



LIBERAL PARTY RALLY

KING'S SCHOOL, PARRAMATTA, N. S. W.

24 MAY 1969

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Bowen, Parliamentary Colleagues, Your Grace the Archbishop, and Distinguished Guests:-

The main object which I have in mind today is to have the opportunity later for my wife and I to meet as many of you as it is possible for us to do. But before we can arrive at what I hope will be the most enjoyable part of the afternoon, and what I know will be for us the most enjoyable part of the afternoon, I should take some time, I think, to discuss with you my beliefs as to what politics is all about. Because after all, you are all here as members and supporters of the Liberal Party, and as members and supporters of one of our best members of the Liberal Party in Nigel Bowen.

But why is it that you are prepared, as I know so many of you are, to go out at election times and to man polling booths when it is 120 degrees in the shade or raining cats and dogs - and on every election I can remember it has either been one or the other. Why is it that you are prepared to do that, to give of your time and of your effort to address envelopes, to attend branch meetings, to go out from your own fireside and divorce yourselves from your own desires to play golf or to do whatever it is that is of greatest interest to you? What is the motivation behind it?

It is not, I am sure, just to get Mr. Smith or Mr. Brown or Mr. Jones in some particular position. It must be more than that and I know it is more than that.

It is, I think, because you have a vision of what this country can do under proper leadership, of what this country can become for yourselves and for your children if the proper measures are taken. And because you have this vision, I believe that what it is that motivates you is the desire to participate in achieving the end that your vision says is possible of achievement. And that is what politics, basically, is all about.

I suppose that the most important thing in politics, though it is not a pressing burden on us now, but still the most important thing, is to see that within a country there is retained that freedom of expression, that capacity to express dissent, provided it is not expressed by violence; that ability to disagree with governments without fear of retaliation;

that chance to cast a secret ballot, knowing it will be secret and that no retaliation can result from it; that ability to choose and change governments, that freedom and democracy which we take for granted but which is, when we look at the world, the prerogative of only a small part of it. And basically that is the first requirement to be kept.

I am bound to say that I think that the side of politics which you support is more likely to retain those basic freedoms than are any other kinds of politics in this country. For after all, it is not the Liberals, if they disagree with something, who seek to resort to violence because they cannot win majority opinion. It is not the Liberals who attack physically those who disagree with them. It is not the Liberals who pelt missiles at distinguished citizens of Australia because they don't like what those distinguished citizens are doing. It is rather people supporting the other side.

But after that, what is politics about? I think it is to keep the security of this country against attack from abroad so that these basic freedoms can be retained, not only within against attack but against attack from without. And I believe that that side of politics which you support is more concerned in times of peace with preparing against attack from without, with preparing for the security of this country, than is the other side of politics.

We have, as you know, and not without some agony of spirit and some time spent examining all the possibilities, decided to accept the challenge to our north posed by the withdrawal of British forces. We have decided to involve ourselves in the region to which we are contiguous and to help it economically, to help it financially, to help it technically and to provide a visible token of our willingness to assist it to defend itself. And this in a new era was a great and momentous decision.

We did not adopt that course proposed by our opponents of sending some Australian forces in and out in a kind of a jack-in-the-box approach of "Now you see them - now you don't", which is as psychologically inept as it is logically and logistically absurd. Rather we have decided that our security is helped by helping the security of the nations to our north, have adopted that principle and I believe in that way have greatly helped our future security - and that is another and most important thing that politics is all about.

Just as it is of the utmost importance for us, a small country in a dangerous world, to be sure - as sure as one can be in the world - that in times of stress and danger should they come, we will be able to call upon the assistance of a great power, knowing that we deserve it because we will know that we have lived up to the spirit of the treaty we formed with it, and are not seeking only to take but are willing to take and to give for our own security and, as I believe, that of the free world generally.

Having achieved the proper processes of democracy inside a country and guarded them, having guarded the country itself these, important as they are, are only the foundation for what we do with what we have gained by those measures. It is essential that we should provide for the people of this country an opportunity for work - if they are prepared to work - and this has been and will be done; that we should bring into this country new manpower without which the development of this country would languish; that we should marshal for the development and growth materially of this country capital resources and technological know-how, not only from within ourselves but from abroad. Because if there was ever a country that needed quickly to grow materially, that needed quickly to grow in manpower, then that country is Australia at this moment in the world's history. And these are things, I believe, that we can do with our team better than any of our opponents can do. And you must believe that too and that must be another reason why you are prepared to give of your time and effort and thought to help us continue a path, and continue an upward path which for the last two decades has been unparalleled in Australia's past history.

Now these are material things of which I spoke, but you must wish too, I am sure, that in a country defended, insofar as its strength will enable it to be defended, growing insofar as its resources will allow it to grow, there should also be more than a mere material approach. You must, and I know you do, want to see that within such a community there is a real attempt, a real effort made to look after the ill, the unfortunate, the aged and the handicapped amongst us. And you must - and I am sure you do - want to see provided for the people and the young people of Australia not merely an opportunity for a job, not merely an opportunity for material advancement, but an opportunity to choose the kind of job, the kind of work which an individual feels he is most fitted to perform, to try and train an individual, whether they wish to be an artist or an artisan, a captain of industry or a captain in the merchant navy, whatever field of endeavour an individual feels he should be drawn towards. A country which is great will help such an individual to develop in the way in which his own internal urges seek to make him develop, and in that way, as I believe, will give him a feeling of participation, a feeling of wishing to give rather than demanding to be given to. Because no great country can continue to be great if the citizens who make it up clamour only to be given to and do not have a wish, an urge and an opportunity to give in return. And this, though perhaps it is one of the hardest tasks, is still a matter of what politics is all about.

So I believe at this juncture in our history is the fostering of a spirit of pride in being Australian, a fostering of an Australian nationalism, no matter whether one lives in New South Wales, Victoria, Parramatta, Malvern or wherever it may be; an elation at some advance in this nation of ours, whether that advance be Gove, Bass Strait, Sydney, Mt. Newman, wherever. A feeling that this, wherever it is situated, is something which helps our nation as a whole, and that should attract our first and greatest loyalty.

I do not mean that we should foster or seek to foster a feeling of chauvinistic pride. I feel that we should seek to foster a feeling of pride, an acknowledgment of the great challenges that face us and a willingness to overcome them, and should join with that a feeling of humility at the tasks in front of us, at the luck this country has had and has exploited, at the requirement to help our neighbours because of the luck which we have had and which, with hard work, we have exploited.

These approaches to the life of a nation are the very basic fabric of which politics is made. If it were just a matter of who is in and who is out, if it were not a matter bound up with philosophies, if it were not a matter bound up with approaches, if it were not a matter which over the centuries has led communities to, in many cases, physical fighting, then it would not matter much. But in fact if what I have said is true - and I believe it is - then it matters greatly, and so it matters greatly, I believe, that you are prepared to work as you are, that you are prepared to come here today as you have, because in so doing you are contributing greatly to the achievement of that vision, to the advancement of that nation to which you belong, and I belong, and which I think can only - I will not say "only" - and which I think can best be advanced by the application of the beliefs which you and we have in common.

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