

OPENING OF NEW CLINICAL SCHOOL BUILDINGS
ST. VINCENT'S HOSPITAL, SYDNEY
3RD MAY, 1964

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

Mr. Chairman, Your Eminence, Mr. Sheahan, Mother Rectress and Ladies and Gentlemen :

My simple function this afternoon is to declare the Clinical School and the Students' Residence open. If somebody will be good enough to remind me at the right time, I will do that.

In the meantime, I take leave to tell you, as you have already discovered, that here is a sort of port of last call. Whenever an occasion of this kind happens and I look at my State colleagues - even a good friend of mine like Mr. Sheahan, I know that before he finishes, he will lay a little hand on me (Laughter) and throw out a broad hint about something. I don't mind that from another politician, but if I may say so, with all the truculence of a Presbyterian (Laughter), I take great exception to being nudged by the Cardinal (Laughter) (Applause), because when we went through the students' residence, I may have imagined it, but I felt quite certain that he gave me a quick dig in the ribs. (Laughter) And under these circumstances, I think that I really ought to say a few words in my own defence, unaccustomed as I am to that kind of exercise. (Laughter)

It is quite true, as you have been told, that I have been fortunate enough to have more than a little to do with the entry of the Commonwealth into tertiary education, with the Murray Committee and the adoption of the Murray Report and then the creation of the Universities Commission, and these things undoubtedly - though they have produced occasional discomfort for the Treasury - have been a great opportunity for new life to the universities of Australia and for that I am thankful, but you know, it wasn't until after that had been done that I was approached by various people and invited to consider whether the teaching hospitals ought to be put on some footing which would approximate them to the universities proper. So in order to secure a completely unbiased report, I added to the Universities Commission a well-known professor of medicine; that is a very good way of seeing that nothing is overlooked. And in the result, we decided two things: First that we would include teaching hospitals who were, in the view of the Advisory Committee, doing work that could be properly be described as university work, that we would include them in the recommendation for grants to be made by the Commission. Now that was a very great step forward in the teaching hospitals.

In the second place, we decided we would, pending a rather fuller examination of running costs - because it is not easy to segregate the normal costs of running a hospital from the special costs attaching to tuition of a clinical kind - pending the conclusion of that matter, we would make contributions for the capital expenditure of teaching hospitals. Now that is a comparatively recent matter. I expect that before this year is out, we will have received and acted upon the report on the recurring expenditure side. I say that because my friend, Mr. Sheahan, was getting in a bit early on this, as if we hadn't thought of it. I expect before the year is out, that this will have borne fruit.

But in the meantime, I tell you, I had a bit of pleasure in walking through this clinical school this afternoon because it is literally one of the first fruits of that new policy and I am delighted and I hope that it will be followed by many other hospitals in many other places.

I suppose - I don't know, but I suppose that centuries ago you didn't need to know much to be a doctor. Judging by some of the seventeenth and eighteenth century works that I have read in my time, you needed to have some of the faculties of a butcher and your patients needed to have endurance far beyond that of Job. But in the last hundred years, what miracles we have seen, haven't we? The great miracles in surgery, the great revolution in medicine which converted it from a ways and means of sedation for the patient while nature did the work to this positive antibiotic approach to the cure of disease - these have been marvellous changes, and not one of them has been made by Act of Parliament. (Laughter)

We want to remember this. We are a little bit given in Australia to thinking that if only politicians were all sensible - meaning by that if they all agreed with all of us - everything would be solved, which is of course untrue. None of these changes that I have referred to were made by Acts of Parliament. How could they be? They were brought about by devoted men and women of immense skill going in for research, tackling problems, incurring risks, making revolutionary changes.

Who would dare to compare the hospital of today with what hospitals must have been before my time a hundred years ago. I said "before my time" because I sometimes feel I am getting near that point (Laughter) though, of course, I am encouraged by the example of Mr. Chancellor, whom I always refer to both publicly and privately as Peter Pan. (Laughter) (Applause) This is all a magnificent piece of human endeavour. The complexity of today far exceeds the complexity of the past.

People don't always perhaps realise it but the work of a Prime Minister, particularly in a Federal community, today is three times as complex as it was when I first became Prime Minister, and ten times as great as it was for a Prime Minister in the middle of the nineteenth century in Great Britain. The world, as it grows smaller, becomes more complex, the whole body of knowledge in science, in any profession, and above all, in medicine and in surgery, keeps crowding in. There are more things to be learned, and the more things there are to be learned, the greater must be the facilities for teaching them and for studying them and the result is that today's hospital, particularly a teaching hospital, has a complexity of responsibility, very good for the human race, of immense benefit to mankind, but it can't be done cheaply. It can't be done without constantly keeping up to date, it can't be done without being able to call on the skill of the right kind of people.

Now, Sir Douglas Miller who has spoken to you today is a shining example of what can be done by a man of great skill and of great devotion. (Applause) I have read in the documents that were given to me in view of today - not for the first time - some account of the honorary medical staff, people who with little, or for the most part, no remuneration, have used their time and their talent and their enthusiasm in order to train other people, in order to help other people. You know, that's a marvellous thing; I hope that spirit will never die. I hope we won't become so highly organised someday in Australia that everybody does what he is paid to do and no more and that we pay for everything and

that we expect to get everything. The world is moving not by people with that attitude of mind but as result of people of energy and enthusiasm and imagination who never thought for one moment that it was someone else's responsibility to do what they themselves could do. This is, I think, one of the glories of the medical profession.

There was a time when I was at the Bar, when I used to cross-examine medical men quite freely. As a rule, they were very poor witnesses. (Laughter) Anyhow, there used to be a lot of cross-examination going on, and once or twice, because I had performed some exercise of logic, in which I had outwitted the medical witness, I used to think to myself, "You know, these doctors, mm..... Put a query against them....." I have long since got over that childish illusion. I have the most tremendous respect, and so have you for the medical profession and I will continue to respect it, so long as it produces, and it has so far, such marvellous examples of fidelity to ideals, of energy, of dedication to the task in hand. This, I think, is one of the things that will be learned in the clinical school.

I had a look at the motto of the institution today on the front of the cover of the programme. If I may, I would just like to emphasise, Your Eminence, one word in it, though this may sound painfully like a sermon - "caritas" - yes, charity. I prefer, myself, rather to say "the love of Christ urges us on." Urges us..... there is an urgency about it. The word "urge" is of tremendous importance. We must all have a sense or urgency about the things that we have to do because we don't know what tomorrow will bring forth. Urgency is it. Urgency is in the mind and spirit of the great medical worker as he tackles his problems, isn't it? "This is not something I can put off for a month or a week or a year; this is the job. Look at this patient. Look at this problem" and he is urged on, he is driven on by these feelings that he has in his heart and in his mind. This is a wonderful spirit. Wonderful spirit. All I can say is that I hope that out of this clinical school, there will come not only medical men of wonderful skill and medical women. I hope that not only will it produce good doctors, talented doctors but that it will produce generation after generation of what I choose to call the Millers of this world, the enthusiasts, the people who will have a sense of urgency and who will never relapse into doing their bare duty or observing the barren rules of routine.

And therefore I am delighted to be here, honoured to be here. I have made a mental note of what His Eminence, the Cardinal, said. All I can tell him is that I will take an opportunity of trying to pass the buck to somebody else (Laughter) always reserving the simple truth that I am a port of last resort, for the time it reaches me, there is nobody to whom I can pass it. But you may be assured at all times of my own understanding of the problem and my own simple pleasure at having been able to take a small part in solving, or helping to solve, some of these problems in the modern educational world.

And so on this happy day when the heavens have been smiling on us, I would take liberty humbly myself to smile on you and say that I am delighted to be here, and remembering with magnificent accuracy what I am here for, I now declare the Clincial School and the Students' Building open.
