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AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY PARTY

1961 FEDERAL ELECTION

OPENING SPEECH

by

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOHN McEWEN

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

MINISTER FOR TRADE

LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY PARTY

at

SHEPPARTON, Victoria

20th NOVEMBER, 1961.

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As I address the Australian people tonight I'm conscious that I speak with a dual capacity. I speak for the Government, as Mr. Menzies' partner and Deputy Prime Minister. At the same time and without any sense of rivalry, I speak as Leader of the Australian Country Party.

For 12 years the Liberal Party and the Country Party have joined in partnership to compose the most long-lived, and the most stable Government our Country has ever had.

Mr. Menzies is a very great Australian -- a world figure. He's given leadership to this country during it's most dramatic period of industrial and economic development.

There's never been the slightest note of discord in our partnership. Compare that with the deep cleavages within the Labor Party.

This great partnership is dedicated to the pursuit of the very broadest national policies, not narrow sectional ones.

Tonight I am to speak of the policies of our partnership and the objectives we still aim at, and in particular of the specialised contribution which the Australian Country Party brings to the good Government, development and the general well-being of Australia.

When policies are being spoken of at election time, the formula for composing an orthodox speech can become a very simple one : to denounce the opposing party and its policies, and to outline an attractive list of proposals, and then beg to be elected. I'm not going to do that.

I shall speak of course of the principles which will always guide us.

And I shall stress how in our every action we're dedicated to the principle of partnership and co-operation for the common goal of national progress and national security; partnership between the political parties, comprising the Government; partnership between town and country; between primary and secondary and service industry; and partnership between Australia and our great Allies and trading partners around the world.

I shall refer to the Opposition only to bring out a point of comparison.

POLICY OBJECTIVES.

Above all we're determined that this country shall be free -- and remain free. And scarcely less important we want Australians individually to enjoy the maximum of freedom to shape their own lives within their own country.

Communism is the ultimate denial of personal freedom. Therefore we denounce Communism. The Country Party was the first political organisation in Australia to demand that Communism be banned.

Secondly, we recognise that the doctrines of Socialism, as embraced by the Australian Labor Party, with the whole concept of economic, industrial, and personal controls is contradictory to our idea of maximum personal freedom. So we oppose Socialism as being a contradiction of our concept of a free and self reliant Australian nation.

We support the United Nations as the international instrument seeking to establish a world of law and peace, and we reinforce our own strength by contributing in every manner to the cohesion of the Queen's Commonwealth, and by Treaties and understandings with our great friend, the United States, and our partners in S.E.A.T.O. and A.N.Z.U.S. alliances to safeguard our part of the world.

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We want to be strong; we want to be free; we want to be secure; so we abhor Communism abroad and at home. And we vigorously oppose Socialism in Australia.

To have our country strong and robust, there's nothing more important than that there should be a widespread sense of pride in the country. So we aim to avoid disunity. National cohesion and economic strength are greatest where there is full equality of opportunity. We're constantly broadening the opportunity for better education, and contributing by health policies to the prospect of avoidance and cure of illness and disability. Some Australians will want their security in jobs; others will want to make their own employment in farm or business. Our policies cover both.

That's our idea of a real land of security and opportunity. That's the kind of Australia we're aiming to build.

I've been illustrating our policy objectives by talking about what we see and plan for our fellow 10¹/₂ million Australians -- their security and their happiness.

ECONOMIC FACTORS.

But let me now turn to the economic facts of life upon which security and prosperity really depend. We live in a competitive world -- maybe an envious world. And 10 million Australians of our day have the job of developing a Continent. The population of Australia must be built up fast, and with the right type of people.

How better could I illustrate what we want to do than to point out in the 12 years of this Government the Australian population has grown with the aid of a record migration programme from 7,900,000 people in 1949 to 10¹/₂ million people today. And today we find in every walk of life our new fellow Australians contributing most valuably to the progress of the nation.

The Country Party wants the maximum number of migrants to become landowners and bring stability, pride and skill to land ownership. Our policy is to aid that.

Where some displacement from employment has occurred it has been in the course of building a base sounder than ever before for real maximum employment opportunities. I undertake that we will pursue industrial policies which do provide a job for everyone. We know that jobs must come from expanding industry.

A real job is found in industry -- not in a politician's speech.

There's no comparable instance in history where such a proportion of people from outside have been added to the national population without creating friction or minority or nationalistic groups.

During the life of our Government the unsurpassed skill of the Australian agriculturalist, backed by his scientific and technical advisers, has raised agricultural output by nearly half with practically no addition whatever to the rural workforce.

The average Australian farmer produces twice as much food as his counterparts in the United States and the United Kingdom. But this very efficiency in production does reveal that the land industries are not the place where new jobs can be found for the millions. But there must be jobs, and factories and service industries must provide them. I have been pointing this out for years.

Manufacturing industries need adequate policies of tariff protection. There's evidence that that has been sustained for today there are 41% more factories in Australia than when we came to power, and the value of factory production is running at a rate $3\frac{1}{2}$ times greater than it was 12 years ago, and there are about three quarters of a million more jobs.

Incidentally increased employment in secondary activities increases the farmers best market -- the home market.

Australia's rate of industrial expansion is phenomenal. My colleagues and I have worked without stint for 12 years to bring about a balanced development and a secure Australia. We'll not let up.

As a by-product of our growth, and economic and political stability, industrialists throughout the Free World are increasingly coming to Australia as a new base for their operations, and so adding to the broadness of our industrial base and to the up-to-dateness of our technical skills, making new products we previously imported.

Now our Government is putting it with ever increasing directness to manufacturers, that they must also export to contribute to the nation's economic needs as well as to their own.

Last year we faced a real problem. There was concentration upon speculative and non-essential activity with offers of very high interest rates, inflation of costs and values -- a threat to our stable and solid base for expansion.

Over a period our export prices had been declining. If last year there had been the 1953 level of prices, the greatly increased quantity of our exports would have earned us £400 million more than we actually received.

That in a nutshell is the situation which led us last year to introduce the economic policies which have been distasteful, and - let me be frank - hurtful to many. But today we're confident that these inflationary and speculative pressures at home have been arrested.

A policy about expanding Australia would be empty and meaningless words without an assurance that sufficient overseas funds will be earned to provide the import needs of Australian factories.

This is essential for maximum employment. Without it migration could not be sustained. This is why we had to act last year to curb speculative spending and at the same time we've worked tirelessly to offset low prices for primary products.

Take examples : the Japanese Treaty has contributed enormously to holding wool prices, and we stand ready to discuss with the wool industry its desires for the future as soon as the results of the present enquiry have been studied by the industry and the Government.

The wheat industry has been protected by the Stabilisation Plan, fair prices at home and overseas negotiations.

For the dairy industry, its Stabilisation Plan, with Government subsidising both the industry and the consumer at home, and the Government doing all possible to sell to best advantage overseas.

Both the wheat and the dairy plans will be renewed as they expire, but after consultation with the industries and the State Governments.

The sugar industry is sustained by a fair home price and overseas agreements. Indirectly the great canned fruit industry is protected by an arrangement with the sugar industry.

Beef producers have enjoyed high local prices through the support of the Long Term Meat Agreement and the negotiated entry to the United States high price market. The benefits of Government help as mentioned have been worth scores of millions of pounds in each case to the wool industry, to the dairy industry, and to the beef industry.

Under our policies Tobacco growing has been raised to an important and profitable industry, with the result of very fast expansion in recent years.

This year much leaf has not been bought at the auctions. We will work with the Industry to ensure that there is established a market at fair prices to growers for leaf acceptable to Australian smokers.

Many other crops -- tobacco, peanuts, cotton, fresh fruit, deserve and have received our consideration as has of course, the dried fruit industry. All contribute valuably to production, save imports, and provide employment.

In these fields particularly our fellow New Australians are demonstrating their skills and willingness to work hard.

FUTURE OBJECTIVES.

We aim to continue in the future what we've done in the past to support the rural industries and I include mining.

The special tax depreciation allowances for rural industries will be renewed by our Government for a further period.

We've established the Development Bank. Today it has resources of capital and money borrowed for re-lending totalling about £50 million. It will be quite especially the job of the Country Party to see that this great new institution will be kept in necessary funds to enable it to function.

The Country Party is pledged to maintain and support the interests of country people and it is pledged to do this for no narrow sectional reason. It's pledged to do it because the prosperity and expansion of the farm sector forms the very basis of national prosperity and expansion.

We'll maintain the concept of partnership with both primary and secondary industry in export development.

Our Trade Commissioner Service is being expanded continuously.

Government funds to support overseas trade publicity are at record levels.

Of major importance it'll be my job to press negotiations with overseas countries to help our trade. Here, I think it is not unfair to recall that every Labor spokesman in the Federal Parliament spoke against the Japanese Trade Treaty. But this Treaty has proved of monumental importance in supporting our exports, as well as improving relations between the Australian and Japanese peoples and Governments.

And the safeguards provided to protect Australian manufacturing industry against Japanese competition have proved to be adequate.

Such a major departure from previous policy as the concluding of the great Treaty with Japan cannot be undertaken by people devoted to narrow sectional interests. Only a Government such as ours will strike out boldly and think in terms of a new departure when circumstances demand it.

Efficient Australian agriculture doesn't carry a workforce of millions. For millions of jobs to sustain our migration as well as for the young people growing up, manufacturing activity in Australia must be strong and expanding. We will provide adequate protection for it.

Last year our Government supplemented the well tried Tariff Board system with the new arrangement enabling a temporary tariff to be proclaimed after 30 days' enquiry.

Already important industries, such for example as the Bruck Mills at Wangaratta, have enjoyed the protection of this.

The great consultative bodies on export and manufacture established by our Government provide a meeting point where Government, manufacturers and farmers are constantly sitting around the same table joining in planning the best for our country.

To encourage export, novel taxation incentives have been devised. Under them, the cost of searching for and developing a market overseas is predominantly borne by the Government. Success in achieving increased exports to a certain formula brings a reward of complete freedom from all pay roll tax liability.

Recently I announced that we'd successfully negotiated the establishment of two new shipping services to South America.

We believe we will feel justified in supporting the establishment of warehouses to carry Australian goods for sale, in a number of important centres around the world.

We look to the steel industry to become a more important and continuous export earner. And our decision to reconstruct the railway line from the great iron ore deposits near Kalgoorlie to Fremantle is related to this.

Likewise, having found enormous markets for Australian coal in Japan, we're now as a Government financially helping the State Governments of New South Wales and Queensland to improve harbours and port facilities.

In the same line of thinking we've undertaken to aid the construction of important roads right across North Australia so that beef cattle may be brought economically to the meatworks on the coast or to the fattening areas.

My own Country Party has long advocated decentralisation. I'm in no doubt that if in appropriate areas New States were brought into existence, this would represent a major contribution to decentralisation. We believe decentralisation to be good, and safer, for the whole country and we'd like to see the family growing up in the country to be able to stay together by being able to find jobs in the country towns and its industries.

COMMON MARKET.

But whether we live in the town or the country there's one recent development which must deeply concern all of us.

Three months ago the United Kingdom decided to apply to join the European Common Market. If she does join it, it'll be one of the great events of history. Her action projects an absolutely

economy. And I put it to you that matters of such complexity and importance affecting the future prosperity of everyone of us, can best be handled by a Government as broadly representative and as balanced in its interests as the present coalition between the Liberal and the Country Parties.

Tonight I'm giving an account of 12 years' work, of the phenomenal growth of our country in that period.

It's the story of transformation into a modern nation. The transformation from long years of slow population increase into a dramatic period of population growth. The transformation of rural industries from conditions where so often they provided only a precarious livelihood into a situation of prosperity and stability with amazing advances in productive capacity.

Today 72% of the people are voluntary subscribers to a national health scheme. In 1949 Government funds provided £300,000 worth of life saving drugs and pharmaceutical benefits. And last year under our Government £28 million was provided for this purpose.

This is the story of the transformation of a country where there used to be continuous tension between Government and industry into one where a new concept of partnership has been deliberately developed and is operating.

The transformation of a country ridden by Socialism into a country where people are free to shape their own way of life with the broad aid of Government -- not under the tight control of Government.

This has had results. Australians now own the biggest proportion of homes to population in the world -- 75% of the nation's families are home owners. Our Government has provided £780 million for housing.

We've seen the transformation from a Federation where in 1949 the State Governments were allotted £208 million from Commonwealth revenue and Commonwealth Loans that year, to the current position where last year they received £593 million.

And Australia is now the tenth greatest trading nation in the world, and the Australian voice is heard, and increasingly heeded, in the world's highest Councils.

Ours is a country where savings bank deposits have more than doubled; where the production of steel has more than trebled; where wool production has increased by 50%. It's a country whose motor car ownership has been extended from 1 car to every 7 people 12 years ago to today 2 cars for each 7 people. Where television, under plans already approved, will in a few years' time be accessible to more than 90% of our people. Where aged and invalid pensions and other social services are provided, not at the yearly rate of £85 million as in 1949 but at the present rate of £358 million a year.

The 1950's have been for Australia a great and historic period of unbelievable growth and prosperity.

For the Liberal-Country Party Government, the 1950's have been a period of remarkable achievement. We are fully confident that this performance will be equalled during the 1960's. By adhering to some general policies which produced the dramatic expansion of the 1950's I believe that by 1970 our population will increase by another 2 million people, to give us about 12½ million Australians. I foresee then another million jobs -- 5 million jobs by 1970. An increase in private investment by about a third to a level of £2,000 million a year.

I see an increase in rural production taken at today's values of from £1350 million worth to £1600 million worth by 1970. I can see the value of work done in our factories increased by 50%, and I predict a rise of two-thirds in the value of our mineral exports.

What is our policy, you ask?. That is our policy.

It will produce results like that. It's there to be seen; to be felt; to be experienced. It's not a policy of small devices. It's a policy of broad, imaginative thinking -- not one to favour a section at the expense of others. A policy to serve and benefit equally -- and I repeat equally -- the whole nation. A policy of broad national co-operation such as can only be achieved by a partnership in Government, of parties representing every section of the community. It's not a policy which has a beginning and an end. It's a policy which has no end, for there will be no end to our planning and our work to develop this wonderful country of ours and keep its people free, prosperous and happy.

We really are working to try to shape Australia as we believe the Australian people want it shaped. We're certain the prosperity and growth of Australia is inseparable from the stability of the country industries. So we're sure that the Country Party will continue to make its full contribution to the continuing success of our Government and to the welfare of all Australians, no matter who they are; whether they live in the town or the city; or work on a farm or in a factory.

All I ask now is that you give our Government and the Country Party the opportunity to continue to make our contribution in our day to the security, health, happiness, and prosperity of all Australians -- new and old.

For the continued development and prosperity of a free Australian people, we ask you to return our Government to office.

For the House of Representatives vote for Government candidates : the Country Party and Liberal Party candidates.

Do not forget the importance of the Senate on this occasion.

We must have a majority there to be really in power.

Vote for the Senate candidates of the Country Party and the Liberal Party who stand as Government supporters.