BARTON ELECTORATE DINNER

SANS SOUCI, N.S.W.

2 JULY 1968

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton

Mr Arthur, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

That was quite a list of qualities you laid down that you hoped would be possessed by a Prime Minister..... and I would not pretend to lay claim to all of them. All I can say is that I would try to do as well as I could to fulfil each one you have mentioned.

When you asked me Mr Arthur, first to come to this gathering, I was delighted for two reasons. One was because it would give me an opportunity, as it has given me, to meet, however fleetingly, so many of the people in this area, such a cross section of Australians living in your electorate, and some from adjoining electorates. This in itself is for me something that I think a Prime Minister should try and do as far as it is possible.

I was glad because this was the electorate which, after a long period of aberration before they finally decided, sent you to join us in Canberra. That meant that we had added to our ranks somebody who was prepared to work hard - indeed one of the most energetic characters I have ever met in my life, who works, as I am sure I don't have to tell you in the electorate - and I think spends more time questioning, cross-questioning, arguing with Ministers on policy in Canberra than almost any other private Member, often with great advantage to the nation.

Secondly I was glad because it would give me a chance to meet some of the people who had sent to us a Member who would help us to further an attitude to government, an approach to the running of the nation which over the last twenty years or so has, I think, proved itself to be a proper approach. Of course, there would in any period of such a time be errors made, mistakes made, but taking the thing as a whole, it has shown itself to be an approach which has built a nation, which twenty years ago was small, to a nation which is now standing on the threshold of real greatness and which has allowed in that period of time a foundation to be laid on which the great edifice of a future Australia can be built.

These things do not come about by governments or by politicians. They come about by the presentation of programmes to Australians and the acceptance of those programmes by Australians, and the work done by Australians which enables the programmes themselves to be fulfilled.

We tend too much to underwrite what we have done. We tend too much to write down ourselves as a country. We must now begin not only here, not only in New South Wales or in Victoria or in Western Australia, but throughout the whole of this continent to further the pride of being an Australian wherever in this continent that Australian may live.

Things are really exciting in this country today. I am going to weary you a little now, just touching on some of the exciting things which will affect all of us and our children and our descendants in the future.

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One company alone, in the Pilbara region in Western Australia has export contracts for 32 million tons of iron ore of the total value of $260 million to be coming in to us over the next two years. Another for 105 million tons worth $800 million. Another for 160 million tons worth $1,240 million coming in in the period ahead. The port facilities that have grown as a result of this, the railways that have been built are all exciting examples of what is happening in this nation of ours. The new town at Dampier - 170 miles of railways - new ports - the oil being discovered in Barrow and under the waters of Bass Strait soon, together with natural gas, to revolutionise the capacity of Australia to live on its own resources and not be dependent on the world outside. All these are the sinews and I think they have come about for two reasons.

One is because of the philosophical approach which the Member you sent to support us agrees with and furthers - that is for this kind of growth to take place, it is necessary that the fullest support should be given to theprivate initiative of Australian citizens and that they should be able to take risks, lose, but get rewards if they win, and that in such a climate you can without too much government direction leave to the initiative and good sense and brains of individual Australians the development of their nation.

I think it has come about too, because this having been demonstrated to have worked in that way, has led to an investment in this country from abroad which this year alone was $1,100,000 and which enables us to get the benefit of the quick development which the changing world around us demands we should achieve because of stability here and because of the climate here created.

Now I said we tend to underwrite ourselves. This does not mean that there are not many things still requiring to be done. This does not mean that we can afford complacency. What it does mean is that looking at what has been achieved, let us look to the future and say, "This is just the beginning. All the past is really a prelude", which I roughly translate as : "You ain't seen nothing yet". And I do believe that in these years ahead we will, those of us sitting in this room, look back in ten years' time and say how much we have grown, how much our material strength has improved, how much the living conditions of our people have been improved.

But we stand at this point in history in a position we have never been in before. For 200 years or more, the Royal Navy has protected us from any assaults from overseas against our shores, and we, when called upon, have rallied to the support of the United Kingdom, Great Britain, but in between times, have had to expend but little thought on our own defence. Those times have gone. The United Kingdom can no longer provide that shield. We, ourselves, must take up and are taking up more and more of the burden which any prudent country must take up to protect itself against threats which may not as yet be foreseen but which history indicates are always likely to be present. And in taking up that burden, we have to examine the situation where the old theories on which our defence was built are no longer valid, and examine new possibilities and bring forward new programmes.

This is one of the great problems facing us today, and one which as you know, we are studying, working for, and providing for. But this is not the only point of change.

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We have to make choices as to what we will do in the immediate years ahead from the resources available to us - how much, a government must decide, should be provided for defence purposes; how much, a government must decide, should be provided for increasing the requirements for universities, for technological colleges, for schools, for more teachers, how much should be provided for scientific work further to develop the capacity of the land to carry more wealth, to produce more wealth; how much, and this cannot be skipped, must be provided to see that the aged and the invalid, the needy, the ill amongst us are provided with sufficient to live on in moderate comfort.

And how much must be left in the hands of the private citizens so that that further development we need can take place because the incentive to the private citizen is there. These are the things on which we must make choices. These are the things on which governments choose priorities. These are the tasks before us. We will let you know relatively soon what the priorities are for the coming year.

It is possible that what we think is right may by some be thought wrong. It would be most surprising if that were not so. But we will say what we think is right. We will say why we think it is right. We will keep arguing unless some better arguments convince us we are wrong - which I think is most unlikely - and we will then leave it to the Australian people to decide whether in fact we were right or we were wrong in what we did.

But whatever those choices of priorities we decide may be, I know from the atmosphere in this room, from the people that I have met tonight, that what we decide is only the beginning of achievement, what we decide will only make it possible for each individual Australian himself to contribute to the growth for which we provide the possibilities if we make the right choices.

Never has there been a time in this nation's history when it has been more necessary for each Australian going about his ordinary occasions wherever he may be to adopt as his motto that saying: Whatsoever thy right hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might. Because if that is done, then not only will the individual get satisfaction from what he is doing in life, and the work he is achieving, but the nation will grow, he will get a feeling of service, which I am sure our young want more than anything else, a feeling of giving over and above his own personal requirements. This is another task, an urgent task of leadership in government - to give to Australians that feeling of participation, that feeling of service, that pride in achievement which is latent in them and which I believe, stirred properly, will make us the greatest nation in the world in time, not only in terms of material strength, not only in terms of opportunities to the individual to develop himself to the top of his bent, but also in an approach to social problems which I think we can and will overcome. This is the task before us as I see it. This is the task I am going to call on you, and others like you, to carry out. This is the task which, in fact, can only be carried out by you and us together.

I conclude by saying I believe above all there is amongst the Australian people a will, an ability, a desire and a goodness which, properly utilised, will make our children proud. I thank you.
