

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES, AT BENTLEIGH, ON THE 1st DECEMBER, 1960

Ladies and gentlemen:

This seems to me like a real old fashioned political meeting. I am particularly delighted with it because this is a by-election, and, as you have been reminded, at this by-election, as indeed at all elections, you have to choose between the Government and the Opposition.

You've heard the Government here; you've heard the "opposition" there; (Laughter, applause) and on Saturday week you will decide what side you are on. Is it difficult? (Laughter, applause)

Now I've noticed that there are three types of interjections. One says rubbish; and is rubbish. (Laughter) One, of course, is my time-honoured and most honourable title, "Pig-iron Bob" (Applause) (If I hadn't been made of some material of that kind I don't suppose I would be around today.) (Laughter, applause) And the third interjection - (Interjection: "How did you get the name "Pig-iron Bob?")

Oh, would you like to hear the story? (Interjections) Now if you are prepared to remain silent I'll tell you how I got the name. Because as you know, I was given the name by the Communists, and I'll tell you, if you would like to know, how I got it.

You see the Communist-led waterside workers at Port Kembla were refusing to load a ship for Japan at a time when we were at peace with that country. They undertook to take charge of the foreign policy of this country.

We, being the Government - (Interjections) - Now, wait a moment. Are you afraid of the story? (Interjection: "No") Well listen to it then. (Interjections) There is one thing you must always say about the Coms - they're cowardly. (Applause)

The issue at that time was, 'Who ran the foreign policy of Australia?' - the lawfully elected Government, or a handful of waterside workers led by the Communist, Roach, at Port Kembla. So I went down to them at Port Kembla - I didn't talk to them on the long distance telephone - I went down and met them on the spot, and told them that they were going back to work because we were in charge of the Government of the country. And they went back to work. (Applause)

Since then I have honourably borne this title - and seen it chalked on railway bridges. Each time I see it, I say "How well they treat me; this is the finest unsolicited publicity that I could possibly have". (Applause)

But the third matter that has been thrown up a good deal tonight during two very interesting speeches, is the matter of the Crimes Act. I just think that perhaps to dispose of this largely bogus argument, I might say a word about it. (There's a young gentleman over here who wanted to invoke the name of the Presbyterian Church. I don't know whether he is a Presbyterian, is he? Are you, Sir? No. Well, I am) (Applause) So perhaps as a member of the Presbyterian Church I can say this to you - (Interjection: "Does that mean the Church is wrong? The fact that I'm not a member, does that prove the Church is wrong?") Oh! It proves nothing. (Interjection: "Well why did you mention it then?") I mentioned it because I thought I might like to establish

that if it comes to discussing the views of the Presbyterian Church I might be more qualified than you were. (Laughter, applause)

I say, without hesitation, that the Presbyterian Assembly was misled on this matter. My distinguished colleague, the Attorney-General, who has devoted infinite time and patience, and skill to this matter has written to the Presbyterian Assembly pointing out where the errors have been made.

(Interjection: "And they still disapprove!")

Well, I don't know. The Presbyterian Assembly has not met since they received this letter. So who are you to say that they disapprove. (Applause) You want to brush yourself up on the procedures of the Presbyterian Church, I can see that.

The whole point about it is this - or rather there are two points about it. The first is this - and I put this question to you, quite seriously, quite coldly. Does anybody in this hall believe that we ought not to have a Commonwealth Law against treason? Or against sabotage? Or against sedition? Does anybody believe that? Of course not.

The Labour Party in the Federal Parliament was so little prepared to oppose the creation of laws in respect of these matters, that it did not oppose the Second Reading of the Bill. Now remember that. The Crimes Bill went to its Second Reading, and the Labour Party confined its attack to a series of particular points. (Interjections)

I may remind you that this Bill was brought down in Parliament, the second reading speech was made, and it was a couple of months before it came on for discussion in the House. For the whole of that time it was available to anybody who cared to read it.

I wonder how many people who are making noises about it tonight, have read the Crimes Bill. I wonder if the very young man there has read the Crimes Bill. I wonder. I wonder how many of them have read the speech made by the Attorney-General explaining the Crimes Bill. I wonder how many of you know that the campaign against the Crimes Bill started after the delivery of the Governor-General's speech at the opening of Parliament. It was started by the Communist Party in its newspapers. They have spent thousands of pounds on it; and their campaign was months old before the Bill was ever introduced, and before they knew one word of what was in it.

That is a very interesting fact. Then, of course, people are easily misled on these matters. And so, "A Crimes Bill! This must be terrible!"

Well what was the great argument? I'll just deal with one central point of this. They said, "Oh, this is a shocking thing. Now this offence of sabotage, you don't have to prove anything except the man's character". That was said, and said almost in terms, by somebody in the Presbyterian Assembly. It was utterly wrong. It has been said, repeatedly, by people who haven't read the Bill, and who know nothing about the substance of it, that here is a law which would enable the Government to grab a man up, and to have him convicted before a jury only on evidence of his known character - and therefore this is a monstrous political weapon.

Now the fact is that you cannot prove before the

jury the offence of sabotage, without proving the act that was performed - and that must be proved to the satisfaction of the jury - and then in addition to that, if you want to prove the purpose for which the act was done, then you are at liberty, if the Judge regards it as material, and fair, to prove the known character of the accused. Now let me give you an example. Here is a simple example of what I mean and I'll leave it to the good sense, the enduring good sense of the Australian people.

(Interjection: "You'll find out on the 10th December".)

Well I'll find out, no doubt. I've been told that, you know, in 1949, in 1951, in 1954 and in 1958. And you will be yelling it out to me at the next General Election. (Applause) But you'll still be wrong.

Now let us take a case, because this is an important matter. It is very important that we should not have unjust, or unfair laws on the Statute Book. Now let us take this example.

A man is engaged in technical work, or work of a technical kind in a research establishment having relation to the defence of the country, and some extraordinary, complicated, difficult, new type of mechanism has been evolved. This is of tremendous importance, let us say, to the defence of the country; and this man, at a suitable occasion, when it is nearing it's tests, and has had many, many thousands of pounds spent on it, drops something into it and smashes it.

He is seen. He drops a great lump of metal, or a spanner or whatever it may be - well, pig-iron if you like - (Laughter) - he drops it in. He is at once grabbed. He has, on all superficial appearances, committed an act of sabotage - and a very serious one. It is simple to prove what happened. Then he says, "Well I'm terribly sorry, but my hands were a bit greasy and it slipped out of my hand, and I didn't mean it. I was the most surprised man in the place".

Now let me put this to you my friends. Suppose the prosecution could establish that that man was a card carrying top-line Communist who had found his way into that works, and was there in a position to do damage in line with the Communist ideas. I put this to you, as a jury yourself: Do you think that that fact ought not to be available to the jury? Do you think that that fact ought to be concealed? And a man go free of an act of that kind, perhaps at the very time when the country stands in its greatest danger? Of course not.

Yet we were told by a variety of people, and unfortunately the Presbyterian General Assembly of my own Church was persuaded to believe it, that you didn't have to prove the act; all you had to do was to prove the character.

Now I've established to you - I hope quite plainly - that you must prove the act, the very act that was done. It must be established beyond all reasonable doubt to the jury. And if you do that, and if the Judge, being told what the other evidence is, says, "Yes, it is material; it is not unfair that this should go in" then you can prove the other things that relate to the purpose with which the act was done.

Now ladies and gentlemen, I want to go back to where I really intended to start.

References have been made here tonight to Frank Timson. I want to tell you that I regard his death as a very great loss to the Parliament. That is the common view, let me hasten to say, of members on both sides of the House. (Applause) Because he was an immensely popular man - greatly respected, greatly trusted by friends and by foe. It is a very sad thing that he should have gone.

But, there it is, these things happen. Therefore we have a by-election and we are, I think, speaking as head of the Government, extraordinarily fortunate that we have a candidate of the obvious calibre of Mr. Chipp. (Applause) Because in Parliament at any rate, people are judged, not by the amount of noise they can utter, but by the processes of their minds, by how much they can think, how much they can expound, how much they can judge the circumstances of the times.

Therefore this is a great opportunity, once more, to put into the Federal Parliament a man of training and intelligence and experience who is capable of doing all those three rather difficult things. Because thinking, and speech, and judgment are all difficult. And he can do them.

Now what has been going on since Frank Timson first went into Parliament, 11 years ago? We have had quite a lot of elections. The elections may be great fun to some people who just have to attend them. But from the point of view of the fellow who slogs through them all over Australia, they are very hard work. We have had now, in '49, and '51 and '54 and '55 and '58, five elections in which I myself have been all over Australia. There have been denunciations made of the Government. We have been told, even by my genial and admirable friend, Arthur Calwell, that we are on the verge of ruin.

Every time ruin and desolation have been prophesied: mass unemployment, all sorts of things. Yet the interesting thing is that on each of these five occasions, as you all saw the issue has been up. People in Australia are not so stupid as not to know their own circumstances.

What I object to about some of my opponents is that they think the people are so silly. I have a great respect for the wisdom of the people. And the people, exercising their wisdom, and knowing their own circumstances better than any politician could, has five times in succession, returned us to office. That is worth remembering. (Applause)

And the ALP Candidate, whoever he may be - I don't know - in this electorate, has a heavy task. (Interjections)

But, ladies and gentlemen, just glance over the events, the policies of these years. Ask yourselves why it is that you have voted for us so steadfastly. If you look back over the 11 years you can answer that question quite simply. You look outside Australia; look at our relations with the rest of the world. They are a great deal better, aren't they, than they were 11 years ago? (Interjections)

Really that's a brave remark for anybody to say "No", because I venture to say that 11 years ago, 12 years ago, our relations with the United States of America, and, to an extent, our relations with Great Britain, were lower than they had been for a long, long time.

So we set out repairing this position. I want to

remind the audience of this. If they want to know what the test is to take, for an example, of our relations with the United States - a very important relationship. Because, let me remind them, the United States is not a neutral country. The United States is the greatest power in the free world, and a great friend and assistant of other countries in the free world. Make no mistake about that. There is no question of neutrality today about the United States, any more than there is about Great Britain.

Therefore just let us consider what has happened during our term of office.

I don't think the United States of America had, except in the case of the North Atlantic Treaty, the NATO Organisation, committed itself in military, or semi-military terms, to other countries, because of Constitutional difficulties, because of the position of the President and the restrictions on his power.

We have, during our term of office, secured and been largely instrumental in securing two agreements by way of treaty with the United States of America. One is the ANZUS Pact, United States, Australia, New Zealand, a Pact of the most enormous importance to us, an arrangement under which, at regular intervals, there are consultations on the political and the military level, between these three countries.

Later on came the South East Asian Treaty, in which the partners are Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, New Zealand and Australia.

Now here you have another form of organisation, rather similar, in some ways, to the NATO Organisation in the Atlantic. Let me remind you that but for the existence of NATO, but for the close co-operation that exists between the United States and Canada, and Great Britain, and France, and West Germany, but for that, and the defensive forces which are deployed in Western Europe, who knows whether we wouldn't have been in war years ago. These are enormously important considerations.

(Interjection: "It's not to your credit")

Well, I hope you will allow me to take a little credit for the fact that it was my Government (Applause) which obtained ANZUS and SEATO - on neither occasion, with any particular approval by the Labour Party. As to the other fellows, not Labour, not Liberal - one hesitates to name them - what their attitude was, I wouldn't know.

But I do know this, that the security of this country has been strengthened and strengthened to an extent that concerns everybody in this hall tonight, and everybody in Australia, during the last ten years. (Applause)

Now, Sir, just let me for a few minutes consider the internal, the domestic side of this matter.

I wonder if everybody realises that in these years, in these last few years, 10 years, 12 years, whatever it may be - it all began under Mr. Calwell whose work in relation to Immigration I think was admirable: (I've never denied that) - we have received substantially over a million new people into this country. Our population has risen year by year, partly by migration, partly by natural increase, at a percentage rate rather higher than Japan. That is worth thinking about.

Do you remember how we always used to be told that of course the teeming millions went on teeming? Our percentage increase has been quite remarkable.

Now this is not easily done. You can't bring as many people as that into a country without putting enormous strains on the economy of the country. You have, and very properly, great demands on the one side for houses and schools and roads and facilities. You can't have 10% of the population brand new, like that, without having all these additional demands.

Of course on the other hand you add to your labor force hundreds of thousands of people who are accustomed to working hard, who go into factories, who have taken on great responsibilities, in heavy industries particularly. So you try to get some balance out of all these things.

But there must have been quite a few people who thought that this large migration programme was foolish because it would throw Australians out of work. Don't you think it has been a pretty good achievement over these ten years to take in, and absorb, these hundreds of thousands, this million and more of people, without any unemployment at all? (Applause)

Then take another thing, take another aspect of this. You can't increase the population of the country at this rate without setting out to develop the resources of the country. Because if you didn't have the development of new resources, you couldn't carry additional population.

Therefore we have had the most tremendous task in front of us of developing Australia, not solely that we should do it: the State Governments have had it; local authorities have it. But Australia, as a Nation has had this tremendous task of national development.

I don't think anybody on either side of the House would deny that the economic development in Australia in ten years has been almost fabulous. Even my distinguished opponent the Leader of the Opposition, had to say the other day, "I admit" - as if it were a matter of reluctance - "that the country is very prosperous".

Well there it is. (Interjections) My dear fellow the fact that you are alive doesn't disprove my case. (Laughter) After all, that kind of odd thing must occur in the best regulated countries. (Laughter) The fact is that it is a very prosperous country.

What is much more important, perhaps, than individual prosperity, is the fact that the whole basis of future development in Australia is being laid strongly and well. You can see it in all aspects of our life.

In spite of Labour doctrines to the contrary, it is not possible to develop Australia, a country of ten million people, merely by the savings of ten million people. Ten million can save a good deal - we do in Australia - but if we are going to develop the country and take on these enormous undertakings, like the Snowy Mountains Scheme - a £450 million job - if we are going to take on a lot of these other tasks and perform them, then we must be able to attract into Australia capital from overseas.

Now I just want to say something about this before I finish - capital from overseas. (Interjections)

I know that my friends opposite - by opposite I mean not there, but up at Canberra - that my friends opposite are a bit cold on getting capital in from overseas. They think, you know, Mr. Chairman, that there is something wrong about allowing Americans, or Englishmen, or even Scotsmen, to come into the country and invest their capital, and take some profits out of the country. This they regard in some strange way, as an evil thing.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wonder if they realise that our net capital gain, not Government borrowing, but private investment, genuine productive private investment, our capital gain from overseas in the last eight years has averaged at least £100 million a year; and last year it reached its peak at £200 million.

But for the movement into Australia of these great sums of refreshing money, this irrigation of Australian enterprise, this creation of work and factories and employment, the rate of progress in Australia would have been slowed down, and we could not have accommodated the flow of migrants that we have received.

That is just one of the simple facts of the economic life of the nation. I mention it to you because although you will encounter people who will argue about all sorts of things that touch them personally, or that are temporary, your real task now, and when the next General Election comes along, will be to say to yourselves, quite simply: "Do we think that this state of affairs will continue under the other Government?"

And of course it won't, of course it won't. Because people abroad are not fools on these matters. They are not going to invest their money, and put their enterprise and skill to work in a country if they think that it is an unstable country, if they think that it is run by people who are ignorant, or incompetent. (Interjections)

My dear boy, one of these days you should sit down and read a little history; it will greatly improve your mind. You will find that your ideas about what happened then just won't bear the slightest examination.

(Interjection: "Now go on Bob, tell us about inflation and round it off. We've heard you") (Laughter)

Stand up, stand up and let's have a look at you. I wish you would stand up because I reckon-(Interjections) I wish you would have stood up, because at a glance, in the distance, I wouldn't think I needed to tell you anything about inflation at all. (Laughter, applause)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I have confined my remarks to a couple of matters which I think are of considerable importance. I just repeat to you that you have a choice to make on this matter. All I do is to urge you to make your choice, with thought. I know that there is always somebody who will say, "Ah, the Government is going to get it in the neck".

Well, only the other day, metaphorically, we had a by-election in Bendigo and I was told the same thing. And what happened in Bendigo? The Government candidate got more votes than before. The Labour majority was lower than it was before. I thought it was pretty good.

We had a by-election in Calare. The Government majority increased.

There are all sorts of calamity howlers, professional moaners, and those who entertain this strange fantastic, juvenile idea that there is something clever about kicking the Government - as long as you don't kick it out.

You know that is a pretty poor performance isn't it? They say, "Well it's a by-election, give them a kick. It won't put them out". Of course you would never dream of voting them out at a General Election. "But let's give them a kick".

Well I have had a fair few kicks in my time, and I won't lose any sleep over it, one way or the other. But I think you will, unless this election goes as I believe it will. (Applause)

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Question:

I would like to know why does the Government consistently contest seats in the country, as Liberals, against the Country Party?

Prime Minister:

Well, Sir, I am sorry to disappoint you, but you may not be aware of the fact that there are two material facts here. One is that at Canberra my Party and the Country party work together in Government in the most complete anity and have done so for a record period of time.

The second is this, that if you would cast your eye over the list of members sitting in the House of Representatives, you would find that there are more country members belonging to the Liberal Party than there are to any other Party. (Applause)

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Question:

I would like to direct a question, through you Mr. Chairman, to the Honourable the Prime Minister: Why, after speaking for so long he did not mention Mr. Holt's "horror" budget? (Laughter)

Prime Minister:

Sir, the answer to that is quite simple: Because it is not a "horror" budget. It is a perfectly sensible set of very moderate proposals. And before we go much longer in Australia people will realise how good it is. Don't forget that people like you were screaming blue murder back in 1952 about the great Budget that was called the "Horror Budget". But by the time it had done its work, the Government was re-elected by the people of Australia. (Applause)

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Question:

Are you prepared to give us National Insurance in this country?

Prime Minister:

Sir, I venture to say that the Australian system of Social Services has no superior in the world. The fact is that the answer to your complaint, if it is one, is that there have been many, many thousands, hundreds of thousands of people come out here to Australia knowing what our Social Services are. And I haven't heard that they go back.

The fact is that you can never compare one set of Social Services in one country with another set in another country, because they have different foundations and they cover different items. But the Social Service system in Australia is, I venture to say - we can always argue about details in it - in the broad, and in the substance, has no superior in the world. (Applause)

Question:

Will the Prime Minister undertake some revision of our education policy throughout Australia so that we have diplomats trained in Asian languages, ministers trained in observation and history of Asian affairs and in general a better educated Cabinet?

Prime Minister:

I understand you perfectly Sir. I am very happy to answer this question because I am surprised that you have not realised that if any Prime Minister in the history of this country can feel some pride about what has been done for University education in Australia, I'm the fellow.

(Interjection: "You haven't done anything")

Oh! Haven't we? Well then, Sir, I will tell you that my Government was the first Government to establish grants to the States for the State Universities. After running them for a couple of years, and establishing the Commonwealth scholarships -

(Interjection: "4,000 of them!")

There were 3,000. Well don't you like to hear an answer? You may have learned Asian languages, but you badly need to learn a little courtesy. (Applause) I'll continue with my answer to this somewhat evasive interjector of mine.

After running a system of grants I established the Murray Committee. The Murray Committee came out and investigated the Australian Universities. They brought down recommendations which involved what seemed to us to be enormous Commonwealth expenditures on University education which was not, technically, our responsibility.

We adopted every recommendation. And, in consequence, over the three years that have just finished, the Commonwealth itself has found over £20 million towards the Universities of Australia - a sum of money without which not one of them could have expanded and half of them would have gone broke.

Then we appointed a Universities Commission - they may, of course, be incompetent people. I think they are a group of the most distinguished people in Australia - under the Chairmanship of Sir Leslie Martin.

The Commission investigated the Universities. It brought down its recommendations only the other day for the second three years. Those recommendations involved an increase in the Commonwealth payments from £20 millions in three years to £39 millions in the next three years. That is a total in six years of £59 million. Every recommendation they made has been accepted. And then I live long enough to hear some fellow get up and say, "It's time we took a bit of interest in Universities". (Applause)

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Question:

I ask the Prime Minister: "Is it a fact that since 1949 prices have a little more than doubled? It is also a fact that your Government has given only 5/- increase in child endowment for one child only. Now wouldn't it logically follow that the value of that child endowment is about half of what it was originally? Do you think this is a good record?"

Prime Minister:

Ladies and gentlemen, this question is a perfect example of how people can get matters confused. The fact is that I don't need to be put in the dock about child endowment. My own Government introduced it. Nor do I need to be put in the dock about the extension of child endowment for the first child; because it was my Government that did it. So we have a little positive entry on our books of child endowment. Your Party has none.

If you are going to understand the significance of Child Endowment then I want you to have a look at this.

Child Endowment was introduced at a time when the Arbitration Court, as it then was, was greatly concerned to know how it could do something better for the family wage-earner. It was because of that examination that child endowment came into the picture.

Later on the Arbitration Court, and the Arbitration Commission more and more developed the idea that the basic wage ought to be the highest wage that industry can bear. So that it is no longer just a matter of counting up what a family needs - though that may have some impact on it. The real thing is to say, "What is the highest wage that industry can pay?". Wages in real terms have gone up since the first introduction of child endowment very much indeed.

If the gentleman putting the question will study a little the graph of the cost-of-living figures, the "C" series Index, or whatever other Index figure he may care to look at, and also look at the rises in the basic wage, to say nothing of the competitive wages that are built up on top of it, he will find that there has been a very substantial increase in real wages at a time when the child endowment payment has stood still. One adds itself to the other; and the result has been a pretty prosperous community.

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