

ADDRESS BY THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER,  
MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY,  
AND LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY PARTY,  
MR. JOHN McEWEN,  
AT THE FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE  
CANBERRA-QUEANBEYAN BRANCH OF THE COUNTRY PARTY,  
CANBERRA, 6TH JULY, 1966

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The Country Party took shape as a political entity separately in all the States at about the time of the First War. It had different names in the different States. It was some little time before the State organisations composed a Federation.

Organisationally the Party is still a federation of State entities. Federal policy is composed by a Federal Council with a membership from all the State organisations and the Federal Parliamentary Party.

In due course a common name was adopted: "The Australian Country Party"; and the branch formed here to-night will be a unit of the N.S.W. Branch of the Australian Country Party.

Undoubtedly the Party in its formative years was composed primarily of farmers concerned with policies concerning the interests of farmers and their export industries.

If anyone said that the Country Party was founded on a narrow sectional basis 50 years ago, I would not dispute that, but would quickly point out that the economic health of this country then, as now, is inseparable from the existence of healthy expanding export industries to earn the foreign exchange to service our national growth.

It was founded as a Specialist party. It has grown to broad national stature without losing its capacity for specialist attention to the well-being of the rural industries.

All that was 50 years ago.

Australia itself is not recognisable as a nation to-day compared with the Dominion of Australia of 50 years ago. And as Australia has grown and broadened, so the Country Party has grown and broadened over the same period.

I believe that many who are attracted to the Country Party here to-night, and widely around Australia, are attracted because the policies of the Party are so singularly for the growth and strength of the Australian economy, and people.

Fifty years ago the terms "farm products" and "export industries" were synonymous.

We have grown with a consciousness that the self-interest of the person engaged in the export industry coincided completely with the self-interest of the nation, always avid to earn the maximum foreign exchange. Constantly increasing production of new wealth is the most essential foundation from which to apply other political policies.

The clearly growing coalescence between the farm export industries and non-farm export industries has been a most natural development.

The basic political philosophy of the Country Party has always been attached to the concept of free enterprise and against Socialist doctrines. This is the common ground which places the Country Party so constantly in alliance with the Liberal Party.

On the other hand, the Country Party has always wanted the fruits of productive labour to go to the maximum extent to the producer, and this explains the almost identity of interest between the Country Party and the great Co-operative Groups which now handle so much of production.

The concept of retaining strength in the hand of the seller by combination is expressed in many different forms, but the objective is constant: dairyfarmers or fruitgrowers combined to establish a dairy factory or a fruit cannery to handle their own produce - a purely private arrangement. The sugar growers and the wheatgrowers found it necessary for Governments and Legislation to aid in their co-operative activities. The motive of retaining the maximum value of production to the producer is the same.

This leads through to the whole complex of statutory marketing boards or regulatory boards.

That is a glimpse of the Country Party's historic part in attending to the well-being of primary producers. The Country Party still claims the specialist knowledge in this field. But, standing further back from the picture, one discovers the extent to which the Country Party has broadened its objectives as Australia has grown and as our circumstances have changed.

We have always been strong for adequate defence provisions; for close co-operation with Britain, and natural allies. Our growth, the diminution of British strength, the shift from Europe alone as the possible source of war to include Asia in this threat, the emergence of Communist strength on the one hand and American might on the other hand - have all contributed to progressive broadening of Country Party policies.

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is a summary of the work done by the various departments and a statement of the results achieved. It is a general statement of the work done by the various departments and a statement of the results achieved.

2. The second part of the report deals with the work done by the various departments during the year. It is a detailed statement of the work done by the various departments and a statement of the results achieved.

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7. The seventh part of the report deals with the work done by the various departments during the year. It is a detailed statement of the work done by the various departments and a statement of the results achieved.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the work done by the various departments during the year. It is a detailed statement of the work done by the various departments and a statement of the results achieved.

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To-day, the Country Party abandons nothing of its specialist field in relation to the rural sector, but plays an increasingly broad and leading part in propounding policies for the growth and strength of the Australian nation.

We support policies of alliances for military strength; of better education and health services; better community services generally; of full employment and adequate social services. But, being fundamentalists at heart, we are firm in the belief that all these policies are only attainable in strength if two essential ingredients exist: first, a growing population, and secondly, a sufficient foreign exchange earning to service our requirements and our ambitions.

I place it as broadly as that: growing population, migration, are mere words without job creation. Job creation is synonymous with developing industrialisation, which leads in turn to growing tertiary activity.

No ambitions in this direction can live without sufficient foreign exchange earning, and here the farm industries are still the backbone. Primary industry still earns more than 80% of our total foreign exchange and is key to a healthy growing national economy.

Name any single aspect of policy and the Country Party will relate it to its position in respect of strong industrial growth, strong capacity to earn foreign exchange.

I have pointed out again and again that superficially there could appear to be a contradiction between fast industrial growth, which undoubtedly imposes a pressure on costs, and strong growth for export, which, to be competitive, requires costs to be kept within bounds. This is a problem, not a contradiction.

No one can contemplate an Australia predominantly composed of farmers, even if operating from a low-cost base, nor can anyone contemplate an Australia highly industrialised with the foreign exchange-earning farmers squeezed out of existence. We have to reconcile this problem.

We have to grow without stultifying the farm community, and the Country Party believes that supporting fast economic growth - as it does - it is entitled in equity to policies which will compensate for the cost pressures imposed on the export industries. And, quite apart from the argument of equity, I point out that there is no future for the country if it fails to earn sufficient foreign exchange.

In 1919 we might have resisted, and probably did, industrial development which would impose cost pressures. To-day the Country Party sees clearly that industrial development must go on, and

proposes constructive policies designed to compensate the export industries for the added costs and to enable them to survive and expand.

The greatest single point of Country Party policy here is that of support for the scientist and technologist and extension worker; to help the wheatgrower, or dairyfarmer, or wool producer, to bear heavier cash costs and yet experience lower unit costs by doubling the number of sheep carried on an acre or the amount of beef produced; doubling the amount of sugar produced per acre; getting the wheat yield up, and the fruit yield up, and so on. Success in this direction is the predominant explanation of rural industries' ability to survive in a phase of growing cash costs: a 60% increase in total agricultural production during the period of this Government with a diminution of the rural workforce of 10% in the same period. This efficiency has been the major offset to cash cost increases.

There is, of course, a total complex of other policy items - home prices, a lower bank overdraft rate for the export industries; a greater access to credit; a preferred access to credit; a number of taxation concessions; a fertilizer subsidy; concessions in freight rates; a search for markets overseas, trade treaties, trade publicity; international commodity arrangements, special bulk sales.

Increasingly, policies of the same character are now being devised to aid the export of manufactured products: payroll tax rebate; the underwriting of overseas investment made in the course of securing market opportunities; the highly specialised insurance provision of the Export Payments Insurance Corporation. These steps supporting manufacture at export are comparable in Country Party thinking with the objectives in mind when a fertilizer bounty is provided, or a trade promotional campaign mounted.

From the fast-growing economic strength of the country, which has been supported by these policies, we are now able to afford what would hitherto have appeared prodigious expenditures on defence, enormous allocations for social services, and for education, and to help the State Governments; and for special activities for Northern Development, such as funds provided for the Ord, for brigalow clearing, beef roads, and very substantial expenditure in Papua-New Guinea of taxation raised in Australia.

I am quite sure that the Australian Country Party is broadly respected for the breadth of its policies; respected not only here in Australia, but respected internationally, where, on many occasions, ideas that have had their origin in this kind of thinking are now part of international discussions and planning.

But, with all the strength that we can muster in our day, we still need strong friends. Our close bonds with the British people and Commonwealth countries need no documentation. The ANZUS Treaty with the United States and New Zealand establishes a mutual alliance between Australia and the world's most powerful military country to-day.

We expect others to accept it that this enviable country is entitled to be free from aggression, and this must result in us lending our support to preserving the freedom of other nations against aggression.

This principle and our unbreakable bond with the United States have combined to lead us to join with the United States in resisting Communist aggression in South Vietnam. In human and in international political terms, we are right in joining to protect this free country from Communist aggression. In practical terms, we are right to keep the frontiers of expansive Communism as far from our shores as possible.

In terms of our own long-term security, the recent declaration by Mr. Dean Rusk that any attack upon Australia would produce a massive American retaliation is the greatest guarantee of our safety in a dangerous world.

In these policies we and our Liberal coalition partners hold identical views.

I am confident that the policies of the Australian Country Party are good both in the specialist sense and, more importantly, for the over-all well-being of Australia.