

PUBLIC MEETING AT FESTIVAL HALL, BRISBANE

ON 23RD APRIL, 1963

Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies

Mr. Hulme and Ladies and Gentlemen :

The acoustics in this hall are not half as good as the audience because I have been sitting behind my friend, the Chairman, and I didn't hear a word that he said but I did hear a few glancing references to "Pig-iron" so that I knew my old friends, the Commos, were here. (Applause)

Now, I just want to offer one piece of advice to all of you in the audience - if you want to register into my ear, you must not all talk at once. Do you mind? Just take it in turn and then I might hear you, and, of course, I would love to hear you. I would enjoy that. Already I have heard enough to be able to congratulate my friend, Mr. Nicklin, on his assured victory at the next election, (Applause) because when our opponents scream, they're in trouble. Now, don't destroy your voice. Don't become too hoarse too quickly - or for that matter, too donkey too quickly. You please yourself. Now, I'll explain to you, my dear fellow, that there is an echo in this hall which makes it impossible for me to understand what you are saying. Therefore, you are wasting your time. But I want to say something tonight about matters which concern my Government, the Commonwealth, and the nation of Australia. Somebody over here says "You are not a Government." When he has been Prime Minister by the election of the people as long as I have, I invite him to get up and tell us. (Applause)

Now, first of all, ladies and gentlemen, I just want to say something to you, in spite of all this, about what has happened in Australia in my own time, what has happened in Australia since you've had the Commonwealth Government you now have - the Commonwealth Government, I beg you to remember, which has been voted for by the people of Australia six times. Six times. (Applause)

Sir, the Labour Party. I can speak freely about the Labour Party, can't I, because you're not a Labour man (to interjector); I can tell that. The Labour Party is very fond nowadays of getting up and saying, sometimes with one voice, and sometimes with 36, that Australia has really gone to the dogs - we are in a state of acute misery in Australia and, of course, particularly in Queensland. They are willing to say that because they have hopes in Queensland; rather sketchy hopes, but still hopes. I wonder if I might remind the Labour Party that it really contributed mighty little to the development of this State, in fact discouraged investment in this State. I'd like to remind them, and if you can listen as well as roar, you might consider these figures.

The tobacco industry is a great Queensland industry and a growing one and, no doubt in spite of your poverty, my dear boy (to interjector), you are a great customer of the tobacco industry. (Applause) When the Labour Government was in office - the Commonwealth Labour Government - they managed to screw themselves to the point of requiring that 2½ per cent of cigarette tobacco should be Australian-grown. Today, under my Government, and in current terms with the great assistance of my colleague down here, the Minister for Primary Industry, the percentage is not 2½, it is 40 per cent. (Applause) And in

the result, up at Mareeba and Dimboola, £3M worth of tobacco is being grown. Tobacco which was an unwanted, rather doubted industry in Australia has become a major industry.

What else has happened? Up in the north of Queensland, we have been seeing a new era of development which is of supreme importance to Australia - the great bauxite deposits, the great uranium discoveries. I don't remember that the Labour Party had anything to do with these matters. The great sugar industry (Interjector - "What about the worker?") Yes, he says, "What about the worker?" - that is an almost Edwardian expression: "What about the worker?" (Applause) It's absolutely wonderful - "What about the worker?" Well, I'll tell him. I suppose that what he calls the worker, the employed man or woman, in this State has some interest in the fact that whereas when we came into office, the great sugar industry in Queensland exported half a million tons of sugar - I'm not talking about money, I'm talking about quantity - and what is it today? A million and a quarter tons or more (Applause). Well, now, my colleague sends me a signal to say I am under-estimating it. All I know is that it has practically quadrupled over the term of office of the present Government.

I wonder if I might make a delicate reference to the great subject of pig-iron. Pig-iron and ingot steel - these are two of the great pointers in industrial production in Australia and since we have been in office, the production of these two commodities has trebled today. I'll explain to some of you boys what I mean by trebled - three times as much today (Applause) as there were when your boys were in office.

Sir, I don't need to go through all these things. We've had the most tremendous development in this country. New industries every year. I was reminded this morning, if I may refer to the subject of coal, that when the Labour Party was in up to 1949 for eight years (to interjector - "That's right, Happy Days!") we were importing coal. We were so happy that we had blackouts and power shortages and we, Australia, were importing coal from India and from South Africa and paying through the nose for it. Today, under a non-Labour Government, Australia is exporting coal as well as using far more coal internally than she ever did before. (Applause) And some of your friends, my boy, ought to be pleased about it, because up at Gladstone, there are a few good, sound unionists who have jobs in the handling of coal for export, who wouldn't have had them at all but for what has happened over the last ten years.

Now, Sir, in this rather gay and friendly atmosphere, I am not going to occupy your time by quoting a lot of statistics and therefore, well, I know, I wouldn't waste statistics on you (Laughter, Applause) but I want to turn to another matter which I am sure will infuriate some of the experts around the room.

We have had, in Canberra, (I suppose you can mostly hear me, can you?) in the last three weeks two motions of "No Confidence" by this powerful Opposition that we have at Canberra. They came along and breathed deep the night air at the Kurrajong Hotel or wherever it was - what was it, the other one, the Wellington Hotel or something; they came along reinforced by a vote of 19 to 17, which would have been 18 all and therefore negative, but for a statesmanlike act by the Queenslander - well, now, I would have thought you would have applauded that.

They came along and they had two goes at us. I have never enjoyed two debates more. I have never felt so convinced that a Labour Party is on the way out (Applause) (Boos) Now, ladies and gentlemen, if you don't mind me engaging in a little bit of autobiography, I have been a Leader of the Opposition myself and I know what it means and I know that an Opposition Leader must occasionally move a vote of "No Confidence". It keeps the boys together. It takes their minds off their troubles, and we have had two, and the first of them seemed to have something to do with international affairs and, as a matter of fact, we didn't assume an attitude of defence, we went on to the attack and if ever an Opposition moving a "No Confidence" motion was thrashed to its feet - appropriate expression in this hall - it was the Labour Party on that censure motion. Their trouble was that they know that Australia, whatever else it may think about this or that, is quite determined to be free and secure in future. Therefore, we decided that we would find out where the Labour Party stood on these matters, and what did we get? What did we get?

We got, first of all, this extraordinary attitude that they have about the signalling station in the North West of West Australia. (Interjector - "What will it do?") I'll tell you what it will do, and believe me, Sir, if you understand what I say to you - now, don't waggle your finger at me - if you understand what I am saying to you, you will be better informed than any of your cobblers in the Opposition because they have never succeeded in understanding it. The Americans, the United States of America, they are our allies. Do we all realise that? (Applause) They are our allies. We and New Zealand (to interjector - Well, don't you like them to be allies?) Really, what have we come to? We and New Zealand are their allies in the ANZUS pact, just as we are also associated with them in the South East Asia Treaty Organization. I wonder if anybody would like to report that on a reference to the United States being our ally, a few cheapjacks in this audience counted them out. Is that the Queensland view? Is that the view that you want to get.... That's right (voices counting out). That's exactly what I expected. Yes, take a good picture, boys. They'll get all the publicity. This is the usual thing. Wonderful. They ought to get the Stalin Medal with a bit of luck. (Cheers and Applause) You know the interesting thing about those lads? They stand up straight, but they can't think straight. (Cheers, Applause).

Now, ladies and gentlemen, what is the purpose of this signalling station? I would like to tell you. The purpose of it is to enable communications to occur between the United States and United States naval forces in the Indian Ocean and the South West Pacific. They have these facilities..... (More counting out by interjectors) By Jove, this is the first time that I ever heard that the Pope was a Communist. (Applause) Really, you boys would make anybody laugh. Well trained, no doubt well paid. Get a picture of them. That's the object of the exercise. All over the press tomorrow. "The Pope calls for peace." All I am saying is that if we want peace for ourselves in Australia, if we want security for ourselves in Australia, it's time we woke up to the fact that in this part of the world, the friendship, the generosity, the power of the United States is essential to us. (Applause) Why does the Labour Party object to this signalling station? Well, I confess I am wrong because by a majority of 19 to 17, they decided they were in favour of the signalling station, provided that if a war occurred, and the signalling station was therefore needed, it couldn't be used

except by the permission of the government of the day .. in other words: "Yes, America, spend £50M or £60M or £70M, put up this signalling station and when the day comes that you need it, we give you notice that if there's a Labour Government in Australia, you won't be allowed to use it at all." (Boos) If anything has been made crystal clear, it's that.

Now, I wonder why the Labour Party has this extraordinary view. Is it anti-American? (To interjector - Well, I am very glad to have your answer, Sir, that it is not anti-American) Does it believe that in the event of a great conflagration in the world, Australia can defend herself without friends or without allies? Does the Labour Party believe that, because nobody else does. The simple fact is that if we expect the United States to do things for us, we must be prepared to do things for the United States. (Applause) (Interjector - "What about Great Britain?" Not so powerful as she once was but with tremendous significance in the old world. We expect Great Britain to do things for us. We are prepared to do things for her.

The whole curse that has come upon the Labour Party is that it has become isolationist in the last few years. It wants to pretend that if it puts its head in a bag and looks in the other direction inside the bag, nothing will happen and we will be left alone. And if we want any further proof of that, we have only to look at the fantastic proposal of the Labour Party that the whole Southern Hemisphere should be a nuclear-free zone. (Yells and cheers from interjectors) Of course - this is what they are cheering. The whole Southern Hemisphere is to become a nuclear-free zone. What about the Northern Hemisphere? They haven't said anything about that. Let's stick to the point. The Labour Party has agreed that the whole Southern Hemisphere is not to have, store, manufacture or receive or use any nuclear weapons and that goes for the whole area of the world south of the Equator. It goes for South Sumatra, but it doesn't go for North Sumatra. It goes for Indonesia and for New Guinea and Australia but it doesn't go for Thailand; it doesn't go for Burma, it doesn't go for North Viet Nam, it doesn't go for Communist China. And therefore, we have this extraordinary proposition being put up: We, in the Southern Hemisphere will say nobody can bring a nuclear weapon to our defence south of the Equator, but north of the Equator, the only aggressors in the world, the Communist powers, can make use of them to their hearts' content, and if the time comes (more jeering and yelling). These boys, of course, are great exponents of free speech. We notice that. They are delighted to have somebody express his mind and to give them provocation. I would express my mind about them with even more delight. But, anyhow, I am going back to my topic.

My topic is that this policy is one in which you confine nuclear weapons to north of the Equator and you leave the countries south of the Equator defenceless against them. Absolutely defenceless against them. (Interjector - "Rubbish") You say "Rubbish", but let me put this to you. Let me put this to you. The United States, I hope you will concede, is our ally, and the United States is significant to us and the United States has naval forces in the Indian Ocean, including, of course, naval vessels, either carriers or submarines or aircraft, which carry nuclear weapons and it may well be in the event of a great war that the capacity of the Western powers to attack the Communist stronghold by nuclear weapons will depend upon their control of the Indian Ocean, their capacity to use the

Indian Ocean for these purposes. But according to the Australian Labour Party, they are not to be allowed to use the Indian Ocean, except North of the Equator, they are not to be allowed to bring their vessels into the Indian Ocean if they are armed with nuclear weapons, unless they bring them through the Straits of Malacca where they can be closed overnight and counted every day, in any event, or bring them through the Suez Canal. Now, I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, do you want the United States to think we are a lot of half-wits? Do you want them to suppose that we are bogus in our attitude of friendship with them, of alliance with them, because the best way to do that is to vote into office a Labour Government with the views that I have been putting and I venture to say that our alliances in a useful sense with the United States will come to an end.

Now I am talking about this matter because I don't want anybody to be under any misapprehension. I am very familiar with the views of various people around the world. (Jeering, slow clapping, shouting and yelling) Isn't it wonderful? This shows that they are on the wane because the moment the Labour Party becomes overwhelmed by its Communist friends and they all start preventing people from listening, that's the end of it. (Cheers and applause) Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I want to say to you - you won't have any doubt of the truth of this, though they do: The majority of the people of Australia are decent people, (Applause) which distinguishes them sharply from some of these. Decent people. And what's more, they are not only decent people but they are sensible people and they know that the future of this country is tremendously involved in us maintaining our contacts, our alliances with the great free powers of the world. (Applause)

Sir, I was very interested to discover what the Labour Party's policy was on these matters and indeed I took the opportunity of pointing out, in the course of the debate, how many of the front-bench Labour men - and I presume they were expressing the views of the 36, the 36 faceless men who run the Labour Party - several of them were at great pains to say, "What's Malaya got to do with us. Why should we have forces in Malaya? Why should we worry about what happens in relation to Malaysia? Why should we worry about anything except what happens inside Australia?" Now that's the Labour Party's policy. Dear me, my distinguished opponent is, I believe, speaking in Brisbane somewhere tonight - you know, the Member for East Sydney. (Yells and cheers) Well give him a cheer. You're exactly his type. Give him a cheer. And I am told he's here. Do you remember when he invented a story about the Brisbane Line (shouts and yells) Yes, invented a story about the Brisbane Line and went before a Royal Commissioner and pleaded privilege and said, "I can't give evidence; I have parliamentary privilege." You must, some of you, remember this. All I can say is, that if this business of the Labour Party, if their policy to warn off the Americans, to control them at the North-West Cape, to ban any nuclear provision in the Southern Hemisphere, if this succeeds, it won't be the Brisbane Line that they will be up to, it will be the Hobart Line or the South Pole Line. (Applause) Now, Sir, that is all I need to say about that matter. There are a lot of people in this hall tonight and a lot of people listening in who really understand that it is the first duty of a Government to attend to the security of the nation, that the security, the safety of the people is the supreme law. They know that, and therefore they will be in a good position to judge the worthlessness of these evasive, isolationist policies on the part of Labour.

Well, now, I just turn to another matter, because we have had two "No Confidence" motions. I don't know how many more we'll have.... (Interjector - "You'll get one now") I welcome them, my dear boy. I welcome them. But, my dear fellow, didn't you listen in? Didn't you listen in to the debate? Didn't you realise that the Labour Party was thrashed on both, not only in the division, but in the House? Come, come, you must do yourself justice. But the second "No Confidence" motion had to do with television and it was a very interesting one. Very interesting. It is quite true that the Leader of the Opposition fell into the error of making some outrageous charges of corruption and dishonesty against people who were not involved and that I find it very difficult to forgive. But at any rate, what did happen was that the Labour Party explained its policy on television. How? (Shouts and jeers) Well in your case, put it under the control of the Comintern. I understand that. But to nationalise all television.

Now let's understand what this is: Every country television station run by a local company, every city television station run by a company to be closed down; either at the end of its current licence if they are being respectable, or closed up with or without compensation, so that when we turn on the television at night, we will be privileged to look at the one station run by the Government. Now that's their policy. And, having stated that policy repeatedly, they then began to support it by the rather villainous argument that I referred to.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, this is something worth thinking about. This television is something new in Australia. It has been introduced in our own time, not in a hurry and it has now been going and spreading and extending for a few years. Does anybody in Australia wish to have a Government monopoly of television? (Interjector - "What about private enterprise?") Well, exactly, you talk about private enterprise. He's in favour of private enterprise now. (Laughter) He's in a confused state of mind, I think, my friend down there. He wants private enterprise. What I am saying to this great audience is - Do you want to have a Government monopoly on television? (Interjector - "Yes") Good. He has ambitions to be in the Government. (Laughter) A government monopoly in television, a government monopoly in broadcasting - same sort of thing - is that what we want? A few rather feeble yesses. I imagine if I am any judge of an audience, that 90 per cent. of the people here tonight don't want to have a government monopoly of television. (Sustained applause) If they don't, they had better take a little more care how they vote at the next election than some of them did at the last.

Now, let's face up to it because here is a Labour Party, publicly and solidly pledged, and repeating it in the House, to nationalise television, to wipe out commercial broadcasting - over here he says, as if he is talking to himself "Liar!" (Laughter) If I thought you could read, I would advise you to read the Hansard because we went to great pains to have this established in the House, and it is established beyond the slightest chance of contradiction. And the Labour Party? Well, it's in a funny state. It's a messed-up Party. It really is. I am almost sorry for it at times. (Laughter) (Applause) It is just muddled-up, the Labour Party. They sit down and they say, "Well,

we ought to do this." For example, I think this is rather amusing. There was a television licence to be issued in Melbourne and one of the applicants had two directors representing the Labour Party (Interjection inaudible.) Oh, no. The two directors representing the Labour Party. And they had one or two extraordinarily well-to-do capitalistic types sitting on the Board and they made their application, but it turned out, when the House was meeting to discuss this matter, they didn't believe in private enterprise, even with Labour directors, they must have their monopoly. And, finally, the Broadcasting Control Board recommended, in the case of Victoria, the application by Mr. Ansett's group. Oh, this was very, very unhappy. After all, the Board recommended it and the Board recommended it unanimously, and after all, one of the directors of the Ansett group is a well-known Labour candidate in Victoria - Sir George Jones - not likely to be a supporter of mine or of ours. But the Board recommended the Ansett group and we said, "Very well. We accept the recommendation."

Now that, I would have thought, would have ended it, because Parliament established this Board, Parliament passed the law. Under the law passed by Parliament, there is a Broadcasting Control Board; the Board is an independent body and every application for a licence has to be referred to it and people come along, eight or nine of them in each case, and spend thousands of pounds on presenting their case to the Board and the Board makes a report, and we accepted the Board's report. I wonder what the Labour Party would have done. (Interjector - "Don't worry about the Labour Party") I'm not worried about the Labour Party. I am only talking about the Labour Party because I think there might be a few noodles left who want to vote for them. (Cheers, applause) Suppose Labour had been in office, what would they have done about it? Would they have rejected the report of the Board? Would they have selected a few of their own friends? (Sustained slow clapping) There you are, you have got the answer. They would have given a slow clap. That's it and while everybody was saying what dumbbells these are, the Labour Party, no doubt, would have either given the licence to one of its friends, or would have said, "The whole thing is cancelled; we are going to have a complete Government monopoly of television" because that is its policy.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I have spoken to you about those matters because I think they are modern, they are quite contemporary. We have thrashed them out in the House, and I don't propose at this stage to occupy your time any longer, but I do take the opportunity of saying that there has been no great Party in the history of Australia ever to have won an election by larrikin tactics. No great Party. (Applause) All I can do is to express my deep sympathy to my Labour opponents for some of the curious characters who allegedly support them on the fringe.
