TO DO IT. THE INFLUENCE OF THE AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HERE, AS IN SO MANY OTHER THINGS, CAN BE AN IMPORTANT INGREDIENT IN THAT SUCCESS.

THE CHAMBER HAS A PROVEN RECORD OF RESPONSIBILITY AND INTEGRITY. ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE COMMUNITY IS SHOWN BY THE NUMBER OF DISTINGUISHED GUESTS HERE TONIGHT. I AM SURE IT WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY AND I HAVE MUCH PLEASURE IN NOW ASKING YOU TO DRINK TO "THE AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE."