

213 (was 211 & not printed)
ON THE DRY SIDE ~~211~~ A Speech John Howard Should Make. John Hyde.

Worthy leadership is the blood sweat and tears variety. But a leader forced to promise blood sweat and tears must promise some milk and honey eventually. Even Moses survived leadership challenges in the Wilderness by smiting the rebels hard and invoking the Promised Land. So should John Howard. He is entitled to displays of common purpose from his shadow ministers and he has a goal he should talk about. I have appointed myself his speech writer for today.

"I want a better Australia as you do. We have to do more than wish for it, but it is within our reach. Those who know the political price of everything tell me of worse to come. They might be right; but they are wrong if they say Australians will not accept self-discipline until they have experienced 'real pain'.

"Our natures are not deficient but a maze of laws confer privileges on the strong at the expense of the weak and on the inefficient at the expense of the efficient. The first is indecent, the second stupid. Laws can and will be changed.

"Values must count in public life---good contrasted with evil, truth with falsity, honour with dishonour, love with hatred, and kindness with cruelty. Without self-deception we can climb out of the hole we have dug for ourselves but it is not truthful, honourable or kind to pretend that we can climb by making good fellows of ourselves at each other's expense.

"Truth, honour, respect and kindness are often confounded by the hypocrisy of selective moralising. To buy votes legislated favours create unequal classes. We justify our welfare system by reference to the poor but pay most to the middle class. We condemn protectionism in the EEC but practise it at home. Afraid to raise enough tax to cover expenditure, we budget for deficits leaving our children to pay. We say that all are equal before the law but allow unions a special status. We condemn South Africa, which is not the nicest country, but cozy up to Vietnam which is worse. If government gets smaller politics will become less hypocritical.

"Many of the apparent moral failures of Australian politics are a direct consequence of government that has become too big. Responding to demands for favours politicians promise what government cannot deliver. They pretend omnipotence, encouraging more demands, causing more failures. When they fail they seek more authority to mend the failures. Temptation to use power unfairly, lie about past failures and promise the world is a vicious circle. But that is changing and we will change it further. I don't promise a cabinet of moral giants but one that is not so much in the way of temptation.

"The important values are ingrained in us all.

"Want of civility disfigures our parliaments and industrial relations. We also need an Australia where one person respects another, offering him goodwill, respecting his rights, expressing disagreement with him forcefully where that is appropriate, but always with civility. This is within reach because the incivility which disgusts us so is not in our nature either. It is encouraged by inappropriate procedures which engender false them-and-us attitudes. Industrial relations policy should not contrive legal acrimony between people who have common interests.

"We want an Australia where status is given a smaller share of the rewards and achievement a bigger share. This imbalance too is caused by regulations: in this case the rules which define the privileged classes and confer subsidies and immunities. Unequal, unfair and inefficient rules will be unmade.

"We want an Australia whose people have purpose. We worry that new migrants top every second class at our children's schools; that our products can't compete in foreign markets. Building a sense of purpose is largely a matter of rewarding achievement.

"While we have serious economic problems---lack of economic competitiveness and mounting foreign debt are the most obvious---we also have strengths. Importantly, we now recognise that we have the problems. We have a high level of literacy, relative isolation from military threat, stable government and exceptional natural resources. These certainly do not guarantee prosperity, but they are enough to build on. Three traditions will be our bulwark against grievous errors.

"First is respect for life, liberty and pursuit of happiness that are the universal, inalienable, self-evident, equal, natural rights of man. We are not guaranteed these in the event of disaster: liberal Germany abandoned them in the thirties. However we value them. They are what the bicentenary should celebrate.

"Second is the conventional family. It alone has a successful record of supporting the young, the old, the ill, and the lonely. Where it fails the State has responsibility but is a poor substitute and must not harm or replace the family.

"Third are democratic practices and institutions. These stand between the public and the dangerous conceits of their leaders. As the Liberal Party makes the policy changes which are necessary to achieve the Australia all want, all will be protected from grievous error by respect for these proven institutions.

"At the start of 1987 let us realistically face our problems but let us count our blessings too. It is true that we must mend some of our ways but the means to enjoy a freer, more civil, more prosperous tomorrow are well within reach. From me,

you are entitled to the truth and workable policies which go to the heart of the problem which is government which has forgotten its own limitations.

I wish you a joyous and prosperous New Year."