At last Bob Hawke has said it. He indicated that he expected the January unemployment figures to show 300,000 unemployed. Last week I said that I believe the summer figures would indicate 350,000 out of work, 100,000 of them are likely to be school leavers unable to get jobs.

This is the tragic result of two years of Labor. It has occurred because the Government has utterly mis-judged its handling of the Australian economy. It has occurred because the Government has pressed forward with its own ideas of what Australians ought to do, ignoring the wishes and needs of many thousands of people.

In recent years the Australian community has become concerned about much wider issues than ever before. One of the legacies of the former Government was full employment and a low level of inflation. There was predictability, stability and certainty. Somebody who was willing to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay did not have to worry about his economic future. He knew his job was going to be there. He knew the pay would be there. This left Australians much freer to look to other issues - how to improve our society, provide a more equal opportunity for people who might have been disadvantaged earlier in life.

Now, however, we are rapidly approaching the problems and difficulties of the 1930's. Australians are once again concerned for security, for jobs.

The Government announced some measures a short while ago which were designed to restore business confidence. I have spoken with many business leaders in the days since the last budget and not one has indicated any change in forward investment plans as a result of those recent announcements. That means business is not going to plan to put out large sums for new investment which alone can create the jobs necessary to keep Australians fully employed.

I wish the Government would act with greater vigour and with greater strength in these matters. The Government would attract credit to itself by that. There is no consolation in the Opposition gaining political strength through the gross errors and mismanagement of this Government when the price has to be paid by the people of Australia.

While the Prime Minister has made a half bow in the direction of private enterprise and while the former Treasurer has made a bow in the direction of profits the attitude of the Government to profits and private enterprise remain highly suspect.
The appointment of Dr Cairns as Treasurer is unlikely to relieve that gloom because a widening circle of Australians know Jim Cairns' ultimate objective. He has certainly been very honest about it and has not sought to conceal it. But it is not an objective that many Australians would share with him.

Despite the nature of our present Prime Ministership Australia is lost and rudderless with individuals and businesses not knowing what lies ahead. In this uncertain climate I would not be surprised if unemployment rose even more than I have forecast.

December and January are two unproductive months for business. There are many holidays and I have been told that a number of businesses will be laying people off over these months knowing that in a high state of unemployment they would be able to re-employ people in February or March once the holiday season is over. If that is so the summer increase in unemployed could be very much greater than that which has been anticipated.

If this situation is to be reversed businesses, whether they be one man or great concerns operating in every part of Australia, need much more incentive and encouragement than they have so far been given by the Government. Individuals need incentive to work.

Australia is a nation in distress - the golden hopes of December 1972 established in the minds of many people have been dashed asunder and destroyed. They have proved to be as ephemeral and as passing as a rainbow.

We need to re-establish a sense of national purpose and direction. We need to re-establish confidence in ourselves as individuals and as a nation. There needs to be a wide public acceptance that hard work, initiative, enterprise, responsibility and skill will be rewarded in the Australian community.

We need to recognise also that in the former Treasurer's words higher wages are taking jobs away from other people. As a nation we have to learn restraint. We have to put aside the selfishness that has embodied so many of our actions in recent times and recognise that there is only Australia. The Federal Government must seek to give direction to this nation by consistency in its own actions, by adherence to principles which apply the law and the actions of Government equally to all groups and to all people.

Last week the lack of direction and consistency of action on the
part of this Government was demonstrated by the Minister for Transport's attitude to the pay claims of TAA and ANSETT pilots. The pilots had a two year agreement which was a closed and fixed agreement which ran out in September of this year. It has to be re-negotiated or it has to go to Arbitration.

The Minister for Labour for two years has been trying to introduce changes to industrial law designed to persuade people that they must negotiate, that employers and employees must consult about new awards and changed conditions. That has been the firm policy of the Government and of the Australian Labor Party - until Mr Jones, the Minister for Transport, came along and issued a directive to ANSETT and TAA that they must not negotiate or make any offer to the air line pilots.

If there are rules and principles for action they must apply in all cases. Governments above all must apply rules equally to all sections of the community. If they make one rule for one group and another for another group Government becomes arbitrary, unfair and unreasonable. This is precisely what the Government has demonstrated over the air line pilots.