

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES, AT THE ANNUAL MEETING, ROYAL PRINCE ALFRED HOSPITAL, SYDNEY, ON THE 9TH DECEMBER, 1960.

Sir, and Sir Charles, and ladies and gentlemen:

I'm in a very low state today, having been out of my bed last night until 4 o'clock helping to make a mess of Parliamentary proceedings. And I am therefore liable, I warn you, at any tick of the clock, to go to sleep, even before you do. (Laughter)

But at any rate I have been fascinated this afternoon by a variety of matters. One in particular is that a mystery has been solved. I knew that my distinguished colleague, Dr. Cameron, was an old Royal Prince Alfred man - he never ceases to let us understand that; it seems to be almost a point of pride.

I also knew that, like his predecessor in the office of Minister for Health, he has an almost diabolical faculty for getting a few more millions out of us every year, than in the year before; and occasionally, as he knows, I will take him on one side in a fatherly way, and rebuke him for this extravagance.

Today the mystery is solved - he was trained under this chap. (Laughter)(Applause) I realise now that whenever Don Cameron is having a civilised and cautious moment, this man gets hold of him, and addresses him, and throws in a few humorous and disarming remarks - and gets away with the booty. (Laughter)

Well, Sir, I hope you will continue to get away with the booty.

I was very delighted to have the chance of coming here for two or three reasons, with all the details of which I won't weary you.

But I did observe that this Hospital began as a University School of Medicine. I put it in a very approximate way. That has not been the uniform pattern in Australia, not the normal line of development in Australia.

It does mean that it has had, and continues to have a close communion with the University in point of ideas, and in point of space. Therefore, it stands as a great instrument of healing and a great instrument of instruction. I can't imagine a more remarkable and romantic history, than this Hospital has had.

But until I came out here this afternoon I had no idea that it was far more than what I think of as a hospital - you know, a hospital, a good modern hospital, with superb accommodation for the patients, and even more superb accommodation for the nurses, which I think is a splendid idea.

You see these tall buildings standing up into the sky? This, Sir Herbert describes, in a rare flash of modesty, as a village - it struck me as being a city! This enormous jurisdiction of his is so great that really he should have been made Lord Mayor (Laughter) of Royal Prince Alfred. I will convey that suggestion to my distinguished colleague from the State Government.

But it really is a fantastic thing. You are used to it; I'm not. All this came to me with the charm of novelty

that you should have, not only what you can recognise as Hospital buildings, nurses' homes and so on - these are orthodox and identifiable - but you go along the street!

I have been taken up to a centre just up the street which I found quite fabulous, in which rehabilitation is going on, in which people are being given all the psychological stimulus of being able to work, and produce things and feel that they are doing something for themselves - and doing it side by side with other people who are handicapped; and being, in the case of the last building I went into, managed by two people who are themselves, not without physical handicaps.

This is, I think, a tremendous, exciting sort of thing. I am sure that if I had time to go around all the streets in this hospital city I would find not only some tumble-down looking houses which I haven't failed to observe, but I would find studded here and there, some new manifestation of an activity of a hospital which I venture to say nobody, when I was a boy, ever thought of.

That, to me, is the remarkable thing. What was orthodox, years ago, still remains orthodox in a sense; but it has had added to it, as the imagination of men and women has laid hold of subjects and problems, an almost infinite variety of activities designed to restore the body, and the mind and the spirit.

Now those things happen in the world; they are among the great evidences of civilisation in a century which has not been conspicuous for civilisation. But here you have great evidences of the essence of humanity.

I have had a good deal of experience in another field, as you know, and I long since learned that the ancient philosopher was right when he said: "I seek a man, I seek a man". There's hardly a problem that I have ever had to look at which was intrinsically difficult of solution by an intellectual process, but which could not really be solved in practice unless you could put your hand on the right man to take responsibility for it, to direct it, to imagine it, to see it through.

We are so much disposed, ourselves, to attend to our own affairs in life that we occasionally fail to identify the true leaders of community effort. But every now and then you will come across one. You have one, today, in the chair. (Applause) I can't imagine that what has gone on in this great Hospital could have gone on as far or as fast if it were not for this cheerful, dynamic, driving personality of Sir Herbert Schlink.

Therefore, we ought to praise famous men and I would like, on your behalf, to praise him today. Because this is a great life work.

There is another thing that I would like to say just a word or two about. Reference was made both by Sir Herbert and Sir Charles about the teaching hospitals, which, of course, brings us at once to the broad, educational field.

I, of course, discard this rather hilarious epigrammatic remark made by the Chairman, that he would sooner be healthy than educated. He can afford to say that because he is both. (Laughter) Therefore I twit him with having made the most purely academic observation this afternoon, that I ever heard him make.

The truth of the matter is - and this is how I have approached this problem myself - that the teaching hospitals in their teaching aspects are part of the educational structure, and ought to be looked at as part of the university structure of the country. You can't just detach them and say that one has no relation to the other.

That is why, when the new Universities Commission was appointed, it took early steps to establish a committee of advice on this very matter, I having stated to them that I thought that this was properly to be considered as part of the overall university problem of the country.

I see here this afternoon representatives of the residential colleges. There again is an evidence that you can't look at the problem of university education, except in the most comprehensive fashion; you can't cut it down to a few narrow ideas.

It is ten years now since I was told by one or two members of the first Committee which I established on this problem that residential colleges in universities were luxuries and that they really ought to look after themselves.

I reject that idea. I reject it because I am a great believer in education, a great believer, if I may make so unpopular a remark, in scholarship, and, if you like, in pure scholarship at that.

Because here is one of the great humanising things, the great civilising things in the mind of man. To set a university up, and say, "Well residential colleges are a luxury, they are to get nothing; the rest of it is to get something - teaching universities, they are nothing to do with the university; they are something that hospitals attend to, therefore they are out of the picture", is a false division.

I know that whenever I talk like this, and set up a Committee, or a Commission, I have to conceal myself for some time thereafter from the stony glances of my colleagues and friends in the Treasury. Mr. Shehan is not the only man who prays every morning to have strength to deal with the Treasury. (Laughter)

But Treasuries are not so uncivilised as people suppose. I think when we began as a Commonwealth Government to deal with the university problem as such, and to make Grants back in 1950, the Grants were of modest proportion. I haven't the figures by me, but they would probably fall short of a million pounds in the year. But it was a beginning.

It was a beginning in a field in which the Commonwealth itself did not have a direct or primary responsibility. It was a beginning in what is, broadly, a State field.

But in the State field the burden of education, year by year, has grown. I think myself that there has been an enormously enterprising approach to it on the part of State Governments. In the State of New South Wales the growth in expenditure on education affairs has, I think, been remarkable. And the same goes for other States that I could refer to.

But the Universities teaching at that level, living education at that level, were in a financial condition in which the choice would very soon have been between positively bankrupting State Budgets, or bankrupting universities, or forcing them into charging such fees that the universities, instead of being, as they are now, the most democratic of all

communities, might have become what an old political opponent of mine once described as the 'bare gardens of the idle rich'.

Therefore we had to go on - the Murray Commission, the present Commission.

Just so that you will see that Governments are not unaware of this problem let me tell you that in the three years covered by the Murray Committee's Report, which positively rocked us, financially, with its magnitude, the Commonwealth Government provided something of the order of £20 to £21 million.

And, under the first Report of the new Universities Commission, which contains increased provisions for universities, increased provisions for residential colleges, and so on, the £20 to £21 million rises to £39 to 40 million. Now these, for anybody except Sir Herbert Schlink, are big sums of money. (Laughter)

That is not the end of it. But there is one word of warning I would like to utter on this matter. It isn't really everybody who can benefit by university training. I know there is a great theory that everybody can and will.

But when I open the newspapers, and when you open the newspapers, and see the appalling failure rates in first year, you begin to say to yourself, "Shouldn't the whole of this conception be revised a little? Are we necessarily right in continuing to have universities developed in the future on the classical 19th century model?" Or, should we try to get more variation into this - some people going to a university in the sense that we understand it, because they have the talent to produce brilliant results; and others, perhaps to other types of technological institutes, or whatever it may be?

This is a broad problem, and the Universities Commission is going into it right away. And for the very good reason that so great, and of course so healthy, is the demand for university training today, that the undergraduate population will become fantastic before we are 20 years older.

I think I am right in saying that at the end of 20 years, 25 years, certainly no more, there would be a demand, provided the thing went as it does now, for 100,000 undergraduates in Australian universities.

That would mean an expansion which would be equivalent to establishing, in every period of about five years, a couple of new universities in Australia.

These are tremendous tasks, and we must all look at them with a good deal of caution, with a good deal of sympathy, with a good deal of interest. They are going to provide problems for my successors, and for your successors. No doubt they will grapple with them. But they will grapple with them all the better if the public continually understands that there is a price to be paid for admiralty, even in the area of the mind.

Now the only other matter that I want to say a word about is this. I am the least of all God's creatures when it comes to knowing about hospitals - my wife is by way of being a species of expert because she had a great deal to do with them in the city of Melbourne. But I was always impressed, from the very beginning, with the astonishing work done by auxiliaries, not merely because of the intrinsic product, but because of the humane spirit that they helped to contribute to the hospital itself.

I have been disturbed, as many of you have, by the tendency, particularly in recent years, to say, "Well we pay high taxes, let the Government attend to it. It is the Government's business to run it, to pay for it". "I pay my taxes", says somebody as if that were an act of virtue - instead of being one of compulsion. (Laughter) "I pay my taxes, let the Government look after it".

There was never a truer observation made than the observation - addressed to men, this was, it doesn't need to be addressed to women - that every man in the course of his life ought to perform some unpaid duty to his fellow men; preferably he ought to do it at a loss. This is the essence of the spirit of service.

You think of all the men who have served the community handsomely, in Church or State, you won't think of too many who have done it because there was a profit in it.

This spirit of sacrifice, of contribution is vital to a healthy community. And I hope that we won't get to a stage when auxiliaries are a thing of history, when voluntary donations will dry up because "I pay my taxes and there's nothing more to be done".

Because if that were to happen - and this applies also to this phenomenal record of honorary services in the hospital itself - if that were to happen, if we all said "Leave it to the Government, I've paid my taxes, I'm going to the races, or I'm going to do something else", then I believe that though medicine might be efficient, and hospitals might be clean, and the food might be admirable, and the nursing skilful, something would have gone out of the place.

Don't forget this: we've got a lot of Government Departments - some people think too many, though, as a rule, they come along to ask for more when some problem arises - but there is no Government Department in Commonwealth or State that provides for the people the milk of human kindness. That is a personal perquisite, that is a personal responsibility, that is, in its ultimate expression, the great proof of the Divine in man. I hope it never disappears.

I was delighted to hear what Sir Charles Bickerton Blackburn had to say about honorary staff. As he said it, I thought "How cynical people become - 'Oh, he's an honorary at the hospital; I wonder what the game is. I wonder what advantage he's after. I wonder whether he is making himself good with so and so, and so and so'". I get so tired of this.

Cynicism can destroy a nation more quickly than any other thing. But a spirit, a social spirit, a community spirit will make that nation healthy, whatever may come or go.

So, Sir, I am delighted to be here and to have the opportunity of joining with you on a very remarkable occasion. (Applause)

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