



GREAT SYNAGOGUE LUNCHEON

SYDNEY, N. S. W.

30 JUNE 1969

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

It is pleasant to be here and to talk to you at this luncheon; to talk to you as Australians of the Jewish faith. I have long believed your actions in the past and the present show that your community is not an alien community any more than those who attend St. Andrew's Day Dinners, or those perhaps more closely akin to my own forbears on one side who wear green on St. Patrick Day. Mind you, I'm Church of England - I just want to make that clear!

But rather are we Australians a people who have, over the years, come together from all corners of the world with differing religions, with differing cultures, with differing customs, with different histories to which we can look back but which should not condition all our thinking. For while history is what is past, in one sense, it also beckons to us to make it in the future in another sense. And a nation made of those who come from so many different areas, from those who come with so many different cultures, from those who have so many different things to contribute, must be richer, must be more able to bend the course of future history to its requirements, not as fragmented peoples, but as a nation and a people embracing all. And because I believe this is your belief and because I think in this approach lies true greatness for Australia in the future, this is why I said it was such pleasure for me to talk to you today.

I have been called a nationalist, sometimes by my opponents who tend to twist this in a way I think it should not be twisted, but I am proud to admit to being a nationalist. I think that the future of this country requires we should all have a national identity, national goals, national aims and national pride. This should not be something shutting out the rest of the world because of our nationalism, for that would be to wrap ourselves up in a small parcel indeed and wrap out all the rest of the world. But rather it should be something creating as a nation, having a national pride, having something we can contribute to the general community of nations in our own right and of our own identity for the good of all, much as those members of a family, each with different capacities, each with difference approaches, each with different personalities, can contribute from themselves to the general family, as we can contribute to the family of the world.

But to do that there is a need to meet requirements inside this country - competing requirements, all of which cannot be met, or at least all of which cannot be met at once. It is easy enough seeing the needs that lie before us in all the various fields, it is easy enough to promise that they will all be done and they will all be done at once, but it is impossible to deliver on that promise and all men of sense know that this must be true.

Let me sketch out for you some of the problems lying before us, calling for manpower, calling for capital, calling for technological expertise and you will see what I mean by competing claims.

First, I suppose - because this is the rock on which development and indeed existence must eventually depend - first is the requirement for our own national security and our own national defence against possible attack. History shows that no matter what a period may indicate to people, those who neglect security, those who neglect defence, do so ultimately at their own peril. And so we must devote a proportion of our manpower, a proportion of our resources, a proportion of our thought to building up defence forces (insofar as a nation of twelve million can), and to forming alliances with greater countries who, seeing that we are prepared to help ourselves, will be prepared to come and help us in time of need. And we must, I believe, become involved in the region in which we live so that to the north of us, countries will see that we care about them, that we will help them - not only economically, not only with aid, not only with training, but also that we are prepared to help them should they be attacked themselves.

But here I want to make some qualifications. Up until now, we have been in a situation where we contributed because the defence of these regions to our north was the responsibility of Britain as, at the moment and for some short time ahead, it still will be. The responsibility for the defence was Britain's. She accepted that responsibility and sought assistance from the local populations. We cannot do that. We cannot take over responsibility for the defence of these areas and look for assistance from the local population. Rather is it our task to expect the local populations to assist themselves and to be ready to contribute to that joint defence, and this is the great difference between what was and what will be. In doing that - and we have decided to do that - we are, I think, acting in Australia's interests.

But we are not giving blank cheques for the use of Australian youth by others. Our forces must be under our control. We are not giving a blank cheque for the use of Australian youth and the killing of Australian youth unless we are sure that this is done to prevent aggression, to prevent attack, and not done merely as an involvement in racial conflicts in a particular area. And it is well, and necessary, that everybody should understand this, because then there can be no danger in the future of any breach of faith. This has been made clear. This is one call upon our resources.

We have another - in a sense a corollary with the first; the need to develop. We need to see that our mines come into production, that our factories are stocked with the latest machinery with the latest technological expertise, and with the latest scientific approach. We need to see that our factories extend and that we become a nation of industrial muscle, of strength within ourselves. This cannot be done quickly unless we attract from abroad large sums of capital and large numbers of people so that the requirements that I have spelt out can be met. This is being done, it must continue, it must be another call on our Government resources because these things require that governments should put in roads, should put in power plants, should put in water supplies, should put in the ancillary requirements for such development - should even, sometimes, please God, put in sewerage!

But here, too, it is necessary (having said this and believing it completely) to seek to ensure that these new developments will in their beginning be required to offer to the Australian people some chance of participation. This offer of some ownership by Australians should be made at the start, so that as these enterprises grow, as Australia grows, then the value of that initial participation will remain with Australians unless they choose themselves to sell it to somebody else.

I used the word "offer". We are not going to be able in Australia to provide from our own resources all the capital that is required for all the development we need. I doubt if we are going to be able to provide from within Australia all the capital that is required for half of the development we need in the space of time in which we need it. But we can supply varying proportions to varying industries and we wish, and have let it be known that we expect that offers will be made for Australian equity participation in new developments, or in expanded development, and if those offers are not taken up, then that is Australia's fault and must not be allowed to inhibit progress.

This is another great call on our manpower and on our resources and on our capital.

I haven't yet touched on many other areas because I do believe, and you will know that I have said this, that it is necessary for a great country not only to have industrial muscles, not only to be materially great but to take care of those within it. In particular, I am speaking of those who, their own race having been run, having reached a certain age, ought to be able to live with some peace and some human dignity at the hands of their fellow Australians. There ought to be provision so that if some woman loses her husband and has a young family to bring up, that family has the same chances of education, of clothing, and of food, as they would have had had that woman's husband not died.

And there is too an increasingly evident requirement that if citizens contribute during their working life to their own security, their own living after they retire, then they should not find themselves in a situation where they may be no. better off, and possibly even worse off than citizens existing solely on a pension paid by the State. This, I hasten to say, is not to be assumed to be any suggestion of abolishing the means test, because it isn't. It is merely a suggestion that there is an area of unfairness, an area of injustice, and that area of unfairness and injustice is one to which we must direct our minds. But this, too, calls for a great deal of our resources, a great deal of the taxes which you pay.

And so, too, do demands for better education which we all want - at least so do the calls for more money for education, which is not necessarily the same thing. But more money for education and a requirement that is directed towards better education call upon our resources, as do calls for better hospital services, better roads, and for many things which you appreciate and with which I will not weary you by enumerating. Another factor is the calls, the heartfelt calls for no higher taxation to meet all these requirements - indeed for lower taxes if it is at all possible.

And there is some justice - well not justice, I'm not going to use that word - but there is some sense in this because taxes must not get to a stage where they inhibit initiative, where they prevent the rewards for extra effort; because in this case we could not meet the other requirements which I have already mentioned. Well, these are all calls. And there is the requirement to see that inflation is not allowed, because if it is, then we are merely kidding ourselves that we are advancing without in fact advancing at all. In a nation where less than one per cent is unemployed, in a nation where our resources and goods are used to their fullest as they are now, the answer is not just issuing more money but rather more capital, more people and more effort from all sections of this community.

Well, there will be arguments as to the priorities amongst the things I have mentioned and the many others you can add. They are right and proper arguments, but there can be no argument as to what I said initially - that should anybody promise all these things all at once he will not be able to deliver on that promise. And as it is necessary that there should be these arguments as to priorities, then clearly they should be stated and judged by the people of Australia. And this is the course which we will follow and which, indeed, we have endeavoured to follow.

It may take time - it will take time to attain the goals of full social justice, to attain the goals of proper educational facilities, of roads which suit everybody, of hospitals which can care properly and cheaply for all the population, and for all the other things I have mentioned. But surely the proper course for a nation to follow - and this is the one that we will try to follow - is to set the goals, advance towards each one

and of necessity, realising the constrictions I have spoken of, advance over a period of time towards each one. This is inevitable, but with the nation knowing what the ultimate goals are and the steps that are hoped to be taken to reach them. This is what I regard as a prudent and proper and honest approach to the Australian people and this is the one we have been following and will follow. And this is the one, I think, most men of good sense and judgment will accept as the proper course for an Australian Government.

Indeed, to finish, Sir, where I began, and to add one other reason for my pleasure in speaking to you this afternoon, it is because I think there would be within this hall such men of good judgment, of good sense, of proper approach as would agree with and would support what we have done and what we propose to do. Sir, we will make mistakes in the years as we approach these problems. That is inevitable, for no man, no woman, no government is perfect. But should such mistakes be made, they will be honest mistakes. They will be admitted. They will be rectified. And that, I think, is what the nation of Australia wants. At any rate, I hope so, and I thank you for the chance of speaking to you.

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