

FAREWELL DINNER FOR THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL,  
LORD DE LISLE, HELD AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE,  
CANBERRA.

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4TH MAY, 1965

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

Sir and Ladies and Gentlemen :

I am about to essay a task proposing your health, Sir. Now I don't think you were around the precincts this afternoon but if you had been, you might have gathered that there were some differences between Arthur Calwell and myself. By the effluxion of time and the enthusiasm of the moment, we are now on the one wavelength. Isn't that right, Arthur? (Laughter) Everything I say, he will agree with, will add to and will adorn.

Now my task tonight is to propose the toast of His Excellency the Governor-General who is, unhappily, about to leave us. He hasn't come to the conclusion suddenly to leave us because when Her Majesty The Queen was good enough to approve of his appointment, he made it quite clear that there was some limit to the time and he has served out his time - is that the right expression, Sir? (Laughter) - with immense success.

The Governor-General has been, in common with quite a number of his predecessors - in fact, I suppose, with all, though there were some I didn't know - a robust occupant of this post. I mean by that that he has never been unwilling to contribute a few views; he has always spoken the mind of a highly-talented and very brave man. I have had no trouble with him, if I may say so. (Laughter) He knows this because one of his great predecessors, then Sir William Dill, was a little given to expressing his mind in certain areas with vigour and occasionally I had to go out to Farraluma, stand outside his study, having made an appointment, stand to attention, say to myself, "Now, Menzies, don't run away from it," (Laughter) and then go in and make my bow to the Governor-General, and then he would say, "My dear fellow, do sit down," very disarmingly, you see.

Then he would say, "What do you want to see me about?" and I, once or twice, essayed the task of saying to him, "Well, you know you said so-and-so, Sir, up in the Northern Territory." It's a funny thing, isn't it, that it is only in the Northern Territory - is Sid Barnes here tonight? (Laughter) - it's only in the Northern Territory that people succumb to the temptation to say things. And I would breathe three times inwards, you know, and say, "I think perhaps, Sir, that wasn't entirely well advised." When I had done this I was in a muck sweat because I was frightened of him. (Laughter) I concede that point.

He would smile and say, "Sit down" and "There may be a great deal in what you say". Well that was something, and then realising I was on the point of collapse, he did what the present Governor-General occasionally does, or regularly does, and said to me, "Would you like a drink?" and if any man ever needed one, I was the man.

Well, I haven't had to have that kind of experience with you, Sir, because from first to last, ever since the day that you were appointed, I have been very, very happy to know you, and all of us have been happy to know you as a man of immense character and if you will allow me to say so - distinguished ability and great courage and tradition. This, I think, has been a very go

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thing for us and I am quite certain, Sir, that you yourself feel that it has been a good thing for you because you have been all round Australia, you have seen people at all angles, you have been into all the corners of Australia and you have made your voice clear in almost every corner of Australia, and always to the immense satisfaction of the people of Australia.

Therefore the first thing I want to say to you is that I am proposing the toast of a very distinguished and very gallant man of whom all of us know a great deal. I have been in a state of a little difficulty, Sir, about the next thing I want to say but I think on the whole you would like me to refer to it.

When you, Sir, came here, you brought with you a wife who had the most enormous tradition of courage and the most enormous individual courage. She was a very great lady and I shall always recall the courage with which she bore herself at a time when ordinary mortals might have been depressed and sorry for herself. Do you mind, Sir, if I refer to her because, really, her period out here with you, her bravery in the face of difficulties moved everybody in Australia. I say that without the slightest hesitation. And of course her death was an irreparable loss to you. Now I don't like to have to speak about these matters because they are really rather emotional, but I thought about this and I thought, "No, this Governor-General can't leave Australia without knowing that he leaves behind him not only memories of himself but memories of her" and therefore I take the liberty on behalf of all of you of referring to that very great lady.

And then when she left, His Excellency was, I think, singularly fortunate to have had in succession two daughters - very young, not to be expected to face up to the formalities and responsibilities of Vice-Regal existence - and each of them in her turn, Kate and Anne, did a marvellous job, and everybody here tonight would want me to say how marvellous that job was, how well they did. And of course although they were daughters - and if I may say so, daughters have something rather special (a number of you will understand this perfectly), they have something rather special, young Philip, the owner of the traditional name, young Philip Sidney has been here from time to time, quite a long time, one way or another, and I would like to say to him, Sir, through you, how much we have enjoyed having Philip here and how convinced I am that he will some day be a Member of the Federal Parliament, and I am keeping my fingers crossed in case he gets muddled up with Arthur Calwell (Laughter).

The other thing, Sir, I would like to say is this. It is sometimes forgotten the Governor-General of Australia is not only expected to be a man of distinction, as he is, but he is also to be recognised as the personal representative of The Queen. Now this is a very significant statement - the personal representative of The Queen. In other words, the perfect Governor-General is one who knows The Queen and whom The Queen knows, who represents The Queen because The Queen would wish him to represent her. This is, I think, tremendously important at the outset.

And when the end of the term of office comes, then it is equally important to remember the reciprocal aspect of this matter that the Governor-General who has represented The Queen, who is known to The Queen, goes back home and finds himself representing - not The Queen but Australia, representing us, speaking for us, understanding us, and that is why it is such a lovely conjunction of the planets to have a Governor-General who

can represent The Queen because The Queen knows him, respects him, who has been her personal representative and who, on his return, will understand us, speak for us, be, in the rather tattered sentence, an Australian Ambassador, carrying with him both ways an immense amount of representational authority, and if I may say so to you, Sir, a very great deal of respect, and what is even more important than respect, affection.

Now, I indicated to you at the beginning that Arthur Calwell and I, having composed our differences over the dinner adjournment, decided that this is a bi-partisan occasion, and, Arthur, I know that with your usual facility and talent, you will support me before I propose the toast.

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