



Archived at the Flinders Academic Commons:
<http://hdl.handle.net/2328/27231>

This is a scan of a document number DUN/Speeches/2009
in the Dunstan Collection, Special Collections, Flinders University Library.
<http://www.flinders.edu.au/library/info/collections/special/dunstan/>

Title:

Speech at the opening of job enrichment seminar, Adelaide

Please acknowledge the source as:
Dunstan Collection, Flinders University Library.
Identifier: DUN/Speeches/2009

© Copyright Estate Donald Allan Dunstan

SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR DUNSTAN, AT THE OPENING OF
JOB ENRICHMENT SEMINAR. ADELAIDE. 25.9.73

MR BOWES, MR MCKEE AND MY OTHER PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES,
DR EMERY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR ASKING ME TO SPEAK TO THIS GATHERING
TODAY.

I WAS DELIGHTED, INDEED ANXIOUS, TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO
SO SINCE I BELIEVE THE TOPIC YOU ARE DISCUSSING - WORKER
PARTICIPATION GENERALLY AND JOB ENRICHMENT IN PARTICULAR - IS
ONE OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES FACING GOVERNMENTS, TRADE UNIONS
AND EMPLOYERS THIS DECADE AND PERHAPS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS
CENTURY.

PAGE 2.

IT IS ALSO ONE OF THE MOST PROMISING SEMINARS TO BE CONVENED
IN THIS CITY. THE AUDIENCE IS INFLUENTIAL, INFORMED AND
INTERESTED. THE LEADER, DR EMERY, IS AN ACKNOWLEDGED WORLD
AUTHORITY IN HIS FIELD: AN EMINENT AUSTRALIAN WHOSE ADVICE IS
SOUGHT - AND FOLLOWED - INTERNATIONALLY. THE RESULTS THAT
FLOW FROM IT COULD HAVE A QUITE PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE WORKING
LIVES OF MANY SOUTH AUSTRALIANS FOR YEARS AHEAD.

IF, AS I AM CONVINCED, WORKER PARTICIPATION IS A CONCERN OF
ALL GOVERNMENT, IT IS ESPECIALLY A CONCERN OF LABOR GOVERNMENTS.
THIS IS WHY I TAKE SPECIAL PRIDE IN WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED
HERE SO FAR.

WE HAVE MADE A START IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. IT'S ONLY A BEGINNING
BUT EVEN SO WE ARE ALREADY IN ADVANCE OF THE REST OF
AUSTRALIA.

GIVEN THE SAME MEASURE OF EXPERTISE AND ENTHUSIASM WHICH PRODUCED THE REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES ON WORKER PARTICIPATION PUBLISHED EARLIER THIS YEAR AND WHICH LED DIRECTLY TO TODAY'S MEETING WE CAN, IN FAIRLY SHORT ORDER, BE AN INTERNATIONAL PACESETTER.

THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA IS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO A POLICY OF WORKER PARTICIPATION, INCLUDING THE BROADEST POSSIBLE DEGREE OF JOB ENRICHMENT. THIS IS OUR POLICY, NOT BECAUSE WE THINK IT DESIRABLE BUT BECAUSE WE THINK IT ESSENTIAL.

IN SAYING THIS, I DO NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE GOING NOW TO LEGISLATE ON JOB ENRICHMENT SCHEMES. BUT WE WILL GIVE EVERY ASSISTANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT THAT WE CAN TO MANAGERMENTS WHO ARE PREPARED TO LISTEN AND TO EXPERIMENT.

WE WILL ALSO PRESS AHEAD WITH ALL POSSIBLE SPEED IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR.

AND IT'S A MATTER OF GREAT JOB SATISFACTION FOR ME PERSONALLY TO SEE HOW MANY EMPLOYERS ARE HERE TODAY WHO'VE ALREADY SHOWN THEIR WILLINGNESS TO INITIATE SUCH PROJECTS AND KEENNESS TO TRY OTHERS, AND TO DO SO WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE TRADE UNIONS DIRECTLY AFFECTED.

BUT I'M AFRAID THERE IS A LARGE MEASURE OF PERSONAL JOB DISSATISFACTION INVOLVED AS WELL.

AS PREMIER I GET TO SEE THE INSIDE OF QUITE A LOT OF FACTORIES. QUITE FRANKLY I AM APPALLED TO SEE JUST HOW MINDLESSLY BORING ARE SO MANY OF THE SO-CALLED JOBS PEOPLE ARE REQUIRED TO DO FOR A LIVING. FAR TOO MUCH OF THE INDUSTRIAL PROCESS IS MIND-ROTTING DRUDGERY, ROTE WORK WITHOUT APPARENT REASON OR INTEREST.

I WON'T SPECIFY FIRMS OR EVEN INDUSTRIES. TO DO SO WOULD BE GROSSLY UNFAIR SINCE IT IS A CRITICISM WHICH IS, REGRETTABLY, TOO GENERAL IN ITS APPLICATION. I WOULD JUST MAKE THIS BROAD POINT. IT SEEMS TO ME TO BE WICKED THAT ONE OF THE RESULTS OF THE MACHINE AGE SHOULD BE THAT WORKERS THEMSELVES ARE REQUIRED TO BECOME MACHINES. IT IS A SHOCKING WASTE OF HUMAN TALENT. AS A SOCIETY WE CAN'T AFFORD IT. WE ARE ALL THE LOSER: THE WORKER WHO FEELS LIKE A BIT PLAYER IN CHAPLIN'S "MODERN TIMES", ALIENATED AND INEFFECTUAL, THE MANAGEMENT SEEKING TO WORK WITH A RESENTFUL, FRUSTRATED STAFF AND ONE WHICH CAN BE PRONE TO INDUSTRIAL SABOTAGE AND SOCIETY AS A WHOLE, DEPRIVED OF ITS FULL PRODUCTIVE POWER.

I'M WELL AWARE, OF COURSE, THAT IN SAYING THIS TO THIS AUDIENCE I'M PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED. YOU ARE WELL AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS AND THE POTENTIALS, OTHERWISE YOU WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO DEVOTE THE TIME TO COME HERE TODAY. BUT THERE IS ONE POINT WHICH I THINK DOES NEED EMPHASIS. A JOB ENRICHMENT PROGRAM IS NOT, AND MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO BECOME, A KIND OF INDUSTRIAL PATERNALISM. MY GOVERNMENT IS NOT INTENT ON FOSTERING JOB ENRICHMENT OR WORKER PARTICIPATION SO THAT EMPLOYEES THEREBY BECOME MORE MALLEABLE, LESS MILITANT IN THE MATTER OF PAY RISES. WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT IN FURTHERING HUMAN DIGNITY, INDIVIDUAL REALISATION AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING - NOT INDUSTRIAL ACQUIESCENCE. JOB ENRICHMENT IS NOT A SOP TO THE PEASANTRY; IT IS, PERHAPS, THE NEXT NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.

IT WAS, MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THIS CONCERN WITH INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING AND DIGNITY WHICH PROMPTED OUR INITIAL CONCERN WITH WORKER PARTICIPATION, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMITTEES OF ENQUIRY.

NOW WE ARE MOVING INTO THE SECOND STAGE.

AS MOST OF YOU WILL KNOW, CABINET HAS APPROVED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKER PARTICIPATION UNIT WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND INDUSTRY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AND ADVICE TO ANY EMPLOYER OR TRADE UNION SEEKING IT.

THE UNIT WILL CONSIST OF AN EXECUTIVE OFFICER, TWO PROJECT OFFICERS AND A RESEARCH OFFICER. THE RESEARCH OFFICER HAS ALREADY BEEN APPOINTED (HE'S WITH US TODAY, IN FACT) AND THE OTHER APPOINTMENTS SHOULD BE MADE SHORTLY.

WE PLAN TO HAVE THE UNIT FULLY OPERATIONAL BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

ON THE BROADER QUESTION OF WORKER PARTICIPATION, WE ARE ALSO SEEKING TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS.

THE FIRST JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WHOSE JOB IT WILL BE TO GET THE MAXIMUM DEGREE OF WORKER-MANAGEMENT CONSULTATION AND COLLECTIVE DECISION MAKING IS BEING SET UP IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND INDUSTRY. THE EMPLOYEES IN THE DEPARTMENT ARE NOW ELECTING THEIR REPRESENTATIVES TO IT. SIMILAR MEASURES ARE ALSO BEING TAKEN IN SEMI-GOVERNMENT BODIES, THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MEAT CORPORATION AND THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE COMPANY.

AGAIN SMALL BEGINNINGS, BUT THEY ARE LITTLE ACORNS WITH A VERY GOOD CHANCE OF PRODUCING STURDY OAKS. I APPRECIATE THAT THESE BROADER QUESTIONS ARE BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE SCOPE OF THIS

BUT THEY ARE MATTERS TO WHICH MANAGEMENT MUST ALSO ADDRESS ITSELF IF WORKER PARTICIPATION IN THE FULLER SENSE IS TO BE ACHIEVED. IT'S ONE OF THE MORE CURIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR SOCIETY THAT WE ARE PRESENTLY CONTEMPLATING THE IMPACT OF A POST-INDUSTRIAL ERA/^{AT}A TIME WHEN WE HAVE YET TO SOLVE SOME OF THE BASIC DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE IN THE INDUSTRIAL AGE. WE HAVE THE INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY (CONDITIONING ALMOST) TO CONTEMPLATE THE MOST FAR-REACHING FUTURE CHANGES WITH NEAR EQUANIMITY BECAUSE WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO LIVING IN A WORLD OF FLUX IN WHICH PROBLEMS HITHERTO HAVE GENERALLY BEEN SOLVED. THERE IS A VERY GREAT DANGER IN THIS. BECAUSE PAST DIFFICULTIES HAVE BEEN OVERCOME, WE ASSUME PROBLEMS ARE, IPSO FACTO, SOLUBLE.

FROM THIS WE MAKE THE BLIND LEAP OF ASSUMPTION THAT PRESENT PROBLEMS HAVING ALREADY BEEN SOLVED WE MAY THEREFORE PROCEED TO THE CONTEMPLATION OF FUTURE PROBLEMS. THE MATTER OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S FRUSTRATION IN THE WORKPLACE IS A REAL, A PRESENT AND A PRESSING PROBLEM. IT IS ALSO ONE THAT DEMANDS PRACTICAL SOLUTION. FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN THE MOST SEVERE SOCIAL DISLOCATION. SUCCESS CAN PRODUCE A SOCIETY IN WHICH WORK TRULY EQUALS DIGNITY AND PERSONAL FULFILLMENT. THIS SEMINAR, IN A SMALL BUT APPRECIABLE FASHION, CAN MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO SOLVING THESE PROBLEMS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA IN 1973. I HOPE IT DOES. I KNOW IT CAN.

THANK YOU.