

LUNCHTIME RALLY, LIBERAL PARTY OF N.S.W.  
SYDNEY TOWN HALL, SYDNEY

5TH APRIL, 1965

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

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

I am delighted to find Mr. Askin in such robust form. I said to him outside before we came in that I didn't have any reason to believe that he would be defeated by his enemies. What sometimes happens in our party is that one is defeated by one's friends. Half-hearted people.

The first thing I want to do is to urge all of you to be whole-hearted. That will be the way to achieve victory.  
(Hear, hear) (Applause)

My mind goes back, of course, a good way in the history of the Liberal Party because I had the great honour of beginning it as Leader of the Opposition in 1944, and at that time I had some hopes, of course, that with hard work, co-ordination of our ideas, a revision of our policy, the accumulation of fresh ideas and fresh drive, we might win in due course. Well, we weren't successful in 1946. I don't think that anybody imagined that starting from as far back as we were, we were going to win in 1946. We won a seat or two. And immediately (do you remember? some of the older of you may) the cry arose, a muted cry, the sort of cry you hear in the corner of a club room, "You will never win with Menzies" (Laughter) This became quite a slogan, very encouraging to me as Leader of the Opposition. (Laughter)

In a reverse kind of way it did encourage me because it annoyed me so much that I didn't let up for years thereafter. And although "you couldn't win with Menzies", I suppose there are some people who have said, "You can't win with Askin". But we did win, and we have won seven consecutive elections since that time. (Applause) And this to a major extent due to the fact that we have had inside our party the most fabulous loyalty; a loyalty that has encouraged us, that has enabled us to ride out periods of unpopularity. We've gone through these periods, and we have gone through them successfully because we have had the complete fidelity of our own people.

Now I think, Sir, that this period, the last twelve or fifteen years in Australia is the most exciting period in our history in the most exciting country in the world. (Applause) Let me repeat that to you: The most exciting country in the world. It is part of my task in Canberra and in other parts of the world to encounter people of significance and influence in other countries and inevitably they will be heard saying to me, "You know, Australia is a tremendously exciting country. We, ourselves, are taking an interest in it. We (if they are in the financial world) are encouraging our people to invest in Australia" because there is no country in the world that offers such an exciting prospect of growth as this country of ours.

Now let us be proud of that because it is true. Anybody who moves around Australia wouldn't need to have any evidence of the facts that I have mentioned. Mr. Askin has just mentioned the population. It is very interesting to recall that since 1949 - I will just take one example - the number of dwelling units in Australia has gone up from 1,970,000 to 3,262,000. Indeed it would be fair to say that most of the houses in Australia

today have been built in our time. This is a tremendously interesting factor and, of course, on all the material sides - black coal, ingot steel, all the area under crop in the country, the increase in the sheep population - all these things have been going on, with their little variations, of course, from time to time because life is like that, but in the end result they add up to the most remarkable period of development that you or I have ever seen anywhere. Now this is a matter that only needs to be mentioned. I don't need to elaborate it to you, but I just want to add one observation if I may.

All this, and many other things that I don't need to quote to you, have been going on during the period of office of a Federal Liberal and Country Party administration at Canberra. (Applause) Now, I am perfectly certain that when this statement comes to be analysed, I will be told by our political opponents, "Well, but do you claim the credit for it? Do you think you did it?" And of course the answer is that I don't think I did it, but I do think that the economic and financial policies of my government have created a climate in which this could happen and did happen.

This is the fact of the matter and in case somebody says that is a little boastful, I want to remind you that at the last State election in New South Wales, the then State Premier stated categorically that the Commonwealth Government has had the main responsibility for economic conditions. (Laughter) Now he can't have it both ways, or he couldn't have had the matter both ways. If we have had, and he is quite right, the main responsibility for economic conditions, then I think that our policies may be taken to have contributed in a material way to the results that I have been referring to.

Of course I know why the Premier said it. After many, many years, I have a rough working knowledge of Premiers. I see them with some regularity and I know they are never, professionally, quite satisfied. That's all right. But in the last election here, we were unpopular. We had almost lost the 1961 election and therefore it wasn't a bad idea, he thought, to say, "Well, there you are. The Commonwealth Government, this government that has practically lost your confidence, it has had the responsibility and look what a mess it has made of it." This was the whole sermon on that occasion. All right, I accept it. Let Mr. Renshaw repeat that the Commonwealth Government has the main responsibility for economic conditions and then Mr. Askin and all of you will be able to point out that if that is so then this responsibility has been discharged magnificently for a long, long time. (Applause)

Now, Mr. Chairman, I think it is worthwhile asking ourselves why there has been such a degree of achievement in Australia, a degree of political success in Australia, and so high a degree in the National Parliament of continuity of office for our side. It might be worthwhile asking ourselves why. Well, of course, from our point of view, we have based ourselves on the encouragement of private initiative and enterprise. We have put into operation the most novel and effective series of social service provisions that this country has ever had since the old-age pension was first invented at the beginning of the century and, of course, we have set out, above all things and particularly of late, to help to create an educated democracy. Now these have been the driving elements in what we have been doing.

But Labor, what has Labor been doing? What is the cause of this failure by Labor? And I say Labor because Labor is the one thing all over Australia. I know the Labor Government here

is occasionally casting itself for the role of a Right Wing Party while its principal Federal representative from this State publicly announces his steady translation to a position near the Left Wing if not actually on its tip, so there is a little bit of jiggery-pokery going on here. But we know, don't we, that the Labor Party is the same all over Australia. It has to be because when its outside rulers meet, they lay down rules of policy and of action which are just as binding on the New South Wales Labor Government as they are on any private member of the Labor Party in the Federal Parliament. This is under their establishment. And the result is that one is entitled to treat the Labor Party as being the one thing all over Australia in Federal, in State, in whatever it may be.

Now, Sir, everybody knows that the Labor Party has fallen increasingly into the clutches of the extremists. You don't need to know very much about the inside of politics to know how true that is. Union after union has been infiltrated by communists and communists have been coming into office promoting discord and trouble. The Left Wing - a term to which I see somebody objects - but the Left Wing at Canberra develops more and more its position as the spokesman of Labor on foreign affairs. We hear them time after time after time and we hear what they have to say about the United States of America and American policy, because the Left Wing of the Labor Party hates America and hates everything that the Americans do. When I came in here this morning, there were a lot of earnest workers holding up placards. This, of course, is very largely an attack on the United States. I know it is supposed to be an attack on my Government, but everything the United States does on behalf of the free world is condemned by the Left Wing of the Labor Party and you are much better informed than I am if you know or can guarantee that the Left Wing of the Labor Party won't be in complete charge of it inside the next few years.

The second thing about Labor is that it has lost the capacity for evolving new ideas because, of course, it has to rely on others to produce them and to tell them what they are to do. Mr. Askin made a remark about this which struck me as profoundly true. They are not producing new ideas. When did they last produce? Ever since they set themselves up as the Socialist Party, the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange etc., have they ever produced anything new? The truth is that they are the reactionaries in politics in this country. They are living on the past, they are living on a little stock of ideas that was established thirty years ago and which they have been turning over ever since until it has got frightfully shop-soiled.

We have been the party that has produced the new ideas. You consider what has been going on in the field of export development, in the field of rural industry, in the field of education, in the field of national development, in the field of international relationships, and international movements of money and balances of payments. We have been the initiators. I can't recall a solitary initiation on the part of my opponents for many years.

Now, a party that has lost the capacity for evolving new ideas ought really to have a look at itself. We did fifteen years ago. We came to the conclusion that we would have to run through our stock of ideas and add to them and produce a platform and a policy that would look forward and would have appeal to the people of Austral a and in particular that would have appeal to

the younger people of Australia to whom the future belongs.  
(Applause)

I was involving the Labour Party in a severe criticism and saying that they were reactionary and out of date, and of course they are, as out of date as socialism and that is about as reactionary and out of date as any doctrine you have ever heard of, but they still believe in it, they still hang on to it, they still think that this has some appeal to young Australian men and women whom they underestimate shockingly. They seem to treat the young people in Australia as if all they wanted to do was to manage to live long enough to be paid something by the government (Laughter) (Applause) and they are not like that, I assure you.

All the young Australian men and women whom I know are keen, intelligent, anxious to stand on their own feet and anxious to carve out a future, and you have a few million people in a country like ours anxious to carve out a future, anxious to get on with the job, anxious to engage in some adventure and I will guarantee the development of the country without a moment's hesitation. It is individuals, millions of them, encouraged to develop their talents, encouraged to engage in enterprise for risk and for reward - have enough of them and you will have a country that is growing and growing until I am able to say with complete truth that it is the most exciting country in the world. You know -

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive  
But to be young was very heaven" (Applause)

Those are fine words and worth recalling.

There is another aspect of this. I don't propose to go through all the details, of course, because that would take much too long, but I do want to say something to you about our revolutionary approach to the problem of education. People very soon forget the Commonwealth didn't have any direct responsibilities in relation, for example, to university education. It was my own Government that made the first little tentative grant to the universities. It was my own Government that established the Murray Committee whose report was the beginning of a revolution in the university world and we adopted every last recommendation in that report, and then we established a Universities Commission. We established a body to report on tertiary education. We had a special committee on teaching hospitals.

We have covered an enormous amount of ground in the tertiary field and the result is that whereas fifteen years ago the Budget item would be about £1M, in the triennium that is beginning now, it will be more like £30M, and you, of course, pay it, but it has been under our policies that these things have occurred. Go around the universities, go and see the buildings going up, see the rapidly increasing number of prospective undergraduates who can get in and get a university training and give themselves a new chance in life. Have a look at these universities, old and new, and you will find them seething with activity, growing almost daily under your eyes. (Applause) And why? I venture to say with complete confidence, because of the revolutionary approach made to these matters by my own Government, a Liberal administration, Liberal thought. This has been the beginning of a new era in tertiary education in Australia, and it was initiated by us. Now remember that and remember, as I do myself, with some pride.

Well then, our last initiation on this matter was in respect of secondary schools and technical schools. It is already rapidly being forgotten that as a result of the policy I put before the people at the last election of which they warmly approved, the money that we spoke of, £5M. a year for technical schools, has already been taken up and will continue to be provided for years into the future. This has put the States into a position of, I think, a very proper advantage in that they are able to do more in building and equipment in technical schools to meet the growing demand for technical training and knowledge in Australia.

Then we made our famous, and I believe contentious, provision providing for science blocks and science equipment in secondary schools (Applause) meaning by that secondary schools of all types, State, independent, most of the independent being church schools. (Interjector : "Shame!") Shame? It would have been a shame to refuse them. What sort of a shame would it have been if the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, having decided to help with science training in secondary schools, said, "Only State secondary schools are to get this money. Those of you who have had the enterprise or the particular desires to have your children in other types of secondary school, you get nothing, although we are the trustees for all the taxpayers in Australia." That would have been a shame. (Applause)

This is an item - it is not a big item intrinsically, but has opened many doors, and I am delighted with it because I think that it is helping to open up a new frontier in Australia. You know, we can go along in the orthodox fashion and treat education as following what I will call the orthodox routine lines, the kind of thing that many of us have been through, but what is needed today in this age, in this young country, with so much resource to be developed, so many challenging things to be coped with, what is needed is a higher degree, among other things, of technical, scientific, technological training than we have ever had before. This is elementary.

This is a technical age. The development in the twentieth century has been, of course, phenomenal, and here we are in Australia, made up of a people of high average intelligence and capacity for acquiring knowledge, with a very advanced standard of living, with great advantages, and we have around us in the world countries which are for various historical reasons and others, backward countries who need help, whose population is pressing all the time on their resources, who are confronted every now and then by the literal problem of starvation, and they must be enabled, they must be helped to develop along scientific lines their own capacity to produce things for themselves. It is quite wrong to suppose they ought to be put in a position of living on somebody else's kindness forever. They have to be encouraged to produce things of their own in the problems of agriculture, in the problems of depasturing stock, in the problems of factories, and therefore we, as a donor country, under the Colombo Plan, have ourselves an obligation to develop to the utmost our own capacity for producing scientific and technological skill. (Applause)

I went out, Sir, to Bathurst the other day to open a science block at a school, a school which had had a science master many many years ago who was a pioneer in applied science. He must have been a very very remarkable man. Sent the first wireless messages across land from the school, did a great deal of scientific work in X-Ray, with the most primitive appliances, and today there is a magnificent science block thanks to this policy, this revolutionary policy, with fine equipment so that

on the basis of a wonderful tradition which these boys have inherited, they will be able to equip themselves to be pioneers of a new growth of knowledge. Very appropriate to say that in Bathurst, because Bathurst after all was the new frontier itself, geographically that was opened up by Blaxland and Wentworth and the great explorers. This opened up a new physical conception of Australia. It converted Australia almost in a stroke from being just a limited penal settlement perched on the coast to being the country that it has now become. And I said to these boys, just as these great men had sought out new frontiers and had discovered them, so they, themselves, would be the pioneers.

This is so much the kind of thing that we Liberals ought to believe in most passionately, that pioneering is not dead, that pioneering has to be encouraged, that all pioneers don't need to be looking around with big beards on and wearing bowyangs. This is an antiquated idea. We can all be pioneers and the more talented we are, the more we can pioneer great movements, great things, great bodies of knowledge, a capacity to accept growing responsibility and therefore I point out to you that this being our spirit, this being our approach, the Labor Party is beginning to discover, I think rather late, that their chronic talk about a depression or about referring to the people as the proletariat - I haven't yet met a chap down the street who liked being called one of the proletariat - but don't let on to the Labor Party, I hope they will still continue to use this rather fabulous expression.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, as time marches on, I just want to turn quite hastily to the great problem of defence and foreign policy because Mr. Askin had some sensible things to say about it. True, we the Commonwealth, have the primary responsibility - in a sense you might say the total responsibility - for conducting affairs relating to defence and foreign policy, but whether we do it well or badly will determine the future security and well-being of all voters in all elections for all Houses of Parliament. This is one of those problems on which an unhealthy attitude in a State Government could easily bring about difficulties in the carrying out of a Federal policy.

If there is one thing on which we all ought to be able to stand clear and together, it is the defence and security of the country which in turn involves the foreign policy of the country, how we deal with other nations. Now on this, of course, as you know, Labor is hopelessly divided. Half the speeches made on the other side of the House are busy explaining how wickedly wrong the Americans are. The other half adopt the view which is much more like our own and that is that if we are to view our security in the broad, we might as well not only pay attention to what we evolve inside our own country but to our relationships with those countries upon whose help, mark you, in a great crisis we would have to depend. (Applause)

Now, let us apply that to the present state of affairs. We have just, not long ago, initiated an expanded defence programme which far exceeds anything that anybody would have thought about a couple of years ago. It is going to involve great national and individual burdens. I think it has the warm support of the people of Australia but I am not so sure that the support will be unbroken when we finally begin to pick up the bill and see how we are going to pay for it. I don't know how yet, we haven't got to that stage.

But this is a colossal task, and it is a task which involves to a considerable extent purchasing equipment in other countries and it therefore involves to that extent drawing upon our overseas reserves and therefore it has a direct relationship to our balance of payments problem which we have from year to year. And, ladies and gentlemen, when I hear my opponents at Canberra throwing cold water on capital coming into Australia, I wonder whether they have the faintest idea as to where we would be if we didn't have capital coming into Australia.

Does anybody suppose that eleven million people, admittedly the best in the world - I'm prepared to concede that point - (cheers, applause) but does anybody suppose that eleven million people with a continent the size of the United States of America and with resources, many of which as yet are quite untouched, can develop all the capital it wants for itself out of its own individual savings? Really, nobody in his five wits would pretend that for one moment, and therefore we can either slow down our progress, slow down our increasing population by cutting down on immigration or we can welcome overseas capital to enable all our resources to be put to work and our development to continue.

I don't know where the Labor Party supposes we ought to get the capital we need. (Interjector : "What about Mr. McEwen, he doesn't agree with it.") Mr. McEwen agrees entirely with what I am saying. I stated the policy of my Government on this matter in my last policy speech and it represented the unanimous views of Mr. McEwen, Mr. Holt and myself. My view is that the Labor Party's policy would do more to damage national growth and development in Australia than any other thing that I can think of.

(Interjector : "What about the aborigines?") Isn't it wonderful? Do you know why I take such pride in the educational programme? Because I am hoping that after a generation or two it will produce people who won't have such a passion for changing the subject when they are losing an argument. (Applause)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I mentioned something about defence. I now want to say a few words about foreign policy. I want to know to what extent Labor really challenges, effectively challenges, our foreign policy. I don't quite understand it because the other day the Leader of the Opposition in Canberra said there was no hope of a bi-partisan policy because nobody could agree with the Government's policy and therefore, ladies and gentlemen, I am at a loss to know what Labor's policy is.

All I know is that it isn't ours according to Mr. Calwell and then, of course, somebody comes up and says (to interjector) that we didn't have one. In one of the long winter evenings, one of you young fellows must come along and have a word with me and explain the policy of the Labor Party on foreign affairs because it would have all the charms of novelty. (Laughter) Our policy is well known. We have a strong view, which I think most people in Australia share, that the security of South East Asia against communist attack is of enormous importance, not only to the countries affected directly but to ourselves in this part of the world. (Applause) And therefore we have engaged ourselves in a variety of directions.

In the first place, we entered into - my own Government entered into the ANZUS pact with the United States and with New Zealand and under that we have a great cloak of

protection under certain circumstances cast over us by the United States of America. We entered into the South East Asian Treaty, a treaty in which we are partners with Pakistan, with Thailand, with the Philippines, with Great Britain, with the United States, with France, with New Zealand. Under this treaty, we have all undertaken to do what we can to protect certain protocol countries, as they have been called, against communist attack and one of them is South Vietnam, so there we are; South Vietnam, one of the countries in effect assured of our support under this treaty, provided she was willing or prepared to ask us to come in because that was a condition right through.

Well she asked the United States of America, she asked us. We are there, in a very small way, because we have major commitments at this moment in and around Malaysia, but we are there, we are contributing. The United States is there in a very substantial way with large forces of all arms and with supplies and all the equipment that is needed to resist the communist aggression. Now, ladies and gentlemen, we are told that the United States ought not to be there. In other words, we are told that South Vietnam ought to be abandoned, that the communists from the north, the Vietminh, should be allowed to come down and join up with these Vietcong pockets of communists in the south and establish South Vietnam as a communist country, a communist country ultimately dominated by the most aggressive form of communism which is Chinese communism today.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, what would happen then? See, America is out. America has listened to the words of the boys outside and they go home. (Interjector : "Were they communists?") I daresay, I thought their labels looked like it, didn't you? (Applause) But I wouldn't know, I didn't recognise any of them personally. (Laughter) But, ladies and gentlemen, let us assume this - "America Go Home. America Keep Out. America Don't Have Any More To Do With This Business." So Vietnam falls. What happens to Thailand? You have only to look at the map when you go home. What happens to Thailand with that long exposed communist frontier that would develop? What happens to Malaya? What happens to Malaysia caught between two fires? From a point of view of ordinary commonsense and of instinct of self-preservation, I can't understand how anybody could say that the Americans ought to go out.

Let me put it in another way to you. Why are the Americans there? (Interjector : "For profit") "For profit" says some goat. (Laughter) They are making a tremendous profit out of being in South Vietnam; it is costing them thousands of millions of dollars and they get nothing back. If that is profit, well you have introduced a new word to the dictionary, that is all I can say. (Applause)

It is easily summarised, ladies and gentlemen. They are not there for money. They are spending money, vast sums. They are not there in order to avoid exposing their own people to risk because they have thousands of their own troops at risk every day. They are not there because they have enormous business interests in South Vietnam. Anybody who knows anything about the economics of that country would know how absurd this is.



Well why are they there? If they are not there serving any selfish American interest, and that is quite demonstrable, then they must be there - and I believe they are there - because this is, in the finest sense of the word, an altruistic effort on behalf of free people wherever they live. (Applause)

Sir, I am delighted to know that when my friend, Mr. Askin, becomes Premier (Applause) and his colleagues become Ministers, we will enjoy the support of people who on these great matters have no ambiguities in their mind and no hesitations in their souls. So my last word to you, because my time is up, my last word to you, ladies and gentlemen, is : Go on in strength, go on with confidence, go on with enthusiasm and you will, beyond all question, win on May 1st.

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