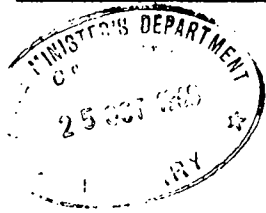


FLINDERS ELECTORATE LIBERAL PARTY LUNCHEON



MORNINGTON, VIC.

14 OCTOBER 1968

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Mr. President, Mr. Minister, Councillors and Members and Workers for the Liberal Party:-

I think perhaps the first thing I should say is that it is more than pleasant for me to be here in an electorate represented by Phil Lynch. I suppose it is not inappropriate for a Minister of the Army to have begun his tasks by having to undergo a certain baptism of fire, not only from the matters which happened in the Army, not only from difficulties with the Opposition, but with various other difficulties which many of you here will understand as well as I do. He has overcome them all and he is accepted completely and thoroughly as a hard-working and dedicated local Member and as a Minister..... somebody who has met and overcome the problems so far inherent in his portfolio, and who seems to me to be avoiding new problems with great skill.

I suppose before I say anything else, Sir, people here would expect me to make one or two general comments, because I have gathered from random remarks appearing here and there in the newspapers over the last few weeks that there appears to be some discussion or some speculation as to whether there is likely to be an election before the due time at which an election has to take place. Now, the one thing that I really want to say about that is that it is quite fascinating that I have never said a word about it, one way or the other, up until this point of time. And I don't propose to say anything about it at this point of time! But I will let you into this secret. I made my mind up about it some time ago and I will be informing my Party about it tomorrow. I think that is the proper way for this information to be conveyed - to a party meeting.

It has been quite fascinating to me to discover how people can suggest and build on things, speculate about things without really getting any indication whatsoever from people who have to decide them. But we will find out about that all in good time.

What I do want to say to you, so many of whom I have met before, so many of whom I have known over such a long period of time, is this. Nearly two decades ago, you got tired of a government which seemed to regard five per cent of unemployment as a reasonable amount of unemployment, which seemed to regard controls as a substitute for progress, which seemed to regard stagnation as a substitute for expansion. You suddenly got tired of that and you changed it. There were people who came out and asked you to help them to change it, and I was one of them, but it was you, and people like you throughout the whole of Australia who made that change.

I think you can take some satisfaction from the results of that change, and in saying this I am speaking of the results under Sir Robert Menzies and under the late Harold Holt, indeed under the administration which you substituted in 1950 for the previous Administration.

It is true to say that beginning then and progressing ever more and more quickly, those old concepts have been discarded. So that now we have, to all intents and purposes, every employable person in Australia gainfully employed, so that now we have - as this shire indicates - an upsurge of growth, an upsurge of development, throughout the length and breadth of this, our nation; so that we have an abandonment of oppressive control; so that we have more than was ever possible then, an opportunity for that individual initiative of which Phil Lynch spoke, the opportunity of people to take risks and reap rewards if they are successful, take risks and reap the consequences if they are not successful, but at least use their own judgment and advance the nation in so doing.

And for nearly two decades this progress continued. It continued without a great deal of basic change in Australia's position in the world or in the problems Australia had internally to face. Things have changed now. We have come to a watershed in Australian affairs. No longer can we, as we have done for I suppose two centuries say, "We are Australian. We are protected by the British Navy. We do not need to protect ourselves. We are available when a First War or a Second War or a Korean War breaks out. We send our contingents. We make what sacrifices are needed, but in the meantime, we are protected by one of the great powers of the world."

Now that has gone, gradually at first, and then suddenly and quickly with the decision by Great Britain to withdraw from East of Suez altogether. So that now, besides the efforts we ourselves can make, we are, for our own security, dependent more than ever before on the United States Government providing the protection understood to be provided under the ANZUS Pact. This is a change, a basic change in the history of this nation, and it means, among other things, that we must devote more and more, not of our gross national product, but more and more towards building up our own defences, so that we can, should the time ever arise when it is needed, meet any first shock of attack upon ourselves or the territories for which we are responsible, meet it, hold it, perhaps beat it back by ourselves, but if not at least meet it, hold it, until further assistance can come.

That is why the vote for the defences of this country has risen from what for so long was about \$400 million, to \$1,250 million this year. It is not something which can bring joy to the heart of any of us because there are so many other requirements for this money, and for what this money could provide. But while it cannot bring joy, it is an inescapable obligation. I do not propose to provide as much as some of our opponents or some of our - I don't know what they are - some of the people who stand between us and our opponents, would require to be provided for defence because I believe we need to build up the nation as well. But there is this requirement we are meeting and there is this change in Australia's position in the world and what it has to do.

We have another change, I think, a change in social conscience. Up until recently, even during Liberal administration, we took the view that those who are old or ill or invalided or in some other way the subject of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune should be helped, yes, but should be helped only to a certain degree.

We expected that the families of those persons, the charities outside, should contribute to what a government, a people was prepared to do, and that therefore a government and a people were only prepared to make some gestures of help towards those who were so handicapped, towards those who were aged. I don't believe that any longer this is a tenable philosophy. I have abandoned it myself and I have abandoned it on behalf of the Liberal Party. I feel it is necessary to see that people such as this are provided with enough to live on without having to depend on outside assistance, enough to live on in a simple, frugal way, because after all, we do want savings to continue as well, and self-reliance to continue as well, but at least enough to see there is sufficient to eat, and that there is no requirement to donate blankets in order to keep people warm. This is one of the things this Government will seek to do, is seeking to do. It is a change in approach from what was previously that of the Liberal Party.

We have another change. We have suddenly discovered that it is possible to develop this nation far more quickly than ever was thought possible before. I speak not only of the enormous mineral discoveries which have been made, though they are of great significance in the development of areas which previously had nobody living in them at all, enormous significance in adding to our overseas earnings. I speak also of the development of new industries. I speak of the increase in production from each acre of farm land in Australia. I speak of what new technology can contribute and is contributing. This is progressing geometrically. It is not going slowly. It is bounding ahead, and this requires enormous amounts of capital, and enormous amounts of enthusiasm and energy and understanding from the Australian people.

This takes me, particularly at this Liberal gathering, to a need to examine some of the basic tenets which, since 1949, have not been examined at all. I speak of a need to stand and quite dispassionately survey the relationships between the various levels of government in Australia - the Australian Government, the State Government, the Municipal Government. There was a time, when this party was formed, when it was believed, and when it was a dogma and when it was unquestionable that all an Australian Government ought to do was to hand out particular sums of money to Queensland, or to Western Australia, or to whoever it may be and say, "Spend these in the way in which you think best." I do not think that those conditions prevail any longer. Is it or is it not necessary that an Australian Government should be charged with the responsibility of seeing that the economy of Australia as a whole is managed as a whole so that inflation is kept under control, so that deflation is met by an infusion of credit, so that overseas investment keeps coming in?

These are things that need to be examined and argued and discussed. Is it necessary now - and here I am going to put my own views and say that I think it is - to see that an Australian child, in whatever part of Australia he is born, is offered uniform facilities for education? Is it necessary to see that somebody who falls ill in any division of Australia has the same opportunity for treatment in hospital, has the same opportunity for care as he would have in any other part of Australia?

It is my belief that the Australian people believe that it is necessary to see that this should happen. But how it is to be brought about is something for discussion by an Australian Government, by State Governments, by Liberal Members and by workers for Liberal parties. Because I do believe that while it is necessary to see that these things happen, it is also necessary to see that centralist administration from Canberra should not take place, but rather the goal having been set, the achievement of the goal is left to those governments closer to the people than is the central government. This is not to be taken as an abdication of the responsibility of setting the goal!

There is something else beyond that, something I have been preaching and something I will continue to preach. That is I think the time has come, indeed perhaps it is past time when we, wherever we may live in this nation of ours, should begin to feel a real sense of Australianism. We should begin to feel a pride in the nation to which we belong, begin to look ahead to what this nation should achieve in the way of helping other nations abroad, in the way of compassion inside its own boundaries, in the way of social justice between its people, feel a belief that whatever we may be we belong to an exciting country. We belong to a nation which in a mere blink of an eye by the end of this century will be 28 million, and then we will go on and on and begin to think with a sense, not of chauvinism, but of national humility how we in this lucky country, as Liberals and as Australians, can best use the opportunities presented to us. We must see that when we grow to that size, we will not only have mighty industrial muscles, we will not only have vastly increased defence potential, we will not only have, as I hope, an internal compassion for our ill and sick which might not have been seen in any nation before, but we will have also as we go abroad a light in our eye, a fire in our heart, as we hold up our heads and say, we are Australians.

And this, in a sense, is a watershed. This in a sense is a goal, and this is something with which you, as you have helped in the past, can help immensely in the future.

What is it that Australians want? What is it that individual human beings ought to want? Not only - though this is important - the opportunity for material well-being, not only the chance to improve the farm on which they live or expand the business which they run or do better work in the factory in which they work and receive more wages; not only that but also a belief which we must instil in them and which we must make real. . . . a belief that in improving a farm, in expanding a business, in working harder and getting more wages, they are not only materially improving their position but they are contributing to the sort of thing that I have tried to outline for you. That they are contributing to that kind of country in which their children can grow up, and in their turn contribute for their children. These are the things, the tasks before us - some easy, some hard, some specific, some not easy to spell out because they are matters more of feeling than of direct figures.

These are what we are after. These are what I think you are after, and judging by the success that you have so far had, if you continue the help you have so far given, I will try to see in the short time I am here that your expectations are fulfilled. They won't be

fulfilled without mistakes being made from time to time because all people make mistakes. Indeed, one would need to be a superman not to. But the attempt that will be made will be honest and I believe that the team we've got will advance along that road which I've tried to point out.

I come now, Sir, to a remembrance of something my wife always says to me before I make a speech. She says, "Always remember that those people who are sitting in the room would thoroughly endorse these four lines of poetry:-

"I love a finished speaker
I really truly do,
I don't mean one who's polished
I just mean one who's through. "

I'm through!
