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Speech made by the Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies

Prime Minister of Australia, prior to

Unveiling the Sir George Holland Plaque

R.S.L. National Headquarters, Canberra 9/5/61.

"Mr. President, the League has of course done a remarkable piece of work in its history in Australia. It has succeeded in doing something quite paradoxical; it has never become a political party, ~~and~~ it always had great influence with politicians, ~~and that~~ I think has been an excellent thing.

You have been able to meet political people of all shades of opinion on fair terms, not as political persons, but as people who have and feel great responsibility for the welfare of Ex-servicemen. It's been a wonderful record, and I think perhaps the best proof of the quality of the work that the League has done is that it has had, in its history so few Federal Presidents, remarkably few with long records of service, ~~who have~~ become quite familiar friends with the Prime Ministers and Ministers of the day. I have been singularly fortunate because by some miracle I was Prime Minister of the country all the time that Sir George Holland was Federal President of the League, each of them a miracle in its own fashion, but a very happy thing for me, and whenever he has come to Canberra he ~~has~~ come to see me. I must say that he ~~has~~ never quite succeeded in coming just to say "I just wanted to have the pleasure of looking at you, old man"; ~~he~~ he has usually a few things, you know, in his side pocket, and when he has left me I have had a few less things left in my hip pocket. But we got on very well indeed. I have always had great respect and affection for him and of course in addition to that, in the last ten years we have had an Ex-servicemen's Committee of Cabinet that has had direct discussions with the members of the Federal Executive and with the officers of the League, the Federal Secretary in particular. This I think has made for great mutual understanding. [It is not to be supposed that the League will ever entirely agree with the Government. It might as well go out of business if it entirely agrees with the Government. It is not supposed that the Government will always entirely agree with the League. There might be some legitimate complaint by the Treasury, but we have got along. We have always met each other and discussed these things, and on each side we have done our best, and the whole matter has been conducted on a high level, and I believe in that. ~~I don't think that the League ought to be put in the position of scrambling around, the thing is we ought to be able to meet each other as responsible people and do the best that we can about what is after all not just an individual problem, but a National one.~~

*all of your love*

*all of them*

Now Sir George Holland has I think, been a perfect example of how these things should be conducted. I want to tell you that so far as my Ministers and I are concerned we thought so highly of him that when he came to retire from office we had him along, with his successor Mr. Lee, and gave him a dinner. It takes an awful lot to get politicians to pay for a dinner out of our own pockets. I would not want that to go any further but we did, and we even enriched him with a piece of silver to commemorate what for all of us has been the happiest possible association,

and all I can say George is that I hope that now you are out of office, they will allow you to come to Canberra occasionally. It would be equally pleasant for me and probably less expensive if you are not a resident of the League, and each time you are here I hope you will be able to look at this plaque which I hope to unveil in a minute, with pleasure and with legitimate pride, because this is a proud day for you. It ought to be, and we all would like to share in your pride with you.

Now I have been told to ~~pull this~~ and something will happen, it sometimes ~~does!~~"

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