

# Labor's policy on

**Australian Labor Party policy on ethnic broadcasting was distributed in February. For purposes of record, CLB reproduces that part of the policy headed "Multicultural Television". "Ethnic Radio" and "The Special Broadcasting Service"**

## **Multicultural Television**

Channel 0/28 will be extended by an ALP Government to all states and territories. This policy was adopted at the National Conference of the ALP in July 1982, and by the present Government two weeks later. It will be implemented according to the time-table announced by the present Government in August 1982.

Channel 0/28 will be a national multicultural network, independent of the ABC and the commercial sector.

Where appropriate, the ABC will be asked to assist by making its technical facilities available so that the network may be developed efficiently, and in the most cost-effective manner.

Arrangements will be made to ensure that the channel is used for a greater amount of time each day, with programme access being provided for public television, for educational and cultural material, and programmes appropriate for migrant women in the home.

## **Ethnic Radio**

Ethnic radio broadcasting will be further expanded in the public broadcasting sector.

As an initial step in this expansion, applications will be invited from ethnic communities in Melbourne and Sydney, with a view to establishing an ethnic public broadcasting station in each city.

Stations 2EA and 3EA will be retained as fully professional broadcasting stations.

Ultimately, the financing of ethnic public radio will be administered by an independent Foundation, which will be responsible for the funding of all forms of public broadcasting.

## **The Special Broadcasting Service**

A Labor Government will adapt the SBS, or replace it by a new independent organisation responsible for

ethnic and multicultural broadcasting.

The organisation will have its own legislative base, and the legislation will provide for:

- a re-vamping of the top structure of the organisation;
- the right of the organisation to appoint its own advisory council and committees;
- freedom from Public Service Board control;
- the appointment by the organisation of Community Affairs officers to maintain close liaison with ethnic communities;
- the holding of open annual public meetings with ethnic communities for the purposes of obtaining comments and suggestions;
- the application of the same rules governing Public Affairs programmes as apply to the ABC.

- increase ABC funding by 5 per cent to enable a further development of Australian programming;

- establish an independent Foundation to assist financing of public broadcasting stations;

- proceed with the extension of multi-cultural and ethnic broadcasting throughout Australia, but insist on greater ethnic community involvement in the management of this service.

Labour rejects the recommendations of the Davidson Report on the Australian Telecommunications system.

That system will remain in the hands of Telecom, and will continue to provide a service which takes into account the public interest in the determination of charges for all Australians.

There will be no fragmentation of the system by the admission of private networks, and Telecom will continue to cross-subsidise country and suburban services.

Telecom will be permitted to raise adequate capital for expansion, and will be the base provider for all new information systems.

It will continue as a major supporter of the Australian electronics industry, and of employment in that industry.

Telecom's "Buy Australian" policy will be maintained.

## **Australia Post**

- A Labor Government will retain Australia Post's letter monopoly.
- Will re-establish the courier service, which was profitable.
- Will allow Australia Post to operate electronic mail services and compete in the provision of new services.

## **POLICY SPEECH — Federal election campaign launch, at the Sydney Opera House Theatre on 16 February, 1983:**

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Communications has grown into a major area of government responsibility, but under the Fraser Government developments have been wholly uncoordinated.

The Australian Labor Party has clear priorities and will develop our communications system with paramount regard to the public interest.

## **WE WILL:**

- immediately plan for a second ABC regional network, to be installed by the third year of government, to provide additional choice to the four million Australians living outside capital cities;

# communications

**In Its Rural Policy speech, delivered in Griffith NSW, on 20th February, 1983, the Australian Labor Party said this about COMMUNICATIONS:**

A basic need of people in remote areas is for efficient and reasonably priced telephone and mail services.

In 1981, the Fraser government set up inquiries into the operations of Telecom — the Davidson Inquiry; and into Australia Post — the Bradley Inquiry.

The Davidson Inquiry terms of reference were written by the Fraser government with the aim of allowing private companies to take over the profitable parts of Telecom's operations.

At present, Telecom keeps down the cost of telephones in country areas by using the profits of the STD routes between capital cities to offset the losses it incurs in rural and provincial areas.

The Davidson Inquiry recommended the end of this system of cross-subsidisation. It effectively recommended the adoption of the "user pays" principle. It specifically recommended a system of telephone rental charging which would mean an annual rental of \$900 for any telephone subscriber living more than 18 km from an exchange. It recommends time-charging for local calls so that a telephone conversation which exceeded three minutes would be charged essentially on the same basis as a trunk call.

When the Davidson Report was published, the Government welcomed it enthusiastically. The Government Minister for Communications, Mr Brown, described it as "a milestone in the history of telecommunications in Australia". For the country telephone services, the implementation of this report would not be a milestone, but a grave stone.

It is common knowledge that right up to this election being called, officers of the Department of Communications in Canberra were working on a submission to the Cabinet advocating acceptance of many of the recommendations of the Davidson Report. They were doing this at the direction of the Minister. Subsequent government claims retreating from applying these recommendations in all their severity are worthless.

In relation to this matter Labor opposed the limited terms of reference of the Davidson Inquiry, has opposed the Committee's recommendations; and, in Government, will not implement any of the recommendations which disadvantage country people. For the Labor Government, those recommendations are dead.

We will encourage Telecom to proceed as rapidly as possible with itemised telephone accounts and the reduction of anomalies in relation to STD calls.

We will ensure that the present cross subsidy is maintained for Australia Post, and that every effort is made to improve mail services in country areas.

**We will give priority to ensuring that the domestic satellite to become operational in 1985 is used for the purpose for which it was originally intended — to provide better broadcasting and telecommunications services for outback communities.**

Our spokesman on communications has had discussions with a company known as Television Australia, which intends to use the satellite facility to provide a chain of small television stations serviced by the satellite which will provide programs for nearly a million Australians living in remote communities who now have either no television, or one ABC service.

## Satellite

- The ALP welcomes services which the satellite can provide in rural areas.
- A Labor Government will strengthen consumer representation on the board of the satellite company and maintain the 51 per cent Government shareholding.
- A Labor Government will retain the Overseas Telecommunications Commission.

## Australia Broadcasting Commission

- A Labor Government will encourage a vigorous independent ABC with bipartisan appoint-

ments to the Commission.

- As soon as possible increased funds will be provided for the ABC for Australian television production and improving rural services. A second radio network will be provided for country areas within 3 years.
- The ALP will not allow censorship of the ABC by means of a Commissioner for Complaints.

## Public Broadcasting

- Labor will provide a Foundation, the income from which will be used to provide ongoing financial assistance to the public broadcasting sector. This will give it

security and independence from Government.

- The Broadcasting and Television Act will strengthen in relation to foreign takeovers of commercial radio and television.
- We will not introduce cable TV in the foreseeable future on both economic and cultural grounds.
- There will be no further inquiries into communications matters.
- We will provide additional funds to overcome planning backlogs in the Department of Communications.
- We will abolish the election blackout on news and current affairs programmes.