

YOUNG LIBERAL RALLYCaulfield Town Hall, Caulfield, Victoria4 JULY 1969Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

It is a great pleasure to be introduced by a President who is obviously a scholar and a gentleman, and who has very great insight into my own mind sufficient to enable him to write what I actually feel about the activities of the Young Liberals.

And it is nice to be here at a period which was described by your President as a period of change. Because, you know, "the times they are a-changing", and how they change is going to be, I suppose in the first place, up to those of us who are now in the Federal Parliament or in the State Parliaments. But that is going to be influenced by what you think, not much influenced by what the Young Labor Movement thinks or the other people, but by what you think. And the directions that the changes may take are going to be of enormous importance to you as you get older and to the children that you want to grow up in a great Australia.

I don't think that I have known a time when change is more in the air, both in our external policies and in our internal reappraisals of things which have for so long been taken for granted. It is a time when statements never previously questioned are increasingly subject to analysis and criticism. And, if I may say so, this is one of the healthiest things that can happen in a democracy.

Let's look at some of the ways in which the times are changing. Let's first take the changes in our relations with the external world and peoples and countries outside of our own. We all grew up - I grew up and all of my generation grew up and, indeed, our sons grew up in a world in which we in Australia were protected by Great Britain. We grew up in a world where countries to our near North which are now household words, Malaysia - which includes a peninsula called Malaya - and Singapore were ruled by Great Britain. Indonesia was a colony of the Dutch. French Indo-China embraced Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam and South Vietnam. There were no new countries in that region - no self-governing countries in that region. Indeed, India itself was governed from Great Britain, and the protection and the peace of all that area of the world rested on the might of the British Navy and on that great major power which Britain used to be.

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EXTERNAL  
RELATIONS

*Defence*

We, ourselves, had no need to worry about our own security because it was guaranteed. We had no need to worry about our relationships with newly-independent nations because there weren't any. We had no need to be concerned with the region in which we lived because the region was a variety of colonial states. And so in those for us fairly easy days, we didn't have to look to our own security. In between wars, we didn't bother to keep anything but the sketchiest of a standing army or navy or air force. When the calls came, when our protector, Great Britain, was embroiled in some struggle in the world, then we responded - responded in the Boer War, in the First World War and in the Second World War. But in between times, we didn't bother. We didn't need to. We didn't have to.

And although since the end of the Second World War now - what is it, 24 years away - there have been these enormous changes to our north, it is only recently that the changes have really been brought home. This is because that power to which we previously looked for the protection of which I have spoken has said it is going from this area, and we must look, therefore, more than ever before, to ourselves and not to assistance from Great Britain. So we look for new allies, we look to build up our own defences and, above all, we look to participate with the other new peoples around us - with the peoples of Indonesia, of Malaysia, of Singapore, of the Philippines - to try in a co-operative way to improve the economic growth of these countries. Our aim must be to improve the income per head of these countries, to see that the improvements which flow from new technical advances, from new scientific approaches and from better business management are passed down the line, from the generals and the colonels and the majors and the captains, so that, if I may so phrase it, the privates, the ordinary people in these countries, will see each year that there is a little more cloth for their families, a little more food - a window into the future offering hope. This is something we have never had to do before until the times changed, but something which is a great challenge and a great inspiration to us, I believe. If we can do this, then we will not only be helping them but helping ourselves and helping our region by seeing that there is a stable, progressive, happy community built up in this part of the world.

*Immigration*

And the times are also changing in other ways. In the early days of Australia's history, it was Britain who sent the migrants to Australia, sometimes unwillingly in the early stages of our history, but who sent them to Australia. And it was British business houses that provided the capital for Australian industry, British business houses which bought the great cattle stations and which bought the land and which helped to develop our country - almost exclusively. But now we are taking, to our immense benefit, and have been taking for some considerable time, people from many countries in the world - from Hungary, from Poland, from Greece,

*Immigration*

from Italy, from Turkey, from England, from the United States. From all over the world new citizens have been coming to us with their different cultures, with their different histories, with their different aspirations, with their new ways of cooking food - we have gone from the days of steak and eggs! - with their appreciation of a glass of wine with a meal, with their appreciation of different music, all adding a richness to the texture of our national life which, twenty years ago, we scarcely knew. And this is, I think, an essential for the building of any great nation - that there should be such an amalgam, that there should be so many different strands in this single strong rope of national existence.

*Overseas  
Investment*

But one of the other changes which is co-existent with this is that we have begun to feel - I think we have all begun to feel - that while we still wish and must have this capital that Britain used to send us from abroad, we have reached a stage where we want, as a nation, as individuals, to have a chance to participate in the new developments taking place in Australia. I don't want to see young Liberals, when they reach the age of forty, or the sons and daughters of young Liberals, living in a country where all the major developments are owned by overseas interests, where the growth that those developments will experience, because of the growth of Australia, is not shared with Australians. And I think it has become well known now to those who have the capital and who are prepared to provide it, that they have a stable place in which to invest, but that we would like them to offer a chance to Australians to participate at the beginning of any great new development. And if such people wish to borrow money here to increase the development in which they are engaged, then I think that the opportunity for such fixed interest borrowing should be in some way related to the opportunity they have given for equity participation by Australians. That's all. If an opportunity is given for participation and is not accepted by Australians, then that's too bad. Let the development go ahead in any case, but let the opportunity be offered to us. And I am glad to say that more and more that opportunity is being provided by those from abroad who can give us the financial sinews from which we can develop our industrial muscles. But in a sense, this is an indication of change for this approach, I think, has not been so often enunciated before as it is now.

*Social  
Services*

There is another field, and although you are a long way from requiring any assistance of the kind of which I am talking, I believe you are interested in it. There is another field in which the times are changing. There was a time when, without question, it was felt that somebody whose race of life was run and who had reached an age of retirement should be given some assistance from the State. But the approach was that this assistance should be merely some supplement to what the family could do for an aged person, or some supplement to the savings an aged person had been able to make. And this attitude persisted not only for aged people but for widows or for those who were

*Social Services*

in some other way handicapped. I think there is a different approach in Australia now. If there isn't, there ought to be and there will be. The approach should be rather, not this is just a supplement to what a family can do, but that there is a requirement in a civilised nation and a great nation to provide adequately for those who have been unable to provide for themselves so that they can live with a modicum of decency and without the fear of hunger and cold. This is a change that must be persevered with.

*Employment*

How else are the times changing? Of course they are changing in the sense that there has never been as great a number of people employed - so little unemployment in Australia as there is today. There has never been as great a spate of development as there is in Australia today - of course that's true. How else are they changing?

*Demonstrations*

One of the interesting facets of change is this question of dissent of which I think, Sir, you spoke. This is quite a fascinating subject and one which must engage our minds. If anybody were to say to me "Are you in favour of dissent", the first answer I would have to give is, "How do I know until I know what you are dissenting against?". I might be in favour of something and therefore I wouldn't want myself to go out and dissent against it. But if anybody were to say to me, "Are you in favour of people being able to express dissent?", then there can only be one answer. That is, "Yes, one must defend the right of people to express dissent". As Voltaire said, "I disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it". So one must agree with the right of people to express dissent. But then if one goes further and says, "Do you agree that the right to express dissent carries with it the right to violence, carries with it the right to destruction", then there can only be one answer and that is, "No". If people come along to a political meeting of any kind and seek to drown out the speaker and seek to prevent him putting his views before the community, then they are not expressing dissent. They are expressing a fascist approach and they are denying the right of free speech. And if people congregate together with banners, they may, if they are peacefully exhibiting those banners, be properly expressing dissent; but if they congregate together and seek to attack a particular building or a particular person or to block the right of ordinary citizens to use a road, then again they are not expressing dissent. They are denying liberty to their fellow citizens. And this perhaps will be a question which will need closely to be examined by the community.

We have seen some examples of this kind of violence of which I have spoken. It can only have two outcomes. Either it leads to counter-violence, as we saw in Germany, when one group who were dedicated to preventing their opponents expressing an opinion clashed violently with those who thought they had that right, and there were armed clashes in the street - something we cannot tolerate. Or alternatively,

*Demonstrations*

it can lead to the imposition of some kind of fascist, communist or authoritarian regime. And it is necessary that all our people should clearly know and clearly believe that dissent does not and cannot be allowed to extend to the use of violence, or to the denial of freedom of expression. We have never had this kind of problem in Australia before but that it is with us now I think there are few of you would deny.

*National  
Development*

Let's look at another area of change. I spoke a little while ago of the great development now taking place in this land of ours. I don't know how many of you in this hall have been to Western Australia, have seen Port Hedland, Mt. Newman, Mt. Tom Price, have seen the place where Australians are laying each day a record length of railway line. Or how many of you have seen or felt the excitement in the air of the new frontiers, or how many have been to Gove, or how many have been to Weipa or Groote Eylandt or all the areas in Australia where great new advances are being made. But I do urge all of you who have the opportunity, who may have the opportunity in the future, to go to these places, to seize that opportunity with both hands. You will find it rewarding financially, because the wages paid there are very great. You won't find it uncomfortable as frontiers used to be, because now people live in air-conditioned houses and have supermarkets and swimming pools and they can be quite delightful places to live. But you will find that they have an air of growth, an excitement of growth, a general feeling which draws out from the individual, I believe, this response: "Here is a place where I can contribute. Here is a place where if I do something it will benefit not only me but the country in which I live and the other citizens of the country in which I live".

And this brings me to the last subject I wish briefly to discuss under this title: "The Times They are A-Changing". There was a time when those who were born in Caulfield tended to grow up in Caulfield and retire in Caulfield. Those born in Malvern did the same. There was little travel in this nation of ours. There was little knowledge of the other parts of this nation. There was some interstate rivalry, some interstate jealousy but little feeling of national identity, except in time of war. And how that has changed, with the movement from State to State of those working for big companies, of those working in the public service, of those serving in the armed forces, of those who merely want a change. There has now grown up in Australia a population which spends some time in Melbourne, some in Sydney, some in Brisbane and some in the country, and sees the nation as a whole. This change, I think, has brought about a climate where we are all feeling much more than we have ever felt before, not that we live just for a municipality or for a city or for a state, but for a country, a nation which is already incipiently great and which is without doubt going to be a really great nation.

And there is a feeling, I think, of pleasure and pride in Victoria at the great iron ore developments in Western Australia or the bauxite development in Queensland or the new developments in Mt. Isa. And there is a feeling of pleasure and pride in Western Australia at the Bass Strait oil and gas discoveries because there is a feeling this benefits all of us from wherever it may come, from wherever it is found - it is in our country that it is found. It benefits all of us, it gives us all a chance to be richer as a nation. This is new, compared with twenty years; this is to be encouraged and I hope will be developed with your help.

We will be a great industrial nation without doubt. We will, given proper compassion for those who are ill and sick, given proper opportunities to help others, be not only great materially but greater spiritually than we have been before. On the way we will need to work. On the way we will need to put in great effort. On the way, I hope we will keep a sense of humour and keep a knowledge that while effort is required, that while national unity is required, while hard work is required, yet there must be time for laughter and for gaiety and for song. And there must be a goal of giving an opportunity to each individual among us to develop his own capacities for his own purposes, to use the gifts he may have, whether they are as a great musician, a great actor, a great business tycoon, a great scientist, a great teacher. In whatever direction, to use those gifts to the top of his bent for his benefit as a human being and for the benefit of a nation.

You will help us in this. You are helping us in this. The future is in your hands. This is why, Sir, you were so right when you said how pleased I was to come and talk to the Young Liberals and what an appreciation I had of the contribution they have to make and have made to this nation of ours.

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