ELECTORAL STATEMENT BY THE HON. MALCOLM FRASER
LIBERAL PARTY SPOKESMAN ON LABOUR & IMMIGRATION
SUNDAY, 24 MARCH, 1974.

In 1972 the Australian Labor Party campaigned for open government. They claimed that the Liberal and Country Party Government did not make full and adequate information available to the Australian public and to the Parliament. Last week I moved an Urgency Motion which was supported by Mr. Andrew Peacock. It was really a plea for information from the Minister for Immigration concerning the Government's immigration programme.

The Minister has claimed a large number of new initiatives.

There are reports of trade qualification teams visiting a number of Asian countries and there are the Prime Minister's flamboyant statements in the Philippines.

All this has led to a great deal of confusion and concern in the minds of the Australian public, but particularly in the minds of some elements of the trade union movement. We were asking for facts. We were not expressing opinions or judgements, but we were wanting to know the direction of Government policy.

If we can get information about that it might then be possible to make judgements about the policy itself.

When Mr. Grassby spoke after me in the debate he answered none of the questions I asked. I then placed about 25 questions on the Notice Paper. These are some of the questions:

Does last week's announcement mean that the Government is now embarking on a major campaign to recruit skilled persons from Asia, the Pacific and South American countries?

Does the Government's actions last week mean that the Government intends a major change in the composition of the Australian people or in the composition of the skilled tradesmen in Australia?
Have the consequences of such a policy been thought through?

Have there been discussions with South East Asian countries about pending Australian efforts to attract skilled tradesmen from them?

Does the Government believe that Australia has a greater need for such skilled tradesmen than their own countries?

How does the Government intend to balance the potential wishes of skilled Asian tradesmen against the need of their own countries?

I also asked questions about the 'Easy Visa' system because the Minister himself has said that a very substantial number of people from one country have abused the system. However, we have no knowledge about the general situation across the 50 or 60 countries to which the system applies. A series of questions in this regard remain unanswered.

I also asked a series of questions which were designed to get at the changes that the Minister has made in relation to migration from the U.K. and from Europe.

This is an important matter. It is of consequence to all Australians, old and new, and we have a right to an answer. Mr. Peacock and Mr. King both supported me, but we were all left with no information. It will be interesting to see what Mr. Grassby does with the Questions on Notice.

A little earlier in the Parliament there was an Urgency Debate on rural policy and the Prime Minister himself must have regretted his phrase when he said: "Farmers have never had it so good". That would sound pretty hollow to all those who were suffering from the extreme floods in Queensland and New South Wales, and I also believe it would sound very hollow to those farmers who for 10 years were suffering because of low world prices and a very severe drought. As a result of these two things, farm debt levels had risen to record heights.

That is one of the reasons why in our new policy we are determined to establish a rural bank and a farm income reserve fund to help farmers even out fluctuations in their income.
As I have mentioned before, details of our new rural policy are available and I would be happy to send copies to any individuals who want it. I believe it is a comprehensive and a useful document. Amongst other things there is a commitment to re-establish incentives for fodder, soil and water conservation.

The fact that Australia is a lucky country was brought sharply to notice during the Parliamentary Luncheon given in honour of President Nyerere of Tanzania.

He made a speech and with good humour emphasised that he was speaking only of Tanzania. He said he was not a missionary and was not trying to suggest that various matters he was discussing were in any way relevant or related to Australia, but he pointed out that Tanzania had an average income of $70 Australian per head - this in a country that is short of raw materials and has only the skill and capacity of their own people. Their human resources are their greatest resources. That is principally true of any country, but many others, including Australia, have very significant natural resources in addition that make the task of people fundamentally easier than is the case of Tanzania.

He gave as another example that 20 percent of the Gross National Product is spent on education, but only 50 percent of the children of Tanzania attend any primary school.

I think if we had a better understanding of the real poverty and the real difficulties of many people around the world we might be less selfish at times and less inward looking. We might have less preoccupation with domestic affairs where our problems might appear to be infinitesimal, compared with the problems that our recent guest has to contend with.
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