

GREENSBOROUGH LIBERAL PARTY BRANCH LUNCHEONBUNDOORA, Victoria10 NOVEMBER 1968Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton

Mr Chairman, Mr Jarman, newly-selected candidate for this electorate and Ladies and Gentlemen :

The real purpose of my coming here today was to have an opportunity to meet as many of you individually as possible. It was not to make a long and involved speech, particularly since most of you are standing up, and long and involved speeches under those circumstances are not always received with the greatest bonhomie.

But there are some things that I would like to say to you - sketchily as they must be said at this time and in these circumstances - just roughing out some of the beliefs I think you have and I know we have as to how this country should be run and as to what is possible for this country to attain if it is properly run.

I want to take you back - not all of you because we have so many young Liberals here who at the time were not old enough to be involved - but those of you who remember, I want to take you back to the time when this Liberal Party first became the Government of Australia under Sir Robert Menzies.

The nation for some time had been suffering controls of various kinds which appeared to be imposed for no other reason than a liking for having controls. The nation had been informed that if we attained the stage where four or five per cent of unemployment was reached, then that was the optimum that any nation could expect to have, and that was to all intents and purposes full employment.

We had suffered under an approach which basically, philosophically held the view that the individual really existed mainly for the purpose of serving the state, rather than, as is the proper approach, the state existed to serve the individual. We believe the state should give the individual the greatest possible chance of developing his own personality, of taking his own risks, of reaping the rewards if his judgment is sound, or of accepting the consequences if his judgment is bad and the risks turn out to have been badly based.

So we turned our backs on restrictive philosophies and on the idea that controls were the answer and that such things as price control, which in effect meant profit control, should be introduced. We had seen and experienced that profit control meant that if somebody had some new idea, some new approach and they produced something better than had previously been produced at a cheaper price but at a greater profit, then a control would be introduced to see that the benefit from that did not flow to the man who had those ideas. This we felt - and you felt - stopped the growth of a great nation.

And so you got together. People came out and asked you to get together. You got together here and throughout Australia, and you changed that approach. You changed that type of government, and as a result over the nearly two decades since then, the growth of this country has been unparalleled and the opportunities for individuals in this country have never been greater.

That is the basis on which Sir Robert Menzies built, on which Harold Holt built, and on which, given the opportunity, I, and the team behind me, will continue to build.

Today, perhaps, the tasks and the problems of applying this kind of philosophy are different and more pressing than they have been before in our history, for we live indeed in times of great and basic change. Up until some very few years ago, we in Australia took little heed of what was required for the defence of our own country. We lived under the protection of Britain and the British Navy and then we lived under the added protection of the United States alliance.

When wars broke out, as they did in 1914-18 or 1939 or in Korea, we were not found wanting. We sent our contingents, we made our sacrifices, but in the years between we did little and had no need to do much in this field. That has changed, with the United Kingdom pulling back from East of Suez, with no definition with any finite approach as to under what circumstances and how they might return from West of Suez, with whatever judgment and assessment one cares to make as to the particular involvement the United States might have in the future in Asia.

With these things, we have entered a new period in Australia's history, a time of change, a need to contribute constantly to our own defence, more than I personally like to contribute because I have always in my mind the knowledge of what could be done with what must be put into this defence expenditure. But I have also in my mind, and your Government and its supporters have in their mind that in this time of change we must keep up the enormous expansion of resources for our own defence as an insurance policy, and if we are with some measure of safety to own what we have and progress in the way that is possible.

There are great problems and difficulties here. It is a time of change and that is the first great sign of it I would put before you.

But then we have a better and a happier one in a way, a time of change in the developmental tempo of this country.

Up until about five or six years ago, development was going on, yes. It was going on gradually, fairly quietly, and suddenly like Spring, we busted out all over - oil was found in Bass Strait, Hamersley was developed, manganese was mined in the North, and new industries in woodchips were developed, and hundreds of millions and thousands of millions of capital for development was required. This has reached a rate of growth, a geometrical progression, which again is a sign of a time of change. It shows, should it be maintained, as I am sure it will be, that we will, in thirty years - and thirty years is not very long - not be a nation of twelve million, but be a nation of twenty-eight million. We will be a nation with a greater industrial potential - with the door to the future open and the future to which that door is open being almost illimitable.

As we accept this time of change and as we take in all the people we can and as we take in all the capital we need - and we need it - we must take that in having regard to our own interests as well. We must seek to see that in development there is some reservation to Australians who are prepared to take the initial risk of equity capital in development, seek to see that if capital is raised inside this country, as distinct from being brought from outside, then those who contribute that capital in this country in some way or another should get the benefit of that part of the ownership to which their capital entitles them.

This again is a new era of change, but a happy one, a good one, one that we can look forward to with pride. It does, of course, bring in its train problems, and you all know what the problems are because what we need here and throughout Australia are more schools, more technical schools, better roads, better communications - you name it, we need it. But these are problems of growth, these are problems arising from growth and not from stagnation. This in itself, although at the moment it is difficult because the manpower we have and the resources we have are fully committed, at least it is a symptom of optimism, and the problems we must face are problems raised through our burgeoning growth and not problems through stagnation.

You mentioned one other indication of change, I think, Mr. Jarman. There is, I believe, growing up in this nation now, and there will be fostered in this nation now a more conscious approach to seeking to see that those who are sick, that those who are ill, that those who are old, that those who have had little chance to provide for themselves are given by the community at least a minimum frugal standard of living when they suffer from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. And I believe it is desired that this be done without a broad hand-out by the government from your pockets to all concerned, but rather that it is steered to the areas where the need is greatest to provide the standard required. This is a sign of a change in attitude.

I won't go on. Those things mentioned are just some of the new problems that we in this country, with your backing, have got to face and have got to overcome. May I conclude by saying this. . . . that over and above our pride in living in Greensborough, or our pride in living in Melbourne or our pride in living in Victoria, the nation requires that all of us feel a pride in being Australians contributing to the development of a nation, no matter in what part of the nation that development takes place. Because wherever it takes place, all of us benefit, all of us grow, all of us can feel we are giving something towards the future, something towards a better country for our children, who, wherever they go in the world, will say with pride and fire in their heart: "I am an Australian."

And if we do that, as I think we will, and at the same time see to it that not only the material advancement I have spoken of occurs, not only that the development and defence needs are met, but also, over and above everything that the individual in this nation is given the opportunity to develop his own resources to the utmost, then we will have before us a shining future. That is why I am so glad to meet today so many people who will be contributing to it.

Thank you.

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