

W.A. CONVENTION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY
AT SOUTH PERTH CIVIC CENTRE
30TH JULY, 1962

Speech by the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. R. G. Menzies

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Premier and Ladies and Gentlemen :

I have really had quite a good day here. I first of all went to have a talk with Mr. Brand, one of the great Premiers in the history of Australia (Applause), then I recorded a television appearance, and those of you who haven't been through that misery, won't understand what a misery it is (Laughter) and that, I'm told, will be on at 10 o'clock tonight. Enough, no doubt, to undo whatever good I may do tonight (Laughter).

This afternoon, I went to the opening of a new building; I went on strict conditions that this was my afternoon off - no speechmaking, but after I had arrived there, I began to detect in the mind and the voice of the Chairman a sort of hint that, with a little encouragement, he would ask me to speak and I was resolutely determined not to speak. Even a chattering fellow like myself needs time off occasionally (hear, hear), and just as we were reaching the danger point - His Excellency the Governor had spoken, the Chairman of the Company had spoken, the Premier was in midstream - a note came into me that I was wanted on the telephone. At first I thought this was the effort of a zealous officer of mine (because I have one or two who might be so described), but when I went out it turned out that it was the Prime Minister of New Zealand who wanted to have a little natter to me, and I said, "My dear Keith, I can't tell you how glad I am to hear you. (Laughter) When we have discussed our business, let's keep it going for a little while" and we did. And so I was saved. (Laughter)

Now, I said just then something about your Premier. I'd like to say this. I know that there is a by-election. There are always by-elections. There will be one for Kooyong one of these days. (Laughter) By-elections are terrible things, but on this by-election at Bunbury much will turn for this State because, to lose this by-election, would involve the Premier of Western Australia in the most tremendous political problem and I repeat what I said to you, we are all very much inclined, and particularly in our own country, to disregard the local product. "Oh, yes, he's quite good." "Oh yes, he's not bad." "Oh yes, I knew him at school." It is a pity that Australians go outside their own bailiwick so frequently to be recognised. Every time your Premier comes to Canberra to a Loan Council Meeting, to a Premiers' Conference, I find myself saying to my colleagues, "Isn't this man absolutely first-class." I have never in my long experience of office - the longest outside South Australia (Laughter) of any man in Australia - known a man to establish, time by time, year by year, such repute and authority among the Premiers as your Premier has. (Applause)

And, therefore, Mr. Chairman, whatever comes or goes on the great issues that we discuss otherwise, I hope that everybody in the Liberal Party in this State will do whatever he can, directly or indirectly, sparing no effort to see that the Brand Government continues to exist and to serve this State. And, indeed, why shouldn't it? I almost give up guessing. I've been a long time now - too long - in this

business, and I never cease to marvel at how disposed people are to say, "Oh yes, whatever is good we must take for granted. Let us concentrate our minds on what we want, not on what we have or what we have achieved." This is a very human failing. It is just as much as to say, "Well, Father Christmas hasn't been here this year. He came along last year rather handsomely." But when I look back over even the last twelve months, and remember what has been done by Dave Brand's Government and by my own in utter collaboration for the development of this State, I marvel that anybody could vote against him.

In fact, I will tell you a story about that. I have a couple of sons who treat me with reasonable respect, and I have a daughter who treats me with more than respect, and before she was married, she travelled around Australia with me on one of these great campaigns, you know - my wife, my daughter and myself. We got back to Melbourne the night before the poll and my daughter leaned against the mantelpiece in the hotel sittingroom and looked at me and said, "You know, Dad, I don't understand how anybody could vote against you." (Laughter) I said, "Well, of course, darling, it's very nice of you to put it that way, but I'll settle for fifty percent plus one." (Laughter)

I want rather better than that for Mr. Brand. Would you all think about it, would you all work on it? Because, really, it would be one of the ironies of political history to have a Government that has done and is doing more for this State than any other Government in its history, to be put in any position of embarrassment over a by-election. So it's your job. Everyone of you, directly or indirectly.

Now, Sir, I thought I would like to talk to you as the Federal leader, about national policy, particularly internal national policy. There are quite a few people to be found who will say to you - you know you have met a few of them; have perhaps said it yourselves - "Oh yes. The Liberal Party stood for something. It has done great work, but what does it stand for now. It can't live on the past." Now, this is something that every political party that has had success must face up to - "What do you stand for now. Are you living on the past?" It is just when you have been in office for long enough to have a great record of positive results that your opponents will be heard to say, "Yes, well, that's all right, but what are they doing next year or the year after or the year after." Then, with great gaiety, they begin to let their imaginations loose on what they would do.

I notice that my friend and opponent, the Leader of the Opposition, has been in the Northern Territory. Dear me, what he's going to do for the Northern Territory after the next election exceeds all the expectations of his prospective Treasurer. (Laughter) But he's announcing it. He doesn't realise, of course, that in my own Cabinet, we have a Minister who represents or administers the Northern Territory. That's Paul Hasluck. And if I were to give you a ball to ball description of how Paul Hasluck tries to get the extra £100,000, the extra half million, the extra million out of us for the Northern Territory, you would be fascinated as listeners, and shocked as taxpayers. (Laughter) And Paul knows all about it. Nobody has ever understood better the problems of the Territories than he does, but it's so easy, when a Government has been in office for a long time, for its opponents to say, "Oh, well, this is what we'll do, and so on."

And, therefore, I thought I'd like to say something to you tonight about Liberalism as a living force. After all, as everybody knows, I had something to do with the establishment of the Liberal Party in Australia, and something to do with writing its first platform, and writing its constitution, and something, I hope, to do with subsequent achievements in the political world. I don't regard Liberalism as a fading force. I think we've run our trial courses and that we are now at the beginning of the next great chapter of achievement. But if we are, then we must know, positively, what we stand for. Don't suppose that I am going to make you a policy speech about half crowns, or five shillings or things. I want to know what it is we stand for, what we believe in, what makes you come here, what makes me come here, what makes the whole movement of Liberalism in Australia a powerful force. So let's ask ourselves what our objectives are - not yet achieved; far from it.

I think that above all things we want to build in Australia a balanced and strong and progressive and civilised nation in which advances are shared by all sections of the people. Now you may say that's platitudinous. Perhaps it is. There are many great passages in English that are platitudinous and that, if you like, is a platitude. But let's look at it. A balanced nation. That is, a nation in which primary industry and secondary industry and tertiary industry live side by side and achieve a common, national purpose. And the moment you say that you stand for a balanced nation, you are saying that whatever is done, there must be progress, productivity, advancement for the man on the land, for the man in the factory, for the man on the truck or the railway train. This is a balanced community - strong, progressive. I'll say something more about that in a moment.

And civilised. There is a tremendous amount of talk engaged in about economic problems; there is a great amount of discussion about how much more money A gets or B gets or C gets. We could easily become man for man, woman for woman, the richest country in the Southern Hemisphere, but it won't matter very much unless we can say that we are the most civilised country in the Southern Hemisphere. Civilised because we understand the unselfish duties of citizenship; civilised because we have come to understand the importance of the human being, the dignity of the human being, the dignity of labour, the responsibility of riches. These are the tests of civilisation, and our great task is to produce a civilised nation.

The only supplement I would like to make to that is that in our time, certainly in mine, there have been many furious attempts made to build up class warfare in Australia. We hear a lot about class distinctions. All the reactionary forces in the country, and I refer particularly to the socialists and the communists who are, of all people, the most reactionary, always like to talk about class distinction, the class war, in the classical phrases of the Communist Party that you so well remember.

But I have, all my political life, believed that there is one single, very great, class distinction in Australia. I insist on it. It's the distinction between people who work and people who don't; between people who contribute to human society and people who merely want to benefit from human society. This is an enormous distinction, and if in the language of the old Communist Manifesto, the phrase is, "Workers of the world unite - you have nothing to lose but your chains," I say, "Yes. Workers of the world unite. That's what the Liberal Party believes in." (Applause)

Now, Sir, the next thing that I want to say to you is this. Here we are, we are a young nation, not unknown around the world, sometimes credited with being aggressive, sometimes accused of being noisy, but not unknown around the world, and I am happy to say, in all material quarters, respected around the world. What we are engaged in doing, what we must continue to be engaged in doing is to build this young nation into a strong and splendid heritage and that can't be achieved by people who acquire habits of dependence. A slight yawn - "Why doesn't the Government (whatever that means) do something about it." You can't build up an independent nation on a foundation of dependent people. The spirit of independence, this fire that burns in the veins of an independent nation must burn in the veins of the individual. We cannot succumb to the ideas of our opponents which, roughly, are that whatever good is to be done must be done by the mystical being the Government. This is a matter for the individual; this is a matter which calls for a spirit of adventure, a desire to contribute. You know, it is a cant phrase, Sir, a cant phrase to talk about private enterprise and every now and then, I will hear people say, "Oh, of course, your Government is not as much in favour of private enterprise as it ought to be." Not infrequently when I hear somebody say that, I come to discover what he means. What he means is that his particular private enterprise ought to be the nursling of the Government. He doesn't want private enterprise really; he doesn't want competition really; he wants to be protected from all the winds that blow. In other words, that particular private enterpriser has lost the spirit of adventure.

Have we? This is the crucial question for the people of Australia, because our whole history has been a history of adventure, sailing wherever ships could sail. This island continent came out of the mists; it was developed by people who had the spirit of adventure. It has been found by people who had the spirit of adventure. Wherever you go in Australia, you see all the memorials, not cairns of stone, but the memorials in farms and stations and factories to the people who had the spirit of adventure. And without that spirit of adventure, Australia can't become by the turn of the century the great and powerful and respected country to whose noises I would hope to listen from the grave.

It's the spirit of adventure and it is our task as Liberals to foster it, not to foster the spirit of leaning on governments but to say that if private enterprise means what we think it means, it must be prepared to accept risks, take chances, go forward.

Now, Sir, all that is by way of preliminary. I just want to elaborate that a little tonight by saying something to you about what, in material terms, might be regarded as our problems.

And the first of them is to increase the population of this country. I think that when at the end of 1949 we came back into office, full of adventure, full of hope, full of thought, the population of Australia was about 7½ million and, today, it's 10½ million. There are three million more people in Australia than when I went and took my oath of office at Government House only a few years ago. And we must do this. We know, don't we, what a pressure there is

in the world, great populations in Asia, China itself, which may very well have by the turn of the century, a thousand million people "suckled in a creed outworn", if you like, still perhaps under the authority of Communism - a thousand millions.

If we, in Australia, are to enjoy and defend our heritage, we can't afford to have 10½ or 11 million people at the turn of the century. We must have our 25 or 30 or whatever it may be. And this means that we must do whatever we can in this country to maintain the flow of immigrants, and that's not as easy as it looks, because you have fluctuations in the economy from time to time and there will always be people to be heard to say, "Well, you must cut down on immigration or you must abolish immigration." We must have people coming into Australia or we will perish.

I know about the problems of immigration - not all about them - but I know a good deal about them and the pressures they make on resources and the impact that they make on the general problems of inflation in the country, but I am a convinced believer in immigration, because I believe that unless we can go on as we have been going on in Australia, increasing our population by importation and by natural increase inside our own country by about 2½% a year, then we are going to be in a position in ten years' time, in fifteen years' time in which the onlooking world will not tolerate our ownership of our trusts.

That means, you know, that occasionally we ought to think about our grandchildren; not as rather nice little creatures, or naughty little creatures or dampening little creatures - you know, all grandparents will understand what I mean (Laughter). We musn't think of them entirely in that sense; we must think of them as those who, as the men and women of their race, will be standing responsible for Australia in their day, and there can't be too many of them. Therefore, to build up the population is a great and primary task.

But you can't build up the population, Sir, in that handsome fashion and, at the same time, ignore the responsibility of providing proper employment for the people who live here. Not only proper employment of human beings, though that is of supreme importance, but proper employment of the material resources of the nation. And, therefore, our second great task is to maintain full employment of manpower and material resources.

Now, so far, I suppose everybody would say to me, "Yes, that's quite right. No difficulty in agreeing to those things. Why labour them? They are two matters; they are commonplace." Yes, I suppose they are - I hope they are. But side by side with these matters we have, and particularly as a Government, a profound responsibility to restrain the destruction of the currency, to restrain inflation, to maintain economic stability. Now, the moment I come to that point - because all the pressures of the first two propositions tend in the direction of inflation - the moment I say, "But, at the same time, we must restrain inflation," and I mention the word "stability" somebody is bound to say, "Oh, yes, there you are, you see. That's what's wrong with this Government. It believes in stagnation." There is not much evidence, is there, in the last eleven years of the stagnation that we have produced? Not much. But today, they say, "Stability? Well, that means stagnation."

Now, I'll come back to that because this is crucial to my argument. We have had for the last eighteen months, pursuant to policies for which we have, or some of us, been roundly abused, we have had, in Australia, for eighteen months, complete stability in the consumer price level. How many people really worry about inflation? I do. There must be a lot of people here tonight who do, who know that if their incomes are fixed by any method at all, then to have the value running out of their fixed income is a cruel, heartless tax on them. Of course, people of responsibility don't want inflation. Gamblers do, because they can chase the market. But do you? Do you want inflation?

It isn't stagnation. The fact is that for the last eighteen months we have had a steady level of prices; for the last eighteen months in consequence, we have had the most marvellous flow of capital into Australia for investment. "Here is a country that is stable, here is a country that is not afraid to take the measures designed to check inflation." I have had these things said to me abroad by some of the shrewdest financial people in the world who inspire their clients to put their money into Australia. They say, "You've got a government there that isn't afraid to take steps to restrain inflation, to produce stability in the currency. And when somebody says to me stability means stagnation, all I want to say is that this is an utter abuse of language. I was thinking of it this afternoon when I went to the opening of this big building in the city. If somebody had said, "Oh, this building is no good because the foundations are stable," everybody would have laughed. They would have said, "Well, that's today's funny story." It might have got into a gossip column, for all I know. (Laughter)

These are equally important - a building in the city of Perth and the building of this nation, the building of the mansions in which we want our grandchildren to live. Stability and strength. In case somebody wants to tell you once more that your Government in the Commonwealth has confused stability with stagnation, I would like to remind you that in this very period in which we are accused of this negative, stagnant attitude towards public affairs, we have, in conjunction with State Governments, accepted a share of responsibility, and a very large share for probably the greatest developmental programme in the history of Australia. (Applause)

Speaking in Perth, I won't take you on a tour of the horizon to all the other States, though I very well could. I will just talk about your own, here. In this period of stagnancy, what has happened? We have agreed, and put in hand, and it is now being pursued with great vigour, a standard gauge railway line from Kalgoorlie to Kwinana; we have agreed upon the development, organised by your own Government, of a great iron and steel industry. We look around us and we see bauxite, alumina; we look further up, and we see the most remarkable developments of iron ore, with port development, with roads in the North. Look, Dave Brand could give you a much fuller account of it than I could, but he would be the first to say that my own stagnant Government has played along on these matters with immense vigour and the result is that whatever comes or goes, the State of West Australia is at the very beginning of its greatest period of development in its history. (Hear, hear) (Applause)

I wonder if I might without wearying you tell you a little private recollection of mine. When I was first Prime Minister, which is beyond the memory, I hope, of some of you who are here tonight, one of my Ministers was Herbert Collett, a West Australian Senator and a great man, a splendid person, and I was chatting with him one night and I said, "Herbert, were you born in the West?" He was then fairly venerable, about the same age as I am now. (Laughter) This is a long time ago. I said, "Were you born in the West?" and he said, "No, my family went there when I was about seven or eight." And I said "What was the population of the West then?" He said, '36,000 people."

Somebody said this afternoon, no doubt with that truthfulness that characterises West Australians, that the population now is about three-quarters of a million. Think of it. At the very time that he and I were speaking, the population was over half a million - from 36,000 to over half a million - and this seemed to me to be the most phenomenal development that you could imagine in a community. I want to say to you, it's nothing to what is going to happen in the next fifteen or twenty years. You may say to me, "Well, fifteen or twenty years, old boy, you won't be here." Neither I will be, that's quite true, I am happy to say (Laughter) but it is going to be true, it is going to be true, and I do hope that all Liberals throughout this period will keep on emphasising that it is because we want this kind of thing to be true that we believe that we serve the best interests of the people of Australia.

The people who talk about stagnation in a period of the greatest fertility in development in Australian history are preferring a slogan to the truth and I beg of you to answer them.

Now there is one other matter that I want to mention to you. If we are to have a large migration programme, if we are to build up our population, if we are to have the fullest employment of our resources, of men and materials, if we are to have the greatest outlook on the development of the resources of the nation, then there are one or two other things that we must have, and one of them is a growing manufacture because, with all the good will in the world, any man on the land will agree that the rural industries are not going to attract migrants. As they become more and more mechanised, as they become more and more improved scientifically in productivity, the chances are all against them being able to absorb thousands of new citizens. I understand that. That is true. Therefore, if we are to bring into Australia large numbers of immigrants, we must look at the manufacturing industries and at the tertiary industries to help us to fulfil the condition of full employment. Now that is a very simple conception. It is true, we believe in it. We stand for it. But it contains one great danger. We must guard against it. If we are going to develop our manufacturing industries as we must, and as we should, if we are going to encourage them as we must and we should, to export some of their products to the rest of the world, we must never lose sight of the fact that today and for many years to come, the primary industries of Australia provide the backbone of our export income and therefore provide a good deal of those imports upon which manufacturing in Australia will depend. (Applause)

Therefore, Sir, every time I think about this matter, every time I speak about this matter as a Liberal and a leader of the Liberal Party, I keep reminding myself and those who are good enough to listen to me, that whatever we do, we must do a great deal to develop these other industries, vastly important for full employment, and therefore to population growth and therefore to national strength and national security. The argument is unanswerable. Whatever we do about that, we must remember that the costs of production in the rural industries are more important than perhaps they are in any others. Because if you have a local industry and its costs go up - well, it has its local list of customers and if their wages go up they can pay the increased price. It's rather a sort of homely affair. But the woolgrower gets what the world will pay him. The wheatgrower, subject to certain limitations, will get what the world will pay him. The grower of meat also - you can run the whole gamut of primary industry. The essential thing from their point of view is that they should not be costed out of their market.

And how are we to achieve that? This is where the Liberal Party has a great task, a great task. How are we to achieve that? We are not going to achieve it by crying down manufacturing, because I think without an increase in manufacture in Australia, steadily growing, year by year, our population will not grow year by year. We are not going to do it by fine words, we are not going to do it by taking the world by the throat and telling the world that it ought to pay more for what we grow. We have to do it by attacking the problem of rural costs, and in order to do that, we encounter not just some simple problem of subsidy but a basic problem of bringing to the service of the man on the land, whether he is a grazier, a sheep man, a cattle man or a wheatfarmer or a dairyfarmer or whatever it may be, the latest results of scientific research. We must have more scientific research, we must build up the activities of people like C.S.I.R.O. and so on and above all things, we must get a common understanding between Commonwealth and States that the results of research must go in the quickest possible time to the man on the land. They must travel from the laboratory to the farm much more rapidly than they ever have before. And if they do, we will find the most remarkable results.

I am not one of those statistical fellows who come around with reams of figures because, although they are fascinating, I've often found that nobody listens to them, and therefore I am not imposing them on you. But I will safely say this, in the broad, that one of the great features of the last few years in Australia has been the increased productivity of rural industries, not arising from increased employment because, on the whole, there may have been a fall in employment, but increased productivity, increased efficiency. And here is a point of time at which governments and private enterprise can meet together.

I still have a few friends - and I like to see them - who are on the land (Laughter) who are sheep men or whatever it may be. I am always fascinated to find that at a time when our opponents like to represent the sheep man, for example, as a rather idle fellow who goes down to the Melbourne Cup you know and buys a bottle of indifferent champagne and all that kind of nonsense, I am fascinated to find that I never encounter one of them on his own property who isn't at some pains to tell me how much he has

been able to build up the weight of fleece in his flocks, how delighted he is to know how he has been able to increase the carrying capacity of his land by the improvement of pastures - these are men who believe in enterprise. They're men who know that while they don't mind earning some money; of course, who does - they know that their own country in which they have a considerable stake will depend on the skill, the scientific effort that they put into the problems of production.

Now, Sir, this is not merely a matter for them. This is where we come in. Tonight, standing here, I can see an old friend of mine the distinguished Minister for Agriculture in the State of Victoria. He has been over here on a conference. He knows, I don't need to persuade him, and all his colleagues around Australia know, that this is one of the great problems - to have more and more scientific effort. (Between you and me, and I wouldn't like to have it quoted against me, I grudge all this stuff up in the air). I want more and more scientific effort in increasing the productivity of the land, the capacity of Australia to sustain a cost level by making it spread over a far greater area of production.

This is our great hope. This is the great task. I don't think our opponents have ever thought of it. To them, costs are nothing. There is nothing in costs to them that can't be made up by an extra tariff or by an extra subsidy or something, or an extra tax. But for Liberalism, which believes in Australia, for Liberalism which knows that it is on the productivity of our own country and our capacity to sell what we produce to the rest of the world that the whole of our economic future depends, this is a different problem. Keep down the costs of rural industries, increase the efficiency, increase extension services, do all these things, so that we may extend our secondary industries, increase our population and come, in twenty years' time, to a state of affairs in which somebody will look around and say, "This is wonderful, the population of this country is twenty odd million, the position in this country is that we still maintain our position as remarkable exporters to the rest of the world, we still retain our position of being a country in which the man on the land can survive and grow and prosper and maintain our position as being, perhaps, the greatest manufacturing and export manufacturing country in the Southern Hemisphere." This is a good dream, isn't it? And it is not merely a dream, it can be made to come true.

It can be made to come true if we, as Liberals, do not allow ourselves to be beguiled by silly people who tell us that Liberalism has become stagnant, that it's all over, that it is about time to give the other boys a go. These pseudo-Liberals who whistle in your ear, some of them from very well-appointed offices, forget about them. You don't suppose do you, for a moment, that we would be exercising such miserable talents as we have in the service of this country as Liberals unless we had something to believe in? Not to make too fine a point of it, I have been Prime Minister, in my second manifestation now, for twelve and a half years. You don't suppose, do you, that I had some fascinated interest in creating a record? I would like, very much, to have a little private life. Most of you have - I have none. But I am here, I hope you're here, because I believe in things, on behalf of my country and am determined to do every last thing that I have in me to achieve them.