

OPENING OF THE KEITH MURRAY BUILDING, LINCOLN COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE  
ON 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1963

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Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies

Mr. President, Mr. Premier, Mr. Vice-Chancellor and Ladies and Gentlemen :

The Vice-Chancellor is by way of being a friend of mine and therefore does me proud, as you might say, but I regret to tell you that he has omitted some of my academic qualifications which really entitle me to be here. He has entirely overlooked the fact that, *causa honoris*, if for no other reason, I am a surgeon, a physician, a gynaecologist and obstetrician (Laughter), an architect - oh, and I forget. And those no doubt give me spurious qualification for being here, but I don't mind telling you that my reason for being here, coming over this morning and going back first thing tomorrow, has a great deal to do not only with you but with Sir Keith Murray.

This is the Keith Murray Building and I have been invited - I notice with great interest - to name it. Not to open it or anything of that kind, but to name it. Yesterday afternoon at the University of Melbourne I found that my task in relation to the new physiological research building was not to open it but to dedicate it. Now, Sir, this is a task entirely beyond me, I would have to require it to be performed by others more ecclesiastically eminent than I am. However, I did it. (Laughter) As I told them, I remembered that it is only a few years ago that, speaking at a luncheon of the Presbyterian General Assembly in Melbourne, I was introduced by an enthusiastic Moderator-General as the "Right Reverend R.G. Menzies." (Laughter) And some of this aura has no doubt hung about me, so I dedicated a laboratory full of sheep yesterday and now I am opening a new wing of a college occupied not by sheep but by.....well, who knows? (Laughter)

The connection between Sir Keith Murray and yourselves is a very real one. After all, he was, at the time this College was established, the head of Lincoln College at Oxford and that in itself is a very considerable title of honour when you consider that John Wesley was a Fellow of Lincoln College at Oxford and remember with pride, as you should, be you Presbyterian like me or Methodist like Norman Makin, that John Wesley was one of the very great men in the eighteenth century, a century not barren of great men, not barren of significant people in our history. Through all its masterly precision, its slight artificiality, its beautiful craftsmanship, its lovely architecture, there came the sort of warm pulse of John Wesley, always to be remembered, one of the immortals of English history. That, I think, would be agreed by everybody. Well, here he was, a Fellow of Lincoln. Keith Murray, the head of Lincoln.

Back in 1951 - 1950 or 1951, I've forgotten which --- we had, I being tremendously keen on university development, established a sort of ad hoc committee to have a look at the funds and see what needed to be done, and out of this emerged a grant, a modest enough grant as one sees it now, of about £1M a year towards the State universities. The very first question that arose with that committee at quite a late stage in its deliberations was whether the university colleges, the affiliated colleges, largely church foundations, should in any way at all be the beneficiaries of any grant that we made, and the committee at that time wasn't very enthusiastic about it. I, myself, the most mild-mannered of men, the least qualified to be a dictator,

spoke to them with a somewhat dictatorial voice and said that if they believed that a university could reach its full stature without its affiliated colleges, they were in bitter disagreement with myself and I would pay little attention to their report. And in the result there was a small matter - I have forgotten, £20,000 or £30,000 - out of the particular grant recommended that went, on some basis or other, to the residential colleges. That was a beginning.

Then, of course, the next stroke was this other illuminating idea which came to my mind. I have had very few bright ideas in my life and therefore I can remember them all without any difficulty. But it occurred to me that what was needed was not just a sort of catchpenny idea of making a little grant, something to keep the wolf from the door, but what was needed was a complete and basic examination of the university problem.

This became all the more important because, let us all remember, that whereas universities before the war might have, even in the case of the largest of them, 3,000 or 4,000 students, after the war, the demand for tertiary education grew, not only at an arithmetical progression, but at a geometrical progression so that instead of having an estimated demand of 20,000, it suddenly appeared to be 30,000 or 35,000. Instead of 35,000, it suddenly appeared to be 55,000. And, of course, it was quite manifest that this presented financial problems utterly beyond the scope of the State Parliaments and Governments, that the Commonwealth must come to this party and come to it in a big way, and if we were to do that, then we must have some examination made by a competent body which would not only map out the probable future of the universities, but also estimate their future requirements and try to envisage the ways and means of their development and what would happen to them and what faculties would expand more than others.

As the first thing you do after you have had a bright idea is to find a man or men, that's the greatest problem in life. Somebody suggested to me, "Well, what about trying to get Sir Keith Murray. You are going to England this year. Why not get him? He's the Chairman of the Universities Grants Commission and vastly experienced." So I saw him and he was quite enthusiastic about this. He was to be the Chairman. As you know, we ultimately developed a very strong committee about him. He said to me, "Well, I would like to do this. It will take some months, of course, and I don't know whether my Minister would let me go." So I said, "Who is your Minister?" "Well," he said, "the Chancellor of the Exchequer". The Universities Grants Commission in Australia is responsible to me, but in England the Grants Commission is responsible to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which is a very different thing. So I said at that time, "Well, of course, that's Harold Macmillan". "Yes." So I went to Harold Macmillan and with great goodwill, he said, "Yes, you may have him." So he came out, and as you remember, many of you, he made, with his Committee, a long investigation.

He understood perfectly the kind of thing that I had in my own mind about the affiliated colleges, with the results that have been spoken of here today. He made an examination which I believe will remain a classic in the history of Australian education, so long as Australia exists. It was a masterly report, and being a masterly report, it overwhelmed me and I, in turn, by giving Cabinet singularly little notice, overwhelmed the Cabinet.

So all the recommendations were adopted and since then, as you know, with the Universities Commission, the position has gone from strength to strength, never so strong as you would desire, never I hope will it be so good as you would desire because that would be the end of the road if the universities of Australia said, "Well, we have all we need, thank you. We have no fresh worlds to conquer." You always will, but at the same time I say, and you will agree, that the position of the Australian universities of today has been, in a very real sense, revolutionised over the last ten years.

As I am here speaking at a college within the University of Adelaide, I may tell you, though I hope nobody will allow this to be known across the border, that Keith Murray after making all his investigations, was having a long talk with me just before he made his report and I said, "Well, which university in Australia strikes you as coming closest to your idea of a university," and he said, "Beyond question, Adelaide." Now I am not just telling you that for fun. This is what he said to me. He didn't mean by that, that in Adelaide you had the best grounds because you don't, or the greatest supply of buildings because this doesn't follow, or that the affiliated colleges live in handsome lawns and on ancient walls and gardens. No, he didn't mean that at all. What he meant was that there was a spirit here at the University that appealed to him. There was an understanding of what a university was for and, above all, that there was a feeling down North Terrace and through the city among men of affairs and men of business that they did have some interest in the University, that they felt for it, that they wanted it to succeed, that they were prepared to contribute some of their own time and talent and effort to its work. In other words, that there was a community aspect surrounding the Adelaide University which appealed to him enormously.

Now having tediously recited to you some of his history - but I think it is necessary to do that because this, after all, is to be the Keith Murray Wing and he is a great and good man - I'd just like to conclude by saying something to you about the colleges themselves.

I know that our forefathers, grandfathers, whoever they might be according to our age, struck a great blow for what they were prepared to call free, secular and compulsory education. ....Secular.....and, of course, if you are going to have compulsory education and I am sure that, by and large, that has been a wonderful thing for Australia; I daresay that it is very hard to get away from the fact that it will be in its nature secular because we are a mixed society, but I have never been able to believe that that is where we ought to stop. I have never been able to believe that we ought to regard the cultivation of the mind as something entirely detached from the cultivation of the spirit. It is, in my opinion, a disaster when education in any country comes to be almost rigidly separated from religious faith or religious teaching or religious background, because it becomes a one-sided thing.

And, therefore, I have throughout these modern developments wanted to see as much done as possible for those affiliated colleges which in particular are colleges affiliated with the Churches of Australia because I think that here, in this college, for example, there may meet together and fuse ultimately the feelings of pure intellectualism and the feelings of pure religious learning and faith. These two things, by fusing, will produce bigger and better people, better citizens,

more useful people, people who will increase the existing minority of people who think first of their duties and only second of their rights.

And therefore, Sir, I am a tremendous supporter of the residential colleges. I was delighted when only ten years ago, eleven years ago, this College was established. Not an easy matter, not a cheap matter, a matter which will continue to put big burdens on your community and, of course, increasing burdens upon the Governments, Federal and State, who are contributors to these matters, but that it is worthwhile I have no doubt whatever. When I say all that I hope that nobody will suppose I am denouncing State education. I am not. I am its beneficiary. In a country State school and in a bigger town State school and on State scholarships and what-have-you, I know something about what the State provides and I have been its beneficiary, but I have also grown up more and more to believe in the significance of these places of residence which have the characteristics to which I have referred and I know how much you agree with me and how many people there are here this afternoon who have put their minds and hearts into this enterprise.

Therefore, Sir, I have singular pleasure in doing what I have been instructed on the paper to do - I name this the Keith Murray Building. I can't declare it open because it bears every sign of having been opened for some time.

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