

Charter for Jobs Policy

ACTU Congress September 1991

1.1 The principal priority over the next period must be the creation of real, lasting and full-time jobs. A national unemployment level of around 11% with higher levels in some states and amongst some groups of workers cannot be tolerated.

1.2 The reality behind the statistics is tragic.

- Over 800,000 unemployed and looking for work in July
- 188,000 from families where no one had a job
- 175,000 children under 14 in homes where no one has a job
- 60% of the increased unemployed are between 25-54 years of age
- 23% increase in teenage unemployment
- 35% increase above 55 years of age unemployment
- 521,000 unemployed 3 months or more
- 187,000 unemployed 12 months or more.

1.3 During the mid to late 1980's and through the Accord processes with the union movement playing a very active role, jobs were created at an unprecedented rate, not only for the unemployed that arose out of the 1982-83 recession, but also to offset the further effects of industry restructuring and to accommodate a big increase in the percentage of the population participating in the workforce.

1.4 At the same time however negative features weakened the result.

- A persistent imbalance of trade with imports unable to be paid by the value of exports
- Our traditional agricultural exports being increasingly squeezed by subsidised exports of the USA & EEC
- A level playing field philosophy inexplicably maintained in the face of the painful realities of world trade
- Paper corporate empire building based on debt financing way beyond real asset values
- Bad debts by the banks accumulating to more than \$25 billion inhibiting lending in real growth potential
- Many managements who don't have a clue about modern industry, work organisation or modern management requirements
- Big increases in executive salaries mostly for the privilege of being incompetent, misusing other peoples money and sending companies broke

1.5 The 1987 crash and the recent intensive and prolonged credit squeeze which was brought on to cut back the unsustainable level of imports exposed these negative features and created the current recession with its serious loss of jobs. Now we again face the uphill task of employment creation, but this time it has to be in a manner that such a credit squeeze to cut import levels is simply never required again.

1.6 Jobs must be created in a continuing process of restructuring and developing world class industries that can hold their own with productivity, quality, uniqueness and service despite the

remoteness of Australia from the worlds large markets. Only jobs of this character will be secure and well paid with real career prospects to suit an Australian way of life.

1.7 Lessons must be drawn from the past experience and there needs to be effective supervision to ensure that market distortion or failure like that which occurred in the 1980's is never allowed to occur again.

1.8 The ACTU rejects as useless the "panacea" approach proposed by the new right John Howard and others that all our problems of industry development can be solved by exclusively enterprise based industrial relations where incompetent managements negotiate with a workforce deprived of union representation. This is a prescription where each pulls the other down to drown.

1.9 Despite the disadvantages there are a number of advantages upon which to build a policy and strategy for lasting job creation in the 1990's. These include the vital significant of low inflation, superannuation, industry and award restructuring, workplace, education and training reform.

2.1 The ACTU propose the following strategy to be followed:

- 'Lock in' inflation at a low level, long term with sustainable lower interest rates
- Ensure effective implementation of superannuation as a major savings resource
- Create a national industry and infrastructure development investment fund with all institutional investors involved
- Establish clear and consistent world class environmental guidelines as a means of enabling development projects to proceed
- program of accelerated depreciation
- Carry out a national plan of selected infrastructure and a "Better Cities and Towns" program development with Commonwealth and State participation
- Ensure maximum possible Australian content in all projects of major national significance.
- Implement development plans in export potential sectors by networking approaches such as R & D, labor market development, marketing and information Rapid enforcement of effective anti-dumping laws & regulation
- Intensify the programs of restructuring, micro-economic reform and workplace change
- Accelerate the reform and development of the training market, education in conjunction with implementation of award restructuring
- Insist upon Government local purchasing at all levels of government commensurate with implementation of structural adjustment and reform by suppliers
- Establish networking of small and medium companies with access to information, training and innovative research including the promotion of new product incubator networks.

2.2 The ACTU declares its determination to pursue this program and to support all positive measures that contribute to sustainable job creation.

2.3 We welcome statements from sections of the business community that have been made recently which can contribute to many if not all the above purposes.

2.4 We instruct the incoming Executive to develop a comprehensive plan of action to be implemented immediately following Congress which can gain the maximum involvement of the whole Trade Union movement and win support from broad sections of the Australian community.

2.5 Immediately following Congress the officers to meet with the Government to discuss the proposals for employment creation contained in this policy.