

MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF WOMEN'S
ORGANIZATIONS ARRANGED BY THE WOMEN'S SECTION
OF THE LIBERAL PARTY IN BRISBANE ON
23RD APRIL, 1963.

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

I've never discovered quite accurately how one begins :
Madam Chairman, is that right? (Laughter) There is a certain
ambiguity about that, but still, we'll let it pass.

I want to thank you very much, in the first place, for
having congratulated me on this event that has recently occurred
in my life. The truth of the matter is that any properly
constituted man finds it almost impossible to say "No" to a
woman (Laughter) and that is the whole story in brief. All The
Queen had to do was to smile and say, "Now, come, come. What
about it?" and I was sunk with all hands. Some people think
that it is in my nature to be given the Order of the Thistle
(Laughter). The motto of the Order is - done into English -
"Nobody hurts me (or frustrates me) with impunity". One or two
of my Cabinet colleagues were unkind enough to say when it
was announced that they had known that for many, many years
(Laughter) and thought it quite appropriate. But the best
translation of the lot is in the Scots, where its version is :
"Who dare meddle with me?" (Laughter) You Sassenachs won't
understand that, but all the rest will.

Now, I thought I'd like to talk to you quite briefly
this morning about one or two matters of importance. In the
first place, I am going to tell you at once, to relieve your
minds, that I don't propose to run through a whole series of
figures and facts and give you categories of this or that because
nothing is more tiresome I think, and nothing more difficult to
carry around with you. But I think it proper to say and it is
worth while everybody realising, particularly in Queensland,
that in recent times the amount that has gone on in this State
and is going on, of a developmental kind, with the active and
powerful assistance of the Commonwealth is quite remarkable.

There are some people who think that all you need to
do, if you are going to get some help from the Commonwealth,
which means from the taxpayers, is to go along and say, "This
is a pretty good thing to do; what about you paying for it?"
Now, this is not right. The Commonwealth does not carry out the
public works, for example, that the States do. We do to a
limited extent, in our own field. Most of the great public
works in Australia, the great works of development, are State
works, but increasingly the Commonwealth is becoming a contribu-
tor to their cost and we have laid down a rule that there must
be some limit to this kind of thing, some rational limit.
We have laid down a rule that we will be prepared to examine
with a State Government the possibility of financial assistance
for a particular job of work, if that job of work can be related
to the export earnings of Australia.

You see, we have a great responsibility for keeping
this country internationally solvent and that means that we
must have our exports constantly increasing, so that we may
have overseas, held in various forms, adequate sums of money to
preserve the solvency of Australia in the international market.
It is a complicated matter. I don't want to look beyond that
point, but it is essential that our export industries should be

encouraged. That is why it is so essential that we should restrain inflation in Australia because the first industries to suffer with inflation are the primary industries which are, to an overwhelming extent, responsible for our export earnings - sugar, wheat, meat and so on down the list.

Now, we have laid down this general rule and if I may apply it to the State of Queensland, it may be interesting. I don't take them in any particular order, but take the great railways conversion on the Mt. Isa/Collinsville lines. It turned out to be impossible to raise the money, to borrow the money from the World Bank, although at one stage, we had great hopes that that could be done and so the Commonwealth Government stepped in and said, "We will act in place of the World Bank. We will finance this up to the extent of £20M.

Now £20M is a lot of money. Even for an Opposition, it is a lot of money. Why did we do this? Well, we did this because Mt. Isa has every prospect of being the greatest copper mine in the world, and whereas copper was in very short supply only a few years ago, there is an increasing chance of a substantial export market in copper, to say nothing of the extent to which it saves us from importing copper in the first instance. Therefore this is a great export earner and if it could be doubled or quadrupled - that is what is going on at Mt. Isa - then the earnings from the mine are doubled or quadrupled and that is of tremendous significance in Australia's balance of payments. Therefore, we are certainly in on this.

Take a small example (the other is a very big one) - the coal facilities at the port of Gladstone. Now, it may seem a little odd that the Commonwealth should come in to some modest extent - about £250,000 - on some coal-handling facilities at a port like Gladstone, but the same principle was applied. The principle was that if these facilities were increased, then an export market from the port of Gladstone in coal could be created. We have done the same with coal ports in New South Wales.

Now you may say, "Oh, well, this is all rather humdrum." It isn't humdrum. When we came back into office at the end of 1949, after eight years of Labour administration, Australia wasn't exporting coal, Australia was importing coal. Many of you will remember it. Importing coal. Buying coal from India, buying coal from South Africa; and because shipping was scarce in those days, paying the most tremendous freight rates, charter rates, in order to land the coal in Australia. Although Australia is full of coal, we were importing it, so declined had the fortunes of the country become. And, today, of course, we have an export market in coal. It becomes increasingly important. The production of coal has gone up by leaps and bounds and so has its export, and therefore we said, "Here's a case in which there is a chance to improve the export earnings of Australia."

Similarly, and I'll still stick to Queensland, you take the beef roads up in the north, where we are providing, over a short term of years, £8M or £9M, most of it by way of grant, in order to construct properly a series of beef roads which will enable a bigger out-turn of cattle from the cattle lands to be made. This, of course, will add very very considerably to the export earnings of Australia because let us

remember all the time that while you may look at it as the export earnings of John Brown or of the Mt. Isa company or whatever it may be, in reality in the broad, this goes into the great stream of export earnings of the country itself and if our exports exceed our imports, then we are accumulating reserves overseas. If we don't accumulate reserves overseas, then we are just like a household in which there is no money in the bank, no savings made, nothing to fall back on for a rainy day and we musn't allow the nation to be in that State.

There is a great development going on or about to go on in the Brigalow country and we have undertaken to find millions of pounds in relation to that, and why? For the same reason. It will increase the production of exportable commodities - beef, meat of various kinds, whatever the products may turn out to be.

Now, I am sorry to be tedious about that, but I wanted you all to understand the principle on which the Government acts in these matters. It is not just a matter of kissing going by favour. It must never be a matter of saying, "Well, we will do that job because there are some votes in it." This is pretty cheap stuff and politics of a poor order. We have therefore established the principle that we must be shown first by a State Government that the operation will come in aid of the national exports and if it is, then we sit down and we get down to brass tacks and in a great number of cases we have helped. We have done it in Western Australia. We are about to do it in South Australia. We have done it to a certain extent in Victoria, though perhaps not as much as the Victorians would like. Now, so much for that.

The other thing I want to mention to you has nothing to do with that. It is far removed from it. There has been a great deal of argument going on recently about disarmament and about nuclear-free zones in the world and about a communications station, an American station, in the North-West of Western Australia. I thought I would just like to say a few words to you about those matters because there is nothing on which there is so much confusion of thought, particularly among my opponents who have got it all messed up in their own minds and it is essential to keep it clear.

First of all, you must realise that the Labour Party approaches it from the point of their firmly-established policy that there should be a nuclear-free zone in the Southern Hemisphere. That is to say, in the Southern Hemisphere no nuclear weapons are to be made or stored or used. Now that sounds wonderful, doesn't it? We don't want a nuclear war. Who does? But we want nuclear power because unless we had had it, we would have been at war long since. But it sounds rather attractive to say, "Well, now, you can put the whole of the world south of the Equator out of the nuclear arena. What would that mean? Just in the name of commonsense, what does that mean? It means that China, Communist China, north of the Equator has no prohibitions about nuclear weapons but we, south of the Equator would. So we couldn't have our allies use nuclear weapons in our defence but Communist China could use them against us without reprisal and with impunity. Does that strike you as a very sensible policy? If ever I knew anything unrealistic, it is that. And this thinking, this thinking which would put us in the position of absolutely letting down our allies and therefore being let down by them,

is pretty widespread. We happen - and it is to the credit of the present Government let me say - we happen to have two treaties in which we are in alliance with the United States - ANZUS - United States, Australia, New Zealand --- and the SEATO treaty in which Great Britain is also one of our partners. Not that we need to have formal alliances with Great Britain, but we are together, whatever comes.

But talk about America for this purpose. America is the greatest free power in the world. If it weren't for the enormous deterrent strength that the United States has, this world could have been overrun at ease by the Communist powers. What could have stood in the way? Therefore the United States is very important to us. You, you ladies, the custodians of the future of Australia, have a profound interest in the security of Australia and the security of Australia depends more than any other thing on the alliances that we have in this part of the world with the United States of America. Great Britain can do something here but she has enormous tasks elsewhere in the world. We have the United States and the ANZUS pact and so on.

Do you realise that this Labour policy means that if the United States became involved in a great war with Communist China - and that would be a world war on a great scale - that the United States couldn't attack Communist China from any point south of the Equator and would therefore be utterly handicapped in conducting operations of war. Suppose - look, God knows we don't want it; we pray against it - but suppose the world got into a great war, with the United States and Great Britain on one side and Communist China and Communist Russia on the other, and we as one of the prizes of defeat or victory, and we have an alliance with the United States --- can you suppose that Australia would approve of telling the United States, "You can't have a submarine with a nuclear weapon on it; you can't have an aircraft carrier with a nuclear weapon on it; you can't have an aircraft with a nuclear weapon on it south of the Equator, otherwise you are breaking the rules that we have laid down. The effect would be to destroy the United States' capacity to attack the Communist powers from the south from a point from which they are most vulnerable - the Indian Ocean and its surroundings. We would simply immobilise our own ally and, of course, the United States, indeed no great country, can trifle with its own safety in that way. It would simply say, "We ignore your rules", and so all we get for our contribution is a quarrel at that time with the nation whose victory is essential to ours. Now all that nonsense, as I call it -- the suicidal nonsense about a nuclear-free zone, is clearly to be observed in the approach of the Labour Party to this signalling station at North-West Cape. Really, they have a bee in their bonnet on this business. They only just failed to declare their hostility to it. Nineteen to seventeen. If the gentleman from Queensland hadn't changed his vote, as I understand, at the last moment, the hostility to it would have been confirmed and a Labour Government - the one that you are going to vote for if you vote against us - a Labour Government would have served notice that if it won the next election, it would terminate the American rights to conduct that signalling base in the North-West of Western Australia.

Now, what is this signalling station? They have got an idea that it is going to be a fire control tower, that somebody will press a button and that will fire a Polaris missile off a submarine. This is so childish. It has no foundation in life at all. That is not the way these things are done. All that this station is for is to enable communications to be had from the Administration in the United States with the United States naval vessels in the Indian Ocean and South West Pacific, whether they are above the water or under the water. It is part of the naval forces. And they need to have the signalling connection with them badly. They have it in the Pacific. They have it in the Atlantic. They don't have it in this area, and the one place in which it can be effectively established is in the North-West of Australia. We are their ally. Their friend. And they are our friend and, to a large extent, our protector. Are we to say to them, "No, you can't have a radio station; the land would still be ours, of course, but you can't have a radio station, because you know, you may be signalling to a submarine and a submarine" Oh, that's a rude word with the Left-Wingers in the Labour Party, unless it is a Russian submarine in which case it is quite respectable, thank you.

Well, you know this is puerile and yet, I repeat, but for the mere accident of a single change of vote, the policy of the next Labour Government would have been to declare, "Out with this station". As it is, I am going to take no chances on this matter. I've got too much sense of responsibility for this country to take chances on this and therefore, when the agreement is finally concluded - because they are still working out a few details - when the agreement is concluded, we are going to put it through Parliament and have it authorised by the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia and it won't be very easy then for a new Government to tear it up because it will not only have to repudiate the agreement, it will have to get Parliament also to approve of the repudiation, and that's not so easy in Australia. It is essential, from our point of view, that this matter should be confirmed, made absolutely clear, and the only reason I am mentioning it to you is that once more it throws light on what these strange opponents of ours think about the problems of national security.

Of course, it all illustrates this: that they have gone back to isolationism. They were isolationist before the war. They had to snap out of it during the war when they went into office and did it very well. Now they have gone back to isolationism. Everybody in Australia ought to look at the map once a week, the map of South East Asia once a week, at least. I go into the Cabinet room and pull it down and look at it with regularity. I know it back to front. What do you see? You see Communist China so aggressive in philosophy that even Khrushchev is disagreeing with them and saying, "Now, gently, gently; don't be so extreme". That is the Chinese Communist outlook. And below them, what have we got? We have got Burma, which lives under their shadow and, I would imagine, in the fear of them. We have North Viet Nam, absolutely violently Communist under Ho Chi Minh - South Viet Nam, a little outpost of non-Communism, involving today the assistance of the United States and Australia; Laos which is in a state of chronic confusion, due entirely to Communist agitation internally and from outside. We have Malaya, peaceful, well-governed, quite a rich country, part of

the British Commonwealth; Singapore, the new concept of Malaysia, and then down here - well, we've got Thailand of course which is our ally - and down below here, Indonesia - you never know - and Australia. Aren't we interested in seeing that the Communist attack doesn't come too near to us, or are we going to put our heads in a bag and say, "Well, we'll pretend we didn't know anything about it until it happened. They can come down; they can infiltrate; they can get hold of Laos; they can get hold of Thailand; they can wipe out South Viet Nam." All imaginary things but, really, in terms of military power, these countries left to themselves couldn't resist it.

And yet, in our Parliament, we have a member of the Executive of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Mr. Haylen, and who is bound to be a Minister if they come into office, saying, "What's Malaya got to do with us? The Commonwealth Brigade in the reserve ought to be withdrawn from Malaya. What's it got to do with us?" In other words, what does it matter to us if Malaya is overrun by the Communists. This is wonderful statesmanship, isn't it? This is the kind of statesmanship that has produced a war or two in modern history. Don't let us stand up for anything when we can; let it go, let it go, let it go, until finally you are in it on the worst possible terms, with all your outposts taken. It is worth thinking about this matter, this suicidal attitude towards what is, after all, the overwhelmingly important thing for you and for me and for our children and our grandchildren, that this country should be strong, self-respecting, secure and living on terms of honourable friendship with great free nations around the world.

I once used an expression - I daresay that like most people I repeated it - about our great and powerful friends. I like to have great and powerful friends and so do you. But this has become a sort of jeering thing now: "The Prime Minister, of course, he bows his knee to our great and powerful friends, while of course we, the Labour Party, so far from bowing the knee, kick them hard, because that's the way to deal with great and powerful friends."

Now, this is a tremendously serious matter. If the next election merely involved some change of emphasis in how much money you spent inside Australia on this or that, perhaps it wouldn't matter, but if a change of Government involves, as I have shown you it does, an utter conversion from one extreme to the other, from one point to another on the attitude towards the security of Australia, then I want to say to you it's a risk no sensible person ought to take. You will be accused - I will be accused - of being warmongers. I was one of the Prime Ministers who, at the Prime Ministers' Conference agreed on a statement about disarmament, every word of which now stands and to which the Labour Party pays lip service. The operative part on the matters I have been discussing I actually drafted myself in the Prime Ministers' Conference.

Of course we want to see a slowing-down of the armament race. Of course we want to see a substantial measure of disarmament, but the first thing to remember is that there are two kinds of armament in the world. There is the nuclear weapon and there is what they are pleased to call the conventional weapon - conventional forces, nuclear forces. A lot of

people like a few of those silly old men who sit in the street in England, a lot of people have persuaded themselves that if you get rid of nuclear weapons you have solved the problem of peace or war in the world. You haven't. You have merely transferred the balance of power from the West to the Communists and therefore we have said right throughout, "You must deal with these two matters together. If you are going to reduce nuclear armaments, and we are all for it, then you must reduce, correspondingly reduce, conventional armament. You are not to have a process of disarmament which throws the world out of balance and gives some tremendous advantage to one side or the other. So keep it phased; keep it in harmony and get down to a point where ultimately, someday, the peace will be kept, we hope, by some properly controlled international force." But in the meantime, there is an awful lot of work to be done, and those people who because of the sheer horror of thinking about it want to abolish the nuclear forces, while leaving the other forces untouched are just, if they got away with it, making it a certainty that the whole balance of power would swing around and that the Communist powers would be able to dominate the world at will. And they are not very gentle. They don't have too much of the Christian ethic so far as I have been able to discover and the prospect of them dominating the world is one that would fill any average Australian with complete horror.

Now, I have already spoken too long. Thank you very much. I didn't expect to see anything like so many of you when I came here this morning. I have to go away and be spoken to by the members of the State Cabinet at lunchtime and then I think I am on a television exercise this afternoon and then a meeting in the stadium tonight. So the day is only really beginning. Thank you very much for making it begin so well.
