



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

9 November 1976

### LORD MAYOR'S BANQUET - MELBOURNE

I am delighted - honoured - to have been invited to attend this banquet, which is the pre-eminent annual banquet of the City of Melbourne. It is the occasion on which the Lord Mayor of Melbourne can speak to the City of Melbourne and to the State of Victoria.

It is an occasion attended by the Governor, the Chief Justice, and this year by the representative of the Premier.

Out of the generosity of the City of Melbourne even Prime Ministers, are, on occasion, provided with a platform from which to respond to the toast to the Commonwealth and to speak - briefly.

Since I find myself tonight with a platform, I hope it will not be taken as an impertinence if I say a few words about the concept of this dinner. The first thing that strikes one about this dinner is the illustrious character of its guest list. It is a guest list which I know you have striven to make ecumenical - even to the extent of inviting Hawthorn football club supporters. But then, I suppose this year you did not really have a choice in the matter.

In recent years, the guest list for this banquet has attracted considerable comment. I am sure that we are all very pleased to see so many of the leading women in our community here this evening. Their presence expresses the judgement that this banquet pre-eminently should express the unity of our community. It is no reflection on the City of Melbourne or on you, my Lord Mayor, that there are few if any representatives of the trade union movement here tonight. Yet their absence, is I believe, very much to be regretted.

This year, many of us have had to think very deeply about Australia and the direction in which we want Australia to go. The kind of Australia we will pass onto our children and our grandchildren will very much depend on those of us here. It will also depend equally greatly on many who are not here.

Australia is a country currently facing significant challenges - challenges which arise both from serious economic circumstances and from inevitable social change. I do not need to spell out in detail what these challenges are - we are all too familiar with them.

Whether we get on top of inflation, whether we can beat unemployment, whether Australia becomes a country where people treat each other with tolerance and mutual respect - all these depend on the commitment and attitudes of people right throughout our community and around Australia.

One of the great qualities about Australia has been the way in which Australians have traditionally recognised the common bond between them - and the over-riding importance this bond has over any differences of opinion that might exist.

There are - unfortunately - some people today who strive to divide Australians from each other - who seek personal gain from stirring up conflict and divisiveness in the community - who strive to use economic difficulties and social issues to attack our democratic institutions.

Fortunately, these people are a tiny minority. There is nothing that will more certainly ensure that they remain a minority than a widespread recognition that the future of all Australians is bound up together.

I have said on a number of occasions this year, that the responsibility for ensuring a return to prosperity falls on all sections of the Australian people.

But the unity of Australians extends beyond the interests we all have in economic recovery. It is a unity which genuinely extends to all the major issues with which we as politicians deal - whether we are talking about the position of women in the community, about opportunities for disadvantaged minorities, about the problems of the retired, or about the small businessmen. The unity of interest about which I am speaking extends even into those difficult problems that arise with changing social values.

In each of these matters all of us - those here tonight and those not here - have an over-riding concern in common - that all Australians, whoever they may be - of whatever sex, race, age - should be treated with full regard to their personal dignity and with respect for their right to seek to realise their goals in their own way.

If principles such as these guide our actions I believe we will not go far wrong in the way we handle any of the problems that confront us. Of course, we cannot take for granted that these basic values will always find expression - we know, indeed, only too well from experience that they are often not expressed. That instead, some Australians are confronted by intolerance, discrimination, social privilege and lack of concern - and unfortunately, by efforts to sow division within Australia. This brings me back to my earlier remarks, and to the imperinence that I referred to.

A banquet such as this can pre-eminently symbolise the real unity in our community - leading women, trade union leaders, community leaders of all kinds.

The future of Melbourne, of Victoria, of Australia depends on them all.

This dinner can truly help to symbolise the unity of our community. I hope that it will increasingly do so in future years.

We cannot avoid the great task of ensuring that the true unity of Australia prevails over particular differences of opinion.

I believe it is important that we all take every opportunity to stress our common interests and our common concerns - and take a resolute stand against those who seek to divide.

It has been an excellent dinner - enjoyed by us all.

I have been most interested in your remarks, Lord Mayor, and most grateful for your invitation.

000ooo000