In the economic statement that was released a few days ago by the Opposition there was a proposal for a revised statutory National Labour Advisory Council. We intend to make this council a statutory body so that future Ministers for Labour will not be able to be ignorant about it.

In our time it was the principal advisory body composed of employers and the A.C.T.U., and it gave advice to the Minister for Labour on a wide-range of industrial questions.

The story of industrial relations is very much the story of human relationships. It is important to keep avenues of communication open, not just when there is a crisis but on a regular basis so that people can get to know and understand each other. When a crisis does arise there is a much greater opportunity of resolving it to everyone's advantage, especially to the advantage of the general public.

Since the present Minister for Labour, Clyde Cameron, has been in power, the N.L.A.C. has not met once. I have had many people from the trade union movement and from employer organisations saying to me, "if you get back, will the N.L.A.C. be revived?"

We are certainly going to revive it, make it a statutory body and we will strengthen it. Its membership will basically be the same as the membership of the earlier body. But we would hope that the council itself would want to establish industrial councils, each chaired by a member of the N.L.A.C., so that more people could be drawn into the discussions concerned with particular industries - the metal trades, the distributive trades, export industries.

We would also hope that it will establish sub-committees for certain particular matters - communication, involvement, training, manpower planning, the problems induced by technological change, discrimination and matters of this kind.

If there was a wide-ranging network of discussions available and if the advice is all going to the Minister for Labour, we would have a greater chance of establishing a saner industrial climate. In industrial relations we need to place more emphasis on those things that ought to occur before a strike or dispute arises. So often people centre their criticism and comments, their efforts for reform, on what happens after a dispute arises. Our real objective ought to be to reduce the number of disputes as much as possible.

We can only do that if we are concerned with labour relations in the broadest context, on a continuous basis before a dispute arises. Both employees and employers can do a great deal to improve the situation.
In some industries there are good relationships. In others I have visited the relationships seem to be bad and there is relatively little communication. If all Australian industries followed the practices of the best Australian industries, our record of disputes would be much less than it has been in recent times.

I feel very strongly about these matters and hope that on a return to Government we will be able to do a great deal to reduce industrial disputation as a result of our policies.

The Parliament resumed last week after the summer recess. At the beginning of the summer there was a great deal of argument about the Prime Minister's overseas visit, one of the longest visits overseas to a great number of countries ever conducted by a Prime Minister.

There are many people who believe that he ought not to have been away for so long and some who think he ought not to be away at all because of the grave domestic problems in Australia - and those problems are serious.

Unemployment

There are now over 312,000 people unemployed in Australia. 312,000 people unable to gain jobs. That is the highest figure since the Great Depression. Bob Hawke himself has said that if world events start to come in on top of the mistakes that have been made in Australia unemployment could go to half a million and that indeed is tragic.

Very often those of us who remain in work, those of us who are secure, look upon the 300,000 as a statistic and do not realise the loss of morale and dignity that is involved when a person wants to work but can't get a job. If a father can't get work, how does he explain that to his children. The personal and family tragedy is great.

I know very well that there are some people who abuse assistance, who seem to prefer to take a chance rather than take a job. But I believe they are the minority. The overwhelming majority of the 300,000 would really want to get a job if a job was available.

The present government ought to be condemned. There are 300,000 reasons for this condemnation. We had a speech from the Prime Minister in Adelaide a short while ago in which he said in firm and categoric terms that he can't blame overseas events, we have to blame high and excessive wage increases in Australia. The Prime Minister could have done more over a much longer period to see that wage increases were not excessive if he had wanted to.

Terrigal Conference

Towards the end of the summer we had the Terrigal conference of the Labor Party. This has been nick-named the Terrigal Two-step because so many of
The policies of the government were torn up and reversed during that particular week. There is a question to be asked by everyone in Australia as a result of that conference. Does this really represent a change of heart? Does the government now really believe that private enterprise, which employs 75% of the Australian workforce has a lasting and permanent place in the Australian economy? Or does the government look at this merely as a tactical manoeuvre, recognising that if they did not bow in the direction of private enterprise, then the government's days are surely numbered?

I strongly believe that as far as the government is concerned the bow in the direction of private enterprise is merely a tactical move. Jim Cairns the Treasurer, realises that if he is to achieve his long term ambition for the complete socialisation of Australia he must co-operate with private enterprise in the short term to see that private enterprise (whether it be a one-man company or business or a large corporation) can survive a bit longer. He knows there is no other way of restoring employment. Evidence for this is seen by the fact that many of the government's policy changes are temporary. The Capital Gains tax has been deferred for a year. The assistance to the motor industries is to last three months. The increased depreciation allowance ends in June.

Next we had Senator Murphy's appointment to the High Court. This is an extraordinary move. It is not the first time somebody from the Senate has been appointed to the High Court, but it was unexpected and quite unusual in view of the electoral situation which results.

Next year there has to be a Senate election and in that Senate election there are 16 Opposition Senators retiring and 14 Labour Senators retiring. It is very difficult because of the weight of electoral numbers for us to gain a majority of Senators from N.S.W. There are normally 5 Senators in election. It is probable that Labor would have won 3 and we would have won 2. Because of Senator Murphy's elevation to the High Court, it now seems there will be 6 Senators elected whenever the next Senate election is held in N.S.W. and that Labor will win 3 and we will win 3.

This will virtually destroy Mr Whitlam's chance of gaining control of the Senate. Why therefore, has he done it? He seems to have thrown away an enormous technical advantage.

One of the theories running around Canberra this last week was that the Prime Minister is planning for a double dissolution before the end of June. The whole thing seems to be a mystery. I don't believe that the Prime Minister would have given away that tactical advantage without some corresponding benefit to the longer term life of his government. Few can see that benefit.
Author/s:
Fraser, Malcolm

Title:
National Labour Advisory Council, unemployment, Terrigal Conference, Senator Murphy

Date:
16 February 1975

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/40638

File Description:
National Labour Advisory Council, unemployment, Terrigal Conference, Senator Murphy

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