

OPENING OF NEW LIBERAL PARTY HEADQUARTERS

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE  
19 MAR 1969

Brisbane, Q'ld.

3 MARCH 1969

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chalk, Parliamentary Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:-

This is, of course, not by any means the first visit I have made to Queensland as Prime Minister. Indeed, I am not quite sure, but I think it might be the fourth or fifth or something of that kind. It is a very happy occasion for a visit, to be able to open this building, although I understand it has been in use for a month. Nevertheless, the mere fact that it is being officially opened now does not render null and void anything that has been done during the month that it wasn't officially open.

I find it pleasant to be here for two reasons - one because, as I know you will all agree, this is an extremely attractive and efficient building in which to do the work of a political party. The other reason is that I believe it is, in a way, symbolic - symbolic of a political party which makes advances, which progresses, which moves - in this case from premises which are not sufficient to premises which are sufficient. This is an indication, I believe, of that progressiveness in the Queensland Division of the Liberal Party, a progressiveness which I believe extends throughout the whole of Australia as far as the Liberal Party is concerned.

We have, as you said, Sir, been in existence some twenty-five years or so and in government for twenty. I think this is a record which all those who have supported the Liberal Party, or now support it, can look back on with pride and with a belief that the work that they have done in the branches and in the electorates has been reflected in great good and great progress accruing to the nation of Australia.

If you look back to the time when this party came in to office, I think it is not unfair to say that at that time Australia was relatively stagnant and the policies of the Government then looking after Australia were relatively sterile. There were problems then which called urgently to be overcome. And in the period since this Government achieved office, I think they have been overcome.

At that stage one of the problems was how to provide for full employment for all those willing and able to work in Australia, and at that stage, those who were then the Government, and now seek hopelessly to be the Government again, were saying that five per cent of unemployment was a reasonable sort of level for a country to reach;

you couldn't expect it to go much lower. Yet we know that we have gone much lower and that in Australia today there is no fear of unemployment for any man able and willing and with skills to contribute.

There was little growth in Australia at that time, yet since then the growth in this country, as your Chairman has said, compares with the growth of any country in the world and exceeds the growth of at least ninety-eight per cent of the countries of the world.

Now this doesn't mean there aren't still problems to be overcome. Of course there are. Problems will always be with us. But it does mean that the problems are new in kind because they are problems stemming from the great growth that Australia has made, from the great increases in its population, from the accretion in size of its cities, from the calls from all quarters for capital for still further development and for manpower to service that capital in still further development. But at least these problems stemming from growth, problems which I believe we are overcoming - though in the history of any nation there will always be problems - are better than the problems which stemmed from the sterility and stagnation of the past.

Here in this State is, I think, a magnificent example of the growth of which I have been talking. A good deal of it is due to the creation of a climate by the Liberal-Country Party Government, the creation of a climate which encourages an individual, which rewards an individual for the work and contribution he makes to the nation in which he lives. Some of it is due to deliberate decisions on the part of our Government; such decisions as, for example, to take action to see that a city such as Townsville was given the potential for growth. That city is now in a position where it is among the fastest growing cities in Australia. Why? Because of deliberate decisions to place there a university college (soon to be a university if not one already); a teachers' college; and, a large Army establishment. With this comes all those who flow in to service the people in such establishments, because another decision by the Government was the establishment throughout the North of a network of roads, opening up the country as it has not been opened up before and enabling the delivery of cattle from the interior in a condition which previously was impossible.

And if you look through this great segment of Australia now and bear in mind what is happening in Townsville, what is happening in Weipa, what is happening in Gladstone, the growth of Mt. Isa, the construction of the Fairbairn Dam and many other such developments, you will see what is being contributed in this State to this State, but more importantly than that, what is being contributed by this State to the nation of Australia.

You spoke, Sir, of nationalism, and I will never cease to speak of it. This is an example of the kind of nationalism that I mean, that these great developments in this part of Australia should be recognised throughout the whole nation as contributions not to a part

of Australia but to the whole. The contributions made in Western Australia by Mt. Tom Price and the other great developments must be recognised as contributing not just to Western Australia but to the nation as a whole, including Queensland, just as the oil strikes in Bass Strait must so be considered by all parts of this nation. Because if we are to attain the destiny that lies before us, which is within our grasp, then we must, of course, give loyalty to the towns in which we live, to the cities in which we live, to the areas of Australia in which we live, but we must recognise that above and beyond and overriding all that is a loyalty, a pride and a sense of achievement in whatever good happens in any part of this great nation of ours.

This is not to be translated as chauvinism because it isn't. But it is to be regarded as an opportunity given by Providence to a new nation, to take a hard land, to wring from it a standard of living better than that any other land has known, and to contribute to the region in which we live unstinted assistance of all kinds so that we from our national development assist our neighbours and thereby assist ourselves. As a result, our children and grandchildren may in time, as I believe they will, be able to say: "This new nation is now significant in terms of numbers, in terms of industrial muscles, in the councils of the world. This new nation has taken initiatives to help its ill and aged and poor in a better and more effective way than has been taken anywhere else in the world. This new nation has not withdrawn inside itself but has been willing to share what has been given to it by nature and what it has torn from nature by muscles and by thought, to share that with its neighbours".

If this is so, then when that time comes there will be no Australian who cannot in the world hold his head high and feel pride in his heart.

If that time comes, as I am sure it will, then the Liberal Party and those of you who have worked for it so hard will get a better reward than any other I can think of.

Sir, there is another great development project proposed in Queensland now - a suggestion that a gigantic power-house may be built on the central Queensland coalfields, calling for some \$200 million in loan funds. This is an exciting suggestion. I can say no more about it than that it was put up by Mr. Chalk and the Queensland Government to us and that it requires close examination in order to determine the extent of the coal deposits, the exact price at which electricity from those deposits can be sold, the willingness of overseas firms to use that power in order to develop the areas around that particular power-house, and indeed a number of other feasibility studies. These are the first steps. I have written to the Queensland Government and said that we recommend and suggest that there should be a meeting of officials from the Commonwealth and from Queensland so that these matters may, as a first step, be thoroughly investigated. I can go no further than that at this stage, and this meeting is entirely without commitment. But should the scheme turn out to be feasible, should it

turn out to be what its proponents believe it might turn out to be, should it do that, and should the resources be able to be found and made available, then that will be one more great forward step - I won't say for Queensland, I'll say for Australia.

I think, Sir, that is all I have to say. Indeed, I have spoken longer than I was told to. So I will just conclude by thanking you all for what you have done and for what I know you will do to keep this nation moving, as it has been moving, only moving even faster in the future.

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