

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G.  
MENZIES, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NATIONAL  
HEART FOUNDATION CAMPAIGN, AT CANBERRA, ON 28TH  
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Sir, Your Grace, Your Excellency and gentlemen:

I think I ought to begin by telling you two things that have entered my mind very powerfully, first, since I read the literature that was circulated; and second, since I came here tonight.

Here is my friend, Warren McDonald, a great Australian, presiding over this appeal and saying to you quite modestly, "I want £1½ millions". What in reality he wants is £2½ millions! And this represents a complete contradiction of my earlier and more respectable life as a Barrister. Because when we wanted, on behalf of our client, £1,000., we always asked for £2,000. He is reversing the process.

And the other preliminary observation is that when I read the book of the words, because having inveigled me into doing this task some time ago, they then sent me masses of what I believe is loosely called "literature" (Laughter) and it had hearts all over it, I read the rules to be observed to avoid being a heart subject. I want to begin by confessing to you that I have violated them all. You are not to be overweight. (Laughter) Well, now, thank you, thank you so much for not having laughed louder. (Laughter) You are not to smoke too much, whereas every time, and it doesn't happen too frequently, that I am offered a good cigar, I smoke it, at once. And third, you are to take regular exercise. The only exercise that I ever get consists of getting up out of my chair in my office and going out into my private secretary's office to kick up a frightful uproar because something hasn't been done. But in spite of that I hope to run for a year or two longer. (Applause) Oh, I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have let this have even the merest hint of political significance. I hope to run for another nine months. (Laughter)

But my interest in this problem, my particular interest in what is being done now, arose when some day somebody brought into me a rather self-effacing, but very famous man, Dr. Paul Dudley White. (Applause) Having got tired of curing President Eisenhower he decided to have a look at me. And he came in to see me. I learned more about the possibilities of a Heart Foundation from him in one hour than I think I might have learned by reading blue books and white papers - sounds rather like Seidlitz powders, doesn't it? (Laughter) - for a long, long time. He introduced me to a new outlook on this matter. All I want to say to you tonight is something about my new outlook on this matter, because I believe - I was going to say I hope - but I believe that the Appeal that is being launched tonight will produce a responsive chord in almost every human being in this country.

I remember saying to the Doctor, "Well, of course when I was a boy" - which as my opponents would say is an incredibly long time ago - "and somebody was reported to have had a little heart trouble, that somebody was put aside - 'Well he's had a little heart trouble' - and he lay low, as you might say, and was treated quietly." It was understood that he must not be disturbed. Finally he almost frittered away his life because it was understood that nothing must be done to disturb it. And I said to him, to our most distinguished visitor, "Is that true any longer?", and he said, with that easy nanner that a thin man adopts when advising a thick one, "No, no, this is all quite wrong. What happens is that if a man has a little coronary trouble - good or bad as the case may be - he rests until this

particular lesion is corrected. Then if he has been in the habit of playing golf, he plays golf; if he has been in the habit of walking, he walks; if he has been in the habit of stepping in smartly to the division lists with the bells ringing, he steps in smartly (Laughter) and registers his vote. He is not to be encouraged to gallop upstairs. But subject to that, let him live a normal life and there is no reason why he shouldn't live for 25 years". Now that, I thought, was a most illuminating observation by Dr. Paul White.

Then when I was approached first about this matter and, as I have been unkindly reminded, made a speech about it, about two years ago was it? Anyhow my office produced it the other day. At the time I thought it was terrible; and reading back on it I thought "Jolly good, jolly good". Then it was, I think, that I began to understand a few things, a few things that I hope everybody in Australia will understand.

We have been accustomed to talking about, and indeed doing something about certain major diseases. For example, what we in this country have done about tuberculosis in the last 20 years is, I believe, almost fabulous. We have been as people devoting as we think, a good deal of money, but as the great and devoted experts in this field know, an immense amount of genius and spirit and enthusiasm and skill to getting rid of certain great complaints. Yet perhaps until this Foundation was mooted we had never realised that although all of us some day will die, because our heart ceases to beat, the fact is that more than half of the deaths in Australia still occur from some disease of the heart. And of those - I'm no expert - but of those, I should imagine, quite a perceptible percentage are deaths of people who need not die, who need not become invalids, who need not be treated as something odd, to be carefully respected on the sidelines. If only we could discover the causes of heart trouble, the proper treatment of heart trouble, the right way in which to make people who have some heart trouble understand that they are not out, but that they are still, under proper conditions, in the full stream of life.

This, I think, is a tremendous adventure in medical science. And like all other great adventures in scientific work it is not just to be left to Governments because Government departments - there are many famous heads of Department here tonight - can do a great deal. But when you attack an enormous problem of this kind, then, as the people expect to have the benefit, so the people must rally around and say "We are going to have a hand in achieving this thing."

This is what I call, Sir, the "new wisdom". In my days as a boy I so well remember, as I have reminded you, "Poor old chap", they used to say "he's had a heart attack, and therefore he's out". And now the whole concentration of the greatest cardiac experts in the world is not on smoothing the passing of the man who has had a heart attack, but in bringing him back into the full stream of life and to his full usefulness as a citizen. This is really, when you think about it, one of the greatest efforts at human reconstruction that has occurred in our time. That is one of the reasons why I am here.

Now, Sir, like most of you I have my own feelings of respect and of affection for medical men. I know it pleases the doctors to make disagreeable remarks about the lawyers - nothing to the disagreeable remarks that the lawyers have made about the doctors under suitable circumstances. But when we get right down home it's true, isn't it, that we all have a remarkable feeling of confidence and trust in the medical man who looks after us, who advises us, who treats us. This is a marvellous and noble profession.

But it isn't all a matter of looking at today's doctor and saying, "Well, of course, he owes his skill to his own genius". He may have no more genius than his father who was a doctor before him. But if he knows more, if he has greater skill, it is because things have been happening outside the immediate practice of medicine that have enriched his experience, enriched his knowledge, enriched his own technique.

Therefore, Sir, the truth is, in each generation, that medical men, and we may all be thankful for it, are better equipped than their fathers. And if they are better equipped, it isn't because they are necessarily more able than their fathers - I've never laboured under that error - it's because research, investigation, experiment have increased knowledge and skill in the new generation. Never let us forget that. Seventy per cent of - what did you say? - £1½ millions, £2 millions, £2½ millions, £3 millions that may be raised by this appeal - 70% of it is to go to research. Now research is not a matter of some man sitting down and having a brilliant inspiration and writing it down on a piece of paper. Research, properly considered in this world, is a matter of infinite pains, of patient seeking, of patient recording of knowledge; it is something that I am afraid most of us have never understood. We think that research means suddenly having a bright idea. It doesn't mean that, except in one case out of a hundred thousand. If we are to have research into these matters, if we are to discover the impact of certain physical conditions on the heart, then clearly this will take years of work - maybe months of work in some aspects, years of work in others. It will require the concentrated and organised labour of devoted and skilful people. And so be it that the research be great, and the results be great, shall we, or other people, in a few years' time meet together and say: "This development of research into the conditions of the heart was one of the greatest things to happen in Australia".

Now, Sir, that provokes me to say just one other thing. We live, as I am constantly reminded, in a new world. And I am constantly reminded, and no doubt, quite justly, that I am an old-fashioned person. This is the "space age" and we are invited to tremble, or applaud, as the case may be, at the researches into space by clever modern men who know all about propellants, who know all about putting rockets into orbit, and monkeys into orbit, and men into orbit. This is no doubt spectacular and magnificent. But I will still say this to you, that from the point of view of the welfare of human beings, men and women and children, the greatest researches and the greatest discoveries in this century have not been in space, but on this earth. (Applause)

When I am invited to quake because somebody has launched a sputnik or a man or something my mind runs back to the undoubted fact that in this century, so otherwise mangled by the villainy of people, the greatest things that have helped mankind, that have prolonged life, that have aided human happiness, have been made by those people who have worked on the problems of health. My mind runs to the surgeons, the great developments in surgery, the marvellous developments among physicians, the marvellous, the miraculous work of the bio-chemists, the work of the physiologists. Add them all up and you will find, as I am prepared to assert, that the simple truth is that of all the people who gaze up occasionally and look at a sputnik in the sky, quite a considerable number wouldn't be there to see it, if it were not for the magnificent work of medical research in this century. (Applause)

Those, Sir, I believe, have been the greatest benefits to mankind in our time. As I am not disposed to believe that all work is done and we must now turn to another, I believe that the Heart Foundation in this country, enriched by the experience of our colleagues in the United States of America, will probably produce in the next generation a revolution in this field, compared to which the launching of rockets, the putting up of things that go into orbit, will, in the ultimate judgment of a just and wise mankind, be as nothing.

The last thing that I want to say to you is this: This is our problem. I read the material that was sent to me and I was delighted to find a passage from old John Donne - I wonder how many people can write English today as he wrote it - and I remind you of it:

"Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee".

Now this, I think, is the key note of this matter - 'never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee'. This is our human problem. If, as a result of this appeal, to which I hope every man woman and child in Australia will respond, if, as a result of this appeal great things are done in this vast field of medical knowledge and the prolongation of human life and of human health, then, Sir, I would say that tonight we have begun a great and humane exercise, not for one, but for all - the most remarkable essay in brotherhood that we have known in our time. (Applause)

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