

Policy Launch Speech: John Curtin, Prime Minister (ALP)

Canberra, July 26, 1943

“Men and women of Australia,

As head of the government which for 20 months has had the solemn duty and grave responsibility of maintaining intact our country, I give you an account of the government's trusteeship.

The circumstances in which the Labor Government took office in October 1941 were unprecedented. Two Prime Ministers had failed to control the Parliament and the parties comprising the then government had split into bitter factions, with place and position tussling against duty and principles in the deeds and words of senior Ministers.

The Labor Government had to devote itself with unflagging industry, and often with heart-breaking pains, to re-shaping the country's war machine in all its components because of the certainty of which it never lost sight but of which a former war-time Prime Minister (Mr Menzies) had said in a speech in London in March, 1941, could not happen - war with Japan.

In two months, with so much to do, so much to set right, the Labor Government faced war in the Pacific - the inevitability which had governed all its actions in that pitifully short period. The nation looked to Labor, and it did not look in vain. In the words of the "Age" newspaper, "it is a matter for gratitude that in virile, statesmanlike form, national leadership is being provided."

The inheritance the Labor Government accepted from its predecessors was a heavy burden. Blind to the dangers in the Pacific, the Menzies and Fadden Governments had left Australia very much unprepared. Australia's resources were spread over many far-flung battlefronts. The men of the three services fought with fine efficiency and made conspicuous contributions, but at home the then government had left the country almost undefended. Australia was a sector as menaced, and as helpless, as the Philippines.

The essentials for defence to the hands of the commanders, as the result of the previous government's policy, were so sadly inadequate that only a limited disposition of forces could be made. But the Labor Government rejected that concept. In association with the commanders, it developed a plan to prevent this great country from being doomed. It rejected the concept that the little islands to the north of Australia would be taken, that upper Queensland and the Darwin area would be overrun by the enemy. It determined and made the necessary provision that the Battle for Australia would be fought in the islands on the north, north-east and north-west of Australia and not in the environs of the peopled areas of the Commonwealth.

The strength, disposition and condition of Australia's forces when Labor took office were: several warships in overseas theatres; Naval personnel 64% of the present strength; Three divisions of the AIF in the Middle East and another in Malaya, and the call-up of citizen forces limited; Army equipment related to initial requirements

only 20% in respect of rifles; 28% of sub-machine guns; 41% of light machine guns; 15% of anti-tank rifles; 21% of anti-tank guns; 9% of anti-aircraft guns and 56% of field guns; Five RAAF squadrons outside Australia; No fighter aircraft, and air force personnel 44% of what it is today. Australia had 10 light tanks when Labor took over, today light and medium tanks are a four figure total.

The previous defence policy was based on the impregnability of Singapore and the despatch of a fleet to Australia. With the fall of Singapore, the Japanese advance flooded the islands in the South-west Pacific to the very fringe of Australia. We were in the same plight as Britain after the fall of France but with the difference that unlike Britain we had neither a fleet nor air force to oppose the enemy's advance. Despite what the fall of France presaged - that Britain would be unable to send adequate land and air forces to Singapore and a fleet to the Far East - insufficient measures were taken to strengthen the position within and around Australia.

The Labor Government took prompt and effective measures to develop Australia's maximum effort. Before the outbreak of war with Japan, the Labor Government secured the return to Australian waters of Australian warships; the Citizen Forces were called-up for full-time duty; VDC personnel were enlisted for full-time duty; and within four months its establishment was increased to 80,000. The 6th and 7th divisions and later the 9th division of the AIF returned to Australia in accordance with the recommendation of the Government's military advisers.

The 9th division remained in the Middle East for a year longer than the other divisions. That is the answer to the allegation that the Government's policy disrupted or delayed the 8th Army's campaign in Libya.

Arrangements were made for a regular flow to Australia of RAAF personnel trained under the Empire Air Training Scheme. Whatever the future may hold, credit cannot be denied to the Labor Government for the development of a war effort which has played such a large part in removing the invasion threat. We owe a deep gratitude to Britain and America for land and air forces and for material aid. Nevertheless, five-sixths of the land forces in the South-west Pacific Area have been Australian and RAAF squadrons have been only slightly less than American.

That, then, makes it clear to you the character and calibre of the war effort which the Labor Government planned.

I now tell you, as briefly as I can, because the full picture would occupy a tremendous canvas, the telling facts of how the war effort has been translated from a blueprint into a living thing in our 20 months' of office.

When Labor took office, 431,000 men were in the fighting services. Today, the figure is 820,000. The number of women was 3,600, today it is 40,000. The number of men in munitions, aircraft and like factories was 71,200. Today it is 144,000.

As a result of Labor's re-organisation of manpower and womanpower, 1,172,000 are now in the fighting forces or war production, compared with 554,000 when the Fadden Government left office.

Today there are two members of the militia to every three members of the AIF. The AIF has been increased by 158,000 men, the vast majority of whom voluntarily transferred from the militia.

When my Government took over, only 267,000 men had volunteered to fight anywhere in the world with the RAN, AIF, and RAAF. Today, the figure is 530,000.

Volunteers for overseas service are now 70 per cent of total enlistments in all services.

We have almost doubled the strength of the AIF and more than doubled the strength of the RAAF. The RAAF is equipped now with the most modern bombing and fighter aircraft - a contrast to the days when Wirraways tackled Zeros.

With the warm support of Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt, the Minister for External Affairs (Dr Evatt), recently concluded an agreement for the supply of sufficient additional aircraft to increase the RAAF's strength by 60 per cent.

Thanks to the magnificent work of the Allied Works Council, air force establishments today are 50 times greater than they were in 1939.

The Allied Works Council represents the greatest single instrumentality of its kind in Australian history. It was established by the Labor Government to provide for Australian and Allied forces the places from which to fight. Before Labor [sic] came into office, our forces had only beaches, civil airports and paddocks from which to fight.

In 16 months, the Allied Works Council has spent £82,000,000. Achievements have been almost miraculous. Oil installations have been built to treble the dangerously low storage which the preceding government left. Aerodromes, landing grounds and flight strips have been built all over the Commonwealth. All-weather roads, including two trans-continental roads, have been completed. Docks, shipping berths and harbour facilities have been installed to get troops and supplies to strategic points. Munitions plants, dehydration plants, flax mills, hospitals, camps and wireless stations have been put together in record-breaking time.

Slightly under 50,000 workers have achieved all this under the Allied Works Council at a rate of over 1,000,000 a week.

It was the knowledge that this vast strategic plan of works had been virtually completed wholly within the term of office of the Labor Government that enabled me, with knowledge of other factors, to say last month that Japan could not take this country.

Munitions manufacture represents an achievement of which this nation's employers and employees can share a deep pride. By last May, the Government had fully equipped Australia's land forces with practically all types of major munitions and had established substantial reserves. That was in addition to aid to New Zealand, to the American and Dutch forces, to commitments fulfilled in the Middle East and overseas.

When the Labor Government took over, there were six Government munitions factories and 76 annexes. Today there are 43 Government factories and 180 annexes. They employ 79,000 persons as against 37,000 when the Fadden Government was in office.

When the Labor Government took over, capital expenditure on the Australian munitions industry, excluding aircraft construction, was only £59,000,000. Today it is £141,000,000 - an increase of £82,000,000 in 20 months.

In pushing on with all these vast projects the Government kept a close control on waste. As illustrations of what this policy has saved the taxpayers, I point out that an anti-tank gun cost £2,100 to make at the time Japan came into the war. Today it costs

only £1,750. A carrier cost £2,000; today the cost is £1,500. A Vickers gun cost £125; today it is £93. An anti-aircraft gun cost £8,000; today it is £6,000.

Giving effect to the policy it visualised in the Labor 1937 policy speech and which was sneered at by our political opponents then, the Government has expanded the Australian aircraft industry to an extent which is a national achievement for all those connected with it.

When the Fadden Government ended, one operational aircraft type and three training types were in production. Today a wide range of service types are in production or are being planned and trainer output is being maintained. Employees in the industry have been trebled in number by the Labor Government and expansion goes on. Capital expenditure is nine times greater than what it was under all preceding anti-Labor governments.

The Government pays tribute to the magnificent work performed by all connected with civil aviation under extreme difficulties and in the face of many dangerous hazards. The Government is determined in the post-war period that civil aviation will be highly developed not only as a source of useful employment but as a valuable factor in its policy of decentralisation.

Since the Labor Government took office it has established and maintained well-equipped civil defence services in cooperation with the States, to whom assistance valued at £3,500,000 has been given.

The Labor Government drastically re-shaped the Australian ship-building programme so that Australia would not only make its best contribution in the construction of ships but should be the base at which Allied warships and merchantmen in the Pacific could be repaired. The latter part of the programme has been a telling factor in war strategy. The Labor Government will make ship-building a permanent unit in our post-war industrial structure.

The concentration of man-power, resources and finance on war production, while maintaining essential civilian living conditions, would have been impossible but for the work of the Department of War Organisation of Industry. This was the department which, under the Menzies and Fadden Governments, had been a department with a Minister, a typist and a bare room.

The Fadden Government went out of office with 504,000 men and women and 68 per cent of Australia's manufacturing capacity engaged in purely civilian production. Today, only 200,000 workers and only 28 per cent of manufacturing capacity is so engaged. The rest has been transferred fully to the war effort.

When the UAP and the CP paint a grim picture of hardship and inconvenience as they survey the domestic scene, remember that one of the reasons this country stands today still free of the enemy is that the Government turned our industries over to potent war factors. Had the Menzies and Fadden Governments tackled in 1939, 1940 and 1941 the job which the Labor Government fearlessly carried through in 1942 and 1943 Australia's task would have been less burdensome and our striking power more quickly nearer realisation.

The Government has been responsible for doubling the men and women in the forces and in war production since Japan came into the war. An additional 618,000 men and 110,000 women - a total of 728,000 fighters and war workers - has been the contribution of the Department of War Organisation of Industry to the victory pool.

Just two more facts on the Labor Government's man power policy. In 24 months the Menzies and Fadden Governments secured only 24,000 skilled trainees to keep pace with the demand for operatives in war industries. In 16 months the Labor Government trained 52,000.

Woman-power was virtually neglected by the preceding governments. The Labor Government recognised the determination of Australian women to play their part and today 30 per cent of Government munitions employees are women and 13 per cent of rural employees are women.

Something over 700,000 men and women are engaged each day in war production yet the time lost in production through industrial disputes and absenteeism during the Labor Government's term of office is barely more than half a day an employee. The success of the industrial policy of the Government, by cooperation and consultation with the trades union movement, is reflected in the fact that only 8000 man-days a week have been lost compared with 21,000 man-days a week under the Menzies Government. This has been achieved although the Government's policy against inflation pegged the wages of workers and imposed other restrictions.

One of the most vexing problems which the Labor Government had to surmount was that of food supplies. Four factors have operated to reduce former supplies to the civilian population. They were that there was a surplus at the outbreak of war and the Menzies Government did not guard against losses in production; that agricultural implement manufacturing was reduced to provide for munitions requirements; that the usual sources of fertilisers were lost and that shortage of manpower was felt severely on the farms.

The entire situation in regard to food requirements changed in Australia when Japan and the United States entered the war. The Government had to meet demands of Australian soldiers that had returned from overseas; American forces based in Australia; naval units in and around Australian waters; and for special foods for Allied forces. The combination of all these factors tended to reduce food supplies and naturally led to some stringency, but there has not been any breakdown in Australia's food supplies, and production of food in Australia has been sufficient for all purposes although there have been some shortages which have caused irritation rather than distress to the general public.

Broadly the Government had to shape its food policy to fulfil the demands of our kith and kin in Britain; our own and our Allied forces in and around Australia and the civilian population on the home front. As is well-known, the food and clothing ration scale in Britain is more severe than in Australia whose population is among the best-fed in the world under war conditions. The Australian ration scale enables a contribution to be made towards the welfare of other peoples which it is proper should be made.

The success which has been achieved would not have been possible but for the notable contribution by the farming community under difficult conditions. It is the Government's purpose not only to maintain the standard so far achieved but to increase production in both field and factory to meet all our commitments and to correct, as far as can be done, difficulties in food distribution to the civil population.

The Government is confident that through the improvement in the position in relation to manpower and agricultural implements, now being actively effected, the position in regard to vegetable and dairy production will be improved. The charges of bungling

on the food front and inspired references to a food shortage are not only unwarranted but are unfounded. The Government's planning has been unparalleled in the history of this country and is in keeping with the planning so successful in Britain.

The creation by the Labor Government of the Allied Supply Council was a master stroke which has been hailed repeatedly by our Allies. Australia is the quartermaster of the entire South-west Pacific Area. We are the storehouse upon which depends the fighting capacity of every man in uniform, whether he be Australian or American or Dutch, or Fighting French. Had the Allied Supply Council not been created by the Labor Government, or had it failed, disaster would have followed swiftly. Instead, splendid success has marked superhuman efforts.

I do not propose to give figures of what has been done to meet the needs of the home front or of what we have achieved through the Supply Council but because the Labor Government has been charged with failing Britain in regard to food I give these unassailable figures:

To March last Australia shipped food worth £208,000,000 to Britain, to other parts of the Empire and to Allied countries. Of that, £118,000,000 or 57 per cent, was to Britain herself.

Look at such colossal figures as 619,000,000 lbs of butter, 1,500 million lbs of meat, 280,000,000 dozen eggs and 373,000,000 lbs of fruit shipped to Britain and nobody can justly claim that the Labor Government has failed to fulfil its responsibilities to the Mother Country.

Negotiations by the Labor Government resulted in an agreement with the United States by which that Government undertook to continue to make available on lend-lease terms material aid for the prosecution of the war. The agreement also initiated the supply by Australia of material aid in lend-lease terms to armed forces of the USA.

I acknowledge with gratitude the huge volume of war supplies received from the United States and am proud to say that, in return, Australia has provided many services to the United States forces.

Social security has received the Government's close consideration, both particularly in respect of payments of pensions and the like, and generally in regard to post-war security to which reference is made elsewhere.

The Labor Government twice increased the rate paid to invalid and old-age pensioners and the added annual cost, including cost of living adjustments, is estimated at £4,400,000 a year. The method of granting invalid pensions was made more flexible, and the maintenance provisions more liberal.

Blind pensioners were assisted and, by pension and income, a blind couple may now receive £7.9.0 a week.

A scheme of vocational training for invalid pensioners was introduced. A grant for pensioners' funeral benefits was made. Pensions were extended to cover aborigines.

The Labor Government has always had prominently in its policy the betterment of the status of women. One decision in conformity with this policy was an increase in the rate of the maternity allowance, the abolition of the means test and special provision for payments to the mother before and after the child's birth. Widows' pensions enabled the Labor Government to go further in enhancing the position of women.

The scheme enacted benefits 30,000 widows and 21,000 children at a cost of £2,350,000 a year.

Steps were taken to liberalise the payment of child endowment and money provided for crèches for children of women war workers.

In total, the Labor Government has provided improved social services approximating £10,000,000 a year.

Provision was also made to maintain persons dis-employed as a result of restrictions on non-essential industries or persons affected by such measures as rationing. The maintenance covers a man, his wife and children.

A comprehensive scheme of compensation for Civil Construction Corps workers and their dependants was put into operation and provision was also made to cover civil defence workers, civilians injured as the result of enemy action, members of the civil doctors' service and members of the Women's Land Army.

The Labor Government has given the widest consideration to the pay, conditions and general welfare of the fighting forces. It increased rates of pay on two occasions, and also widened the scope of payment to include many sections not formerly covered. The effect of all actions by the Labor Government has been as follows : All members of the fighting forces now receive 2/- a day deferred pay after six months' service; the active pay of all members has been increased by 1/6 a day; single men who formerly drew 5/- a day now receive 6/6 a day; married men who formerly drew 2/- and allotted 3/- a day now draw 3/- and allot 3/6; subsistence allowance for living at home was increased by 25 per cent to 3/- a day; living away from home allowances have been increased, the minimum rate now being 4/6 a day, with higher rates for married men.

Weekly payments to wives and children (covering allotment and allowances) have been increased by 14/- in the case of a wife; 17/6 in the case of a wife and child; and 21/- in the case of a wife and two children; increases in pay were made to all members of the women's services. The minimum adult rate is now 4/4 a day for adults and this rate is granted to minors who have served for a year. The increases were carried through the higher grades. Living allowances for the women's services were also increased.

In addition to the increases to all members and in recognition of the fact that many proficient soldiers do not receive extra pay through promotion or specialist grouping, the Government has approved of an additional 6d a day to privates whose conduct and efficiency merit the payment.

Taxation concessions directly made to members of the fighting forces, and in respect of concessions to soldiers' dependants, total £18,000,000 a year. If civilian rates were applied to members of the forces, they would pay £21,000,000. Actually they pay only £3,000,000.

Substantial exemptions were provided for the estates of members of the fighting forces who die on active service. There is a flat rate exemption of £5,000.

A wider measure of protection has been given to members of the forces and their female dependants by improvements in National Security (War Service Moratorium) regulations and by the introduction of regulations covering tenancy of houses by members of the fighting forces and their dependants.

By decisions of War Cabinet a comprehensive scheme of rehabilitation of ex-soldiers is in operation, providing for educational services, maintenance until positions are found and care of dependants.

One of the landmarks in the Labor Government's administration was the Repatriation Bill. The Government's proposals which are now law represented the greatest reform effected to the Repatriation Act since it was passed after the last war. The government's amendments, too numerous to mention here - covered a vast range of the many difficulties, hardship and injustices suffered by former members of the forces and provide a basis whereby Australian servicemen of this war will take pride of place in similar legislation throughout the world.

The Government, meanwhile, proposes to keep the Repatriation Act constantly under review and will not delay in bringing it into line with conditions created by the war as it proceeds.

The Government had hoped to pass through the last Parliament a measure which would have dealt fairly, justly and effectively with the question of preference for members of the forces. It was blocked in this endeavour by precipitate action by the Senate Opposition but will make such an act one of its first measures for submission to the new Parliament.

One of the most important aspects of war conditions is the effect on the level of prices. Inadequate imports and the necessity to divert an ever-increasing proportion of resources to the war effort impose serious shortages of goods on civilians.

For the first three and a half years of war it was the task of the Commonwealth Prices Commissioner to control the adjustment of prices to costs so that, on the one hand, the consumer would not be exploited, and on the other the trader would be enabled to carry on. The rise in retail prices of 24.5% since the war began is very moderate considering the nature of cost increases that had occurred.

The Government considered that, if prices continued to rise, consumers would find their minimum standard of living too expensive to maintain. Moreover, with the large volume of excess spending power inevitable under war conditions, it was clear that stronger discipline over prices and costs was required. Therefore, the Government announced that prices in general were not to be raised above the levels ruling on April 12, 1943.

Where possible, individual ceiling prices will be gradually replaced by specific maximum prices when the Prices Commissioner's investigations show that such a determination is possible. Normal price control regulations will continue to ensure that, where the cost situation permits, prices will be reduced below the ceiling. This gives ample protection to the consumer.

Producers will be protected by the Government's decision that in future increased costs for which some form of relief is required will be examined and, if these costs cannot be avoided and if the product is essential, a subsidy will be paid to producers to enable them to carry on under reasonable profit conditions.

As expected some early difficulties were experienced in achieving the results desired from the operation of the new method of price stabilisation. However, the Government has shown its determination to hold the cost of living stable by stabilising the prices of tea and potatoes at or below their pre-war levels, by reducing the price of all clothing through a reduction of the sales tax, and by taking steps to

secure adequate production and economical distribution at reasonable prices of essential types of clothing.

The farmer has benefited from war-time financial policy as much as most sections of the community. He was not in a very good position at the beginning of the war, but since then, owing to the degree of control exercised over the community, it has been possible to raise his income to a level that compares more favourably with the rest of the community than at the outbreak of war.

The community has been protected by the fixation of maximum prices for some primary products, but the producer has also been protected by minimum prices of wool, wheat, hides and skins, rabbit skins, potatoes, sugar, flax, peas, and dairy products. Plans are in hand to extend the principle to a number of leading fruits and vegetables. There is already a minimum price for many fruits for processing purposes. The Supply Department's contracts for many fruits and vegetables virtually establish minimum prices for them.

As a result of improved income, the financial structure of rural industries is now a much better basis than at the beginning of the war. It will be important in considering financial plans for the remainder of the war and after the war to ensure that this improved financial position is maintained. The policy of price stabilisation should enable this to be done.

A definite example of Government action to protect a primary industry is the recently announced butter subsidy. The Government recognised that the industry has done less well than any other industry under war conditions, and has decided to pay the very substantial subsidy of £6,500,000 a year to meet its disabilities. The method of subsidy enables us to assist producers without allowing the cost to pass into the price structure.

Under the new price stabilisation plan the primary producer will occupy a special position. Costs of his material will be stabilised and this will solve one large element in the financial problem concerning him during the war. Yet his products have for the most part been exempted from the operation of the general ceiling, and will be subject to specific determinations in each case, with due recognition of the seasonal nature of the commodities he is producing. For instance, specific ceiling prices have been fixed for meat as those operating on February 26, but they have been subject to some seasonal variation.

The Government's assumption of responsibility for reviewing the incomes of all sections of the community, and keeping them in step with each other, is in accordance with our policy. Not only that, but it is also negotiating with other United Nations for the development of a healthy basis for international trade after the war. If we have the knowledge of how to control our economy, and the courage to use that knowledge, then instead of being pessimistic about what is going to happen to our livelihood when the stimulus of war demands slackens off, we can look forward to the future with soundly-based optimism.

The Labor Government has looked steadily at the real facts of national economy, and has adjusted financial methods to our needs, instead of letting our lives and our needs be distorted by financial limitations. The most notable fact is that so far we have avoided, and we will continue to avoid, the inflation that characterised both the war and post-war period from 1914-22 - even while relying to probably an even greater extent on bank credit than was the case in the last war.

In terms of money Australia's financial problem has grown enormously. War expenditure in 1940-41 was £170,000,000. In 1942-43 it was £563,000,000. The provision of the necessary finance for the war has been effected by marshalling the whole resources of the country. Finance has been provided partly by taxation and by voluntary loans to which the public have responded magnificently. Last year nearly £200,000,000 was raised by loans without the help of the trading banks. In 1940-41 only £76,000,000 was raised by loans and that included substantial trading bank subscriptions.

Necessary bank credit has been obtained from the Commonwealth Bank against Treasury Bills carrying a low rate of interest. This, together with other measures of banking control which have been introduced effectively prevents private banks making increased profits out of war finance.

The Government has applied the lesson of the depression - that the financial problem fundamentally is one of manpower and resources not of money. This approach to finance will be important after the war, to turn our new enormous production potential to rural development, to housing, clothing, feeding and entertaining our people on a standard limited only by our physical resources and our capacity.

The paramount problem ever before service men and women is re-establishment in civil life. I repeat the undertaking given in Parliament recently: the Government pledges itself to ensure that every man and woman of the forces who, on discharge, is in need of employment, will be provided with reasonable opportunities for such employment. During any unavoidable period of transition back to civilian activities, each and all will be afforded the fullest possible economic protection.

Military and industrial demobilisation policies and national employment policies must be knit so closely that not only men and women from the forces, but also those in defence industries, may move with the least possible delay back into civil employment and other forms of civilian activity - including national works and conservation projects.

Our energy, ingenuity and power will be devoted to ensuring that the manhood of this country will not rot in unemployment as it did after the last war.

The success of these particular practical measures of re-establishment will depend on the use of human and material resources to the full. Re-establishment plans must be seen as a phase of national reconstruction policy, which is receiving full attention by the Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction.

In formulating the wider economic policies of reconstruction the Labour [sic] Government will not be content with half measures, with unused manpower or idle resources. We shall not tolerate an uncontrolled, speculative post-war boom which dissolves into the prolonged depression of ruined hopes and wasted lives. We will assist primary and secondary industry through a smooth transition to stable prosperity. At the same time, the Labour [sic] Government will not be idle if national development projects or measures for the nation's welfare languish because they do not offer attractive profits. We are determined to develop this country and its resources to assure to every Australian a national minimum standard of income and social services which will leave him in no envy of any other country. We are preparing now the plans to cope with the great post war tasks.

The Tariff Board has been at work for months on the enormous problems of turning over war-plants and war industries to civil production. War-time developments have

brought new industrial methods and new skills; they must be applied to raising living standards.

The Rural Reconstruction Commission is seeking ways and means of ensuring for the man on the land the greater stability of income and for his wife and children the more adequate amenities which this Government is determined they should have. The Commission is examining carefully prospects for returned servicemen who want a life on the land under favourable conditions.

Both these bodies will work to link town and country together by a far-sighted policy of decentralisation.

The Commonwealth Housing Commission is planning to meet the heavy demand for homes which war has intensified and which, without a fast[?] building programme, the peace would make even more acute. The appointment of a woman to the commission ensures that the practical viewpoint of the mother, no matter what her income, who wants to bring up a family in comfort, will receive fullest consideration.

For the general economic and social development of Australia the Government is planning, in cooperation with the States, a comprehensive programme of national works. It is intended that plans will be developed to the blueprint stage so that no delay will take place in commencing the works as soon after the war as men and materials become available. This national works programme will be coordinated with the general reconstruction programme. The Commonwealth has many projects in mind, among them being a national necessity such as the standard gauge railway link between Broken Hill and Port Pirie and, ultimately, to Fremantle.

This Government's policy of full development of resources, full employment of manpower and full provision for social security is a basis not only for Australian reconstruction but for a stable and peaceful commonwealth of all nations. It means prosperity at once for us and for others. In banishing want, we shall have gone far to free the world from fear.

The Government will ask the new Parliament to pass the necessary legislation to give to the Commonwealth the powers adequate to these plans.

A bill has been prepared to provide benefits for persons whose normal earnings are interrupted by unemployment or sickness. This measure, a positive step forward towards social security, will ensure that breadwinners and their families are not reduced below a certain standard of income when overtaken by unemployment or sickness. The Unemployment and Sickness Bill will be introduced by the Labor Government in the new Parliament.

Another important aspect of the Labor Government's national welfare plans is health and medical services. Work has been proceeding continuously on the formulation of a comprehensive health scheme. Hospital services, medical attention and the provision of medicines come within this scheme.

To finance national welfare the Labor Government passed the National Welfare Fund Act. About £30,000,000 a year will be paid annually into this fund commencing this year.

A comprehensive scheme of social security cannot be left until after the war. It may take a considerable period to organise adequately and the Labor Government will ensure that the complete administration is in operation when the war ends.

Although the Commonwealth powers in respect of health are limited, the Labor Government has taken an active part in promoting health and youth welfare, and last month very valuable results flowed from conferences of medical authorities and State Ministers for Health, under the authority of the Government's Health Department. Those results will cover not only immediate problems such as care of children; nutrition and the health of the civilian population and the services, but also will play a vital part in post-war reconstruction.

As the war proceeded Australia took an increasingly active part in international relationships. The Labor Government was able to have Pacific War Councils established in London and Washington; to obtain entree of an Australian representative on the British War Cabinet and to ensure making certain Australia's voice was heard in a measure equal to participation of her fighting men and resources in the world conflict.

The Government's foreign policy has been a forward looking policy integral to the status of our membership of the British Commonwealth and our loyalty to the Throne. The discussion of mutual problems with the British Government has emphasised the strength and the value of our associations. We have, as Mr Churchill has expressed it, become better members of the British Commonwealth by becoming better Australians.

Equally in the peace, our people must take an active part in ensuring a future for Australia by the fullest participation in all policies affecting the Pacific. Australia subscribes to the principles of the Atlantic Charter especially because we feel that the problems of the Pacific and South-east Asia are of special interest to Australia and are problems in the solution of which Australia has an important contribution to make. The Government will concentrate in establishing in peace a system of security which will be as effective in the Pacific and Asiatic zones as any other part of the world.

This statement of policy is made because the world can never be the same in the years to come - politically, governmentally, economically, and in problems of defence and security - as it was in the years before the war. We must be a Pacific power for our own security. The Labor Government believes that Australia has to march with the advancing forces of the world and meet the external problems of government involving this country in consultation and concert with other governments.

You have heard the story of the degree of security secured for this country by the Labor Government. The war has still to be won and the enemy defeated. The nature, extent and balance of Australia's part in winning final victory is due for review.

Objectives in our programmes are being reached and surplus manpower and productive capacity are becoming available for re-allotment.

The time is now due to reconsider the position of those classes of production which have been unduly depressed because of the earlier paramount urgency of other demands which have either been fulfilled or which, on a balanced view of the war effort, have been over-provided.

The need for this review is particularly pressing in the case of those industries which are required to make a greater contribution to the war effort in the South-west Pacific area, or which represent a specialised aspect of Australian economy in which the

Commonwealth is peculiarly fitted to make a contribution to the war effort of the United Nations, as in the case of foodstuffs.

The assurance of Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt on the vigorous prosecution of the war in the Pacific theatre should guarantee assistance in those things for which our capacity is insufficient, without the need for placing our national structure under an impossible strain to produce them.

We have also agreed to coordinate our production programme with that of the United Kingdom and United States, so that each of us may do the things which we are most capable of doing, that we may help each other with our surpluses and that we may avoid duplication of our respective efforts.

I would state the future policy of the Government in the form of the following principles which will govern Australia's war effort: The nature and extent of the Commonwealth's war effort will primarily be governed by the Commander-in-Chief's strategical plan of operations and as related to global strategy laid down by the Combined Allied Chiefs of Staff.

The primary consideration in every proposal is whether it makes the maximum contribution to the Australian war effort in the South-west Pacific Area, except where it can be justified as a contribution which can be peculiarly made by Australia to the efforts of the United Nations in another theatre, for example, the supply of foodstuffs to Britain.

The nature and extent of the Commonwealth's war effort must be within its physical capacity to fulfil, within the requisite time, the commitments already approved or subsequently entered into. It is only misleading the Commander-in-Chief and our Allies to undertake commitments which we cannot fulfil on time.

The types of assistance to the United States Forces will be in accordance with the provisions of the Reciprocal Lend-lease Agreements. The Navy will be maintained at the strength necessary for the existing ships plus approved additions to the strength, together with all administrative and ancillary services.

The Army will be maintained at the strength necessary for providing for an Army Corps for offensive operations in accordance with the plans of the Commander-in-Chief, South-west Pacific Area; and adequate forces for the defence of Australia and New Guinea and for relief of units outside the mainland; provided, however, that the strength will be governed by the available manpower, the capacity to maintain the wastage of tropical warfare, and coordination with other manpower requirements.

The Air Force will be maintained at the strength authorised under the programme of the maximum strength required for the defence of Australia against invasion to the extent to which aircraft can be provided. Such part of the RAAF that is not required for the defence of Australia, New Guinea and trade protection in adjacent waters, will be allotted to General MacArthur for offensive operations in accordance with his plans. Provision will be made for Australia's commitments under the Empire Air Training Scheme, subject to coordination with other manpower needs.

Munitions production will be in accordance with programmes as recommended by the Defence Committee, endorsed by the Commander-in-Chief, South-west Pacific Area, and approved by War Cabinet.

Supplies for the services and the needs of the civil population, including overseas commitments, will be produced in accordance with programmes approved by War

Cabinet or the Production Executive, as appropriate, and coordinated by the Allied Supply Council.

Works programmes for the Australian and American forces will be governed by operational needs, and the physical capacity to complete them within the time required. Essential services common to the Australian and United States Services and the civil population, such as transportation, water, power and lighting, will be reviewed in respect of their present and prospective manpower and material requirements.

The reviews of the manpower situation under the various phases of the war effort will provide a basis from which the War Commitments Committee will be able to coordinate the whole manpower position, and to report from time to time on the particular aspects or the aggregate situation.

These reviews will be made at regular intervals, in view of the continual adjustments that will be occurring in the strengths of the forces, and the increases or decreases arising in the works and production programmes as they are completed, added to, or varied.

In the urgent measures which the nation's situation necessitated being taken during the last 20 months, many regulations were made. Improvisations had to replace peacetime practice. It is now possible for the Government to review many of the steps taken and this will be done.

That, then, is the history of the threat which the UAP and the Country Party allowed to hang over Australia; the record of what the Labor Government has achieved; the undertaking of what the Labor Government will work and strive for in the future.

The Labour [sic] Government asks for a mandate from you, the people, to do that work. For 20 months the Labor Government has kept you safe. You cannot risk a government from the UAP and CP which would make the same terrible mistake it made before Japan came into the war. The Labor Government is the victory Government. It won security for you over 20 months; it will bring victory to this fair land.

And what of the post-war period? The UAP and the CP offer you a complete blank. In the words of their leader (Mr Fadden) at the Constitutional Convention "It is wrong to propose that, in peace, the powers used for the forging of the war machine should be used for the purposes of peace." Mr Fadden then went on to move that a convention be held after the war. The UAP and the CP are still in the 'whether' stage on matters of post-war rehabilitation, whereas the Labor Government has advanced well into the 'how' stage.

In war and for the peace you cannot risk a non-Labor Government taking office. What a government it would be! The same elements would be there as jockeyed for place and position in their past Ministries. Who would be the boss among them all? Who would be the leader of leaders? Would it be Mr Fadden or Mr Menzies or Mr Hughes or Mr Cameron or Mr Abbott or Mr Spender? Would the war effort come first with them? Or would they, as Mr Hughes said in his broadcast last April, go on 'intriguing for months'?

A government from the UAP and CP now would be a repetition of what one of their former Ministers, Mr A G Cameron, complained when he said of his own government: 'Everlasting intrigue and manoeuvring for personal advantage reached its

zenith in ruptures of the seal of Cabinet secrecy...The call to national unity was unheard or unheeded in the party's own room.'

What would be the policy of this government from the UAP and the CP? These parties are supposed to be concerned about many things - strikes, absenteeism, finance, food and manpower. But I quote Mr Hughes -'All these evils are not growths that have sprung up overnight; they have been patent to all for many months - some of them existed when Mr Menzies was Prime Minister.'

Who would decide the policy of this government from the UAP and the CP? Would it be Mr Fadden? Well, he could not control 17 of his followers who formed the National service Group. Would it be Mr Menzies? Of him I again quote Mr Hughes: 'He is the great self-seeker, the man behind the scenes in every intrigue, the fountain-head of every whispering campaign, the destroyer of unity.' Yet you are asked to return a United Australia Party and United Country Party government. 'United' in what? My friends, the only unity these parties will find is when the interests each of these sections serve happen to come into conjunction. One may as well await the millennium.

The Labor Government has a positive record - the security of this nation over the last 20 months. The Labour [sic] Government has a positive policy which, in association with the United Nations, I confidently believe, will bring victory and an end to war. The Labour [sic] Government has the framework built, the plans drawn for - and the courage to proceed with - post-war reconstruction and economic stability for all.

The Australian Labour Party has no association or affiliation with any other party or faction nor with any 'isms', whatever their origin, which may be put forward. Labour candidates are selected by the properly constituted Australian Labour bodies and other candidates purporting to be Labour or supporting Labour are not official Labour candidates, and have no participation whatever in the making of Labour Governments or the shaping of Labour policy.

I give you the Labor Government's policy in a phrase - victory in war, victory for the peace. On that we stand inflexible, for a lost peace would be marked by horrors of starvation, unemployment, misery and hardship no less grievous than the devastation of war. It was the needs of our country which called us to office, Parliament has witnessed the divisions, intrigues, and the resulting incompetence of the previous administrations. Mr Menzies' government collapsed from internal disruptions. Derived from the same white-anted elements Mr Fadden's government could not survive. My Government was the one remaining alternative to political chaos and national disaster. We faced an era of dangers and problems unprecedented and unpredictable. We met them unwaveringly. We had a trusteeship to and for Australia.

Our country has now withstood the direst trials; it has lived through its darkest hour; it is now confronting the dawn of a victorious and a better day. The Labor Government has done its duty. Australia stands at this election one of the free countries in the world. For that we have toiled and striven. And we know that the time has come when a preserved Australia can once again advance.”

Source: Compiled from original documents at John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. (Records of the Australian Labor Party, National Branch. JCPML00456/1) and the Argus, Sydney Morning Herald and Courier-Mail.