

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G.
MENZIES AT KNOX COLLEGE, SYDNEY, ON THURSDAY,
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I think I ought to begin by making two apologies, one is for the absence of my wife, who would have greatly enjoyed being here, but who, in a sudden onrush of what I can only describe as eccentricity, decided to have her four Melbourne grandchildren to stay with her at the Lodge, ranging from 9 to 3 $\frac{1}{2}$, and all of them with a considerable element of old Adam and old Eve. (Laughter) Therefore she wished me to make her apologies to you.

In the second place, whether it is because I have been away from her, I am not in the best of form tonight - you may say that I seldom am. (Laughter) The last couple of nights I have not been able to sleep. I don't know what it is. The only explanation that will occur to some of you is that conscience has at last caught up with me. (Laughter) Well whether that is so, or not, I don't know; I'll leave it to you.

I have a variety of reasons for being glad to be here and one of them, outstandingly, is that the Chairman tonight is a very old friend of mine.

I referred just now to my wife. At a time when the Rev. P.J. Murdoch was preaching in Trinity Church Camberwell in the State of Victoria he had two fine looking lads in the Church - one was Allan Murdoch, and one was myself (Laughter) - and an uncommonly good looking girl who was a boarder at the Church School nearby. Well in that contest I won (Laughter) because she married me. Not, Allan, that I think you did too badly yourself. (Laughter)

Now there is one thing that I like very much about the programme tonight. I've always maintained that we Scots Presbyterians have a very practical outlook. Tonight it has been brilliantly arranged. I've been to a few Speech Nights and they always tell you to hand out the prizes first and speak afterwards. Well, it's very hard on the boys - they've collected their loot (Laughter), their interest in the proceedings is completely terminated, and therefore they say, "Who's this old fellow (Laughter) spouting away?"

But tonight I have them in the hollow of my hand. If they count me out inside the next ten minutes then all I can say is, "Counting out, no prizes". And judging by the look of the table there must be a most brilliant collection of school boys in this place that I've ever heard of. (Laughter)

You may think that going to a Speech Night from the point of view of a political old hand like myself is a rather dull business. Do you know it is very stimulating? The other day I handed out to a boy, who struck me as being very intelligent to look at, the Senior prize in Latin and French.

You know that did so much good to my morale - this was a very intelligent looking boy - and I was able to tell him that was the last prize I won at School myself. Of course the standards may have fallen in the meantime. (Laughter)

But this does all of us good, to come along and re-visit the glimpses of the moon and recollect the time when we were intelligent. (Laughter) It is about that time that I want to say a few words to the boys tonight.

When you senior boys go out into the affairs of life you will find any number of people who will say to you, "Now all that stuff that you have learned at school - forget about that; that's all old fashioned. Now you have to face the real facts of getting a living and dealing with people".

I've heard so many of them talk like that, the truth of the matter being that those men who talk like that have never learned anything since they left school. They came out of school with a little stock of things that they had learned, and normally, with that little stock of things that they had learned, provided the intelligence and the character and the decent ambition, they could go on learning and learning for years until the very end of their lives.

Any man who has the benefit of an education, who isn't a student at the age of 80, has wasted his time. I sometimes think about people of that kind that they really think that school is something to be got through.

Now what is it that we acquire at school? It is quite true that you don't do a Law course, like me - you do that after you leave school; you don't study Medicine - you may do some Biology, or Chemistry, but you don't study medicine.

It is quite true that what you are doing is, in a sense, though it doesn't always look it, elementary compared to what will be attacked later on.

But the whole point about it is that this is a superb discipline for the mind. It really teaches us when we are at school, to have some standards, to have things by which we can measure other things - good manners, courtesy, intelligence, the team spirit, a willingness to subordinate personal interests to the interests of the side, to the interests of the school.

These are all wonderful things. They are not childish. They are never more needed than in the grown-up world.

You take the question of standards. We are living in an age of immense scientific research, particularly technological research. Our friends in the Soviet Union fire off satellites into the air - they've even come to blows with the moon, so we're told. All this is supposed to be tremendous, and a lot of people, in this country, and in other countries in the free world say, "Well, you know, that shows they are getting ahead of us". It would be very odd if they didn't get ahead of us in something.

But I want to say to everybody: Remember there ought to be standards. Everything must be judged on some comparative basis.

A friend of mine who is in the diplomatic world and from another country said to me one night in Canberra, "You know, the moral effect on the people of various Asian countries, of seeing these satellites passing across the sky, the moral effect politically, will be tremendous". But I said, "My friend, you are forgetting that but for the work of the microbiologists, the medical scientists of the Western world, a lot of them wouldn't be alive to see the satellite". You see, you must always have some comparative standard in your mind.

Right around the world we see - and it's not new, though I think perhaps it's more acute than it was - that one of the great standards appears to be 'How much money does he earn? How much money does he laboriously accumulate?' I would like to say to my boys down there, I hope they don't succumb to that silly idea. Judging by some of the people I've seen who have made a lot of money, I don't think it can be too difficult. (Laughter)

I've seen other people who made immense fortunes by tremendous constructive work for the country, and I admire them - not because they have made a fortune, but because of their constructive work for the country.

But don't worry about that kind of thing. Make up your minds that right through your life you are going to know something - if possible better than the man next to you. You are going to continue to be a student. You are not going to be laughed out of it by being told that now you are a man you must put away childish things. This is the most terrible of all fallacies.

Above all, don't succumb to the national pastime of being cynical about other people's motives. You remember that J.M. Barrie made a magnificent speech years ago at the rectorial address, it was, at St. Andrew's. I've always kept it near me and I read it about once a year, perhaps not with all the benefit that I should take from it, but I read it once a year. And I once had the great honour of talking with Barrie about it for a couple of hours in a country house in England.

But one of the flashing sentences in that speech was, 'Never ascribe to your opponent motives lower than your own'. When I hear in the political world people eagerly alleging that somebody has been personally corrupt, I suspect very deeply whether he isn't. Never ascribe to an opponent, motives lower than your own.

You may have to fight your opponent; you may have to denounce him from time to time - that's all in the game of life - and you must be courageous and have a good spirit.

But the silly cynicism which disfigures so many people's minds, the kind of cynicism which produces the statement "Oh, well, yes, I know he's supposed to be doing it for nothing, but there must be something that he's after". You hear it said about municipal councillors, poor chaps. I always thought that they gave an immense amount of service to their locality, and did it for free, as they say. But, "Oh, no, you can't tell me; there must be something".

Now the fellow who says that has never done a hand's turn for the country in his life.

Don't belong to that group of people. Go through your lives, firmly persuaded that people can, and do perform unselfish acts just as you have seen your school fellows perform them for year after year in the school. Go through your life still believing that.

Because if you do, the whole of your life will be sweetened, and the life of Australia will be sweetened, because our standards will have risen. We will have come more and more firmly to have certain things that we passionately believe in, and that we won't run away from. This is the essence of having standards.

Now, I think if you don't mind, I'll leave it at that and get on with the part of the proceedings which always appeals to me in my dual capacity - I'm giving away things that other people have paid for (Laughter) - and in my dual capacity as a Presbyterian and as a politician, I appreciate both.
(Laughter, applause)
