

ANNUAL LIBERAL PARTY RALLYW. A. DIVISIONPERTH, W. A.7 JULY 1969Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton

Mr President, Parliamentary Colleagues and Delegates:

It is an honour for me to technically open this Conference of West Australian Liberals.

As you say, Sir, I have been here, I think on five - I am told on five - I think on six occasions since becoming Prime Minister. I will certainly be back before the elections and while the elections are on and, given your assistance, I would expect to be back as Prime Minister after the elections are over.

After all, this is a really exciting part of a really exciting nation. Here, Sir, I think you are taking something like twice the national average of migrants and the population here is growing at something like twice the national average. Here we have a part of Australia which is already contributing enormously to our total mineral exports and which nothing can stop contributing in even greater measure in the years to come.

You must feel it yourself, the excitement in the air in Perth; though that is nothing compared with the excitement in the air in Port Hedland, in Mt Tom Price, and in the other new frontiers of this developing State. There is an enormous future which has just begun for Western Australia, and that is not to be regarded as merely a future for Western Australia but for Australia as a whole.

I wonder what it is that brings you, as Liberal delegates, to a meeting of this kind. What is it that you want to see happen in this country? What is it that you want to see the Members you support and the Government you put in office do? There will, of course, be on matters of detail different answers from different individuals, but there must be some basic overriding consensus of what you wish to happen in Australia, of what you wish a Government to do for Australia. Because you don't go out, I am sure, merely to elect

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National  
development

Mr Smith or Mr Jones or Mr Robinson to some particular seat. You must, and have, a reason for seeking a particular representative of a particular philosophy. And I want to talk a little tonight of what I think motivates you people to see that the sort of Government you want is in office in Australia.

I suppose first of all you want to see a continuation of a climate which a Government can create - a climate which enables individuals in Australia to take their risks in a developing country, to use their initiatives, to take their losses if they fail, and start again, and to take their gains if they succeed without being envied by others. Because this is the sort of climate which permits to individuals the greatest possible area of freedom to experiment, to build new businesses, to try new developments. In that climate, and in that climate alone, can a country quickly and properly and to the benefit of its citizens grow rich and prosperous and give to its citizens the chance of self-fulfilment.

So it is, I think, that climate, as opposed to the idea - the socialist idea that the individual exists to serve the state - that you want to see in the Government you elect in Australia. But you want to see other things too. You want to see other things done as a result of that climate being created and these are the ones that I see as important. And these are the ones I believe you see as important.

*Defence*

Firstly, you must wish to look to the defence and security of Australia. We are not under any imminent threat of invasion or attack, nor can I envisage myself in the decade ahead that we would be under such imminent threat. But history shows that a nation which does not look to its own defences and its own security even in times of peace fails to do so at its peril. And the pages of history, and recent history, show nations which thought they were safe, and because they didn't contribute to that safety, found out too late they were not safe at all. So you would wish us, I think, to regard this as the rock on which all other development, and indeed our existence, must depend.

To do this, we must look to our own defences, though the defences which can be called in to being by a nation of 12 million are not great. Yet we must look to our own defences and be able to be seen in the world to be taking a serious and a real approach to our own security. And we must also look beyond ourselves. We must, as you know we have done, become involved in the region to our North. This is the region in which we live, the region in which in the future we must

*Defence*

continue to live; and we must help that region technically, economically, by opening the avenues of trade and by doing all we can to increase the standards of living of the peoples in that region. For in that way lies ultimately the greatest defence. But we must also show our readiness to participate in the defence of that region against external attack. And this we have done, and this I believe you would wish us to do.

When I say "participate in the defence of that region", I mean, precisely, participate in it. Up until the present and for a little while to come, Britain has taken full responsibility for the defence of the region to our North. She has accepted that responsibility as a major power. She has looked for assistance to the people in the region themselves, to those in Malaysia and in Singapore; and she has looked to us and she has looked to New Zealand, and she has not looked in vain. But we cannot take over that overriding responsibility and that must be clear to all.

We can join in, and will join in concerted efforts against external attack, but we cannot take over the full responsibility that Britain had. And that is the difference between what was, and for a little while is, but what in the future will not be. I believe you would wish us to do this. I believe you would see it as sensible. I believe you would see the stationing of our air force on the peninsula of Malaya and the stationing of our troops in Singapore as visible evidence of this interest, of this willingness to participate, and as the only real way in which such visible interest can be shown.

This is one great difference between ourselves and our opponents, for they would reject what I have just put to you. They would say we should not do this. Rather would they adopt a jack-in-the-box policy of shooting some troops up and then bringing them back and then shooting them up and bringing them back on the premise of now-you-see-'em-now-you-dont; a proposition which is as psychologically inept as it is logistically absurd, and which in fact would mean no real readiness to participate in the defence of the region at all. This is one great difference and this is one clear-cut difference.

But also in this area of defence, we must look to alliances with major powers. Britain will come to our assistance, I am sure, but the major assistance I think we must look for now is from the United States. We have an understanding and an undertaking that that assistance will come under the ANZUS Pact, but we would not wish as a Government, and you would not wish, I believe, as an Australian people that we should expect to get that assistance in time of peril, without ourselves contributing to the alliance which promises us that

*Defence*

assistance. There is another major difference between ourselves and our opponents. We are prepared to contribute to a joint defence. We are prepared to participate in such installations as North-West Cape, Pine Gap or Woomera because they are for our joint protection. But our opponents would not be prepared to do that. They would seek only to take and not to contribute because there might be perhaps some small danger in contributing. I do not believe that any alliance which seeks only to take and not to give will be a lasting alliance or a lasting security for this country. And in this field, which I have rated so important, these are the great differences between what I believe and hope you wish, and what I know our opponents would destroy.

*Immigration*

Then, what next? What more? What other things are uppermost in your mind. I venture to say that development of this nation, continued and accelerated development, is one of the major things you wish to see happen. Yet because at the moment there is virtually no unemployment at all in Australia, which means that all the labour available is employed in one field or another, in private enterprise development or government development - but employed - there is no unused labour on which to call for accelerated development. So there must be a continued effort to bring in more migrants to this country and to beat the record number of migrants which this year will see coming to these shores. This is one of the essentials of continued and accelerated development.

*Overseas Investment*

The other, of course, is the provision of capital to enable labour and capital to work together. Here we cannot possibly hope to generate from within our own savings and within our own community sufficient capital to develop this country as quickly as it must be developed. I believe we could not possibly hope to generate from within our own savings even half as much capital as is required for our future development. So we must continue, as we have done, to look to overseas capital to flow here to enable the strength of this country to grow and to enable the industrial and material capacity of this nation to increase.

Yet, at the same time, we would wish as a government, and I believe that you would wish, that the maximum opportunity for Australian participation in this growth and development should be offered to the Australian people, preferably at the beginning of a development, but certainly as that development progresses. It is impossible, of course, and it would be ridiculous to try to say that there must be a specific proportion of Australian ownership or some

*Overseas Investment*

development can't go ahead. But if it is known abroad that an Australian Government wishes and expects that an opportunity for Australian participation will be offered to the Australian people then I believe that, knowing what a government wants and being responsible, those great companies will do what they are already doing - and that is offer more and more opportunities for equity participation in development. And this we will seek to bring about.

This is not putting curbs on the flow of capital into Australia. This, I believe, will not frighten off any capital from Australia. For given a politically stable country such as we are, and given the opportunity of full profits from an investment of capital, then I believe that capital will come here and will not be deterred by the request that an offer should be made of some participation in that development. And it is important that this should happen because in fifty years, developments which now begin will, as this country grows, grow with it, and the assets and the value and the worth of these developments will, in fifty years' time, be immensely greater than they are now. And there should be a chance for Australians to own and participate in some of that growth in their own country. So I believe that you would wish to see, and we will do our best to see this happens - an increasing flow of labour, an increasing flow of capital, an increasing chance of Australian participation in that material development of which I have spoken to you.

*Social Services*

What else should a community require? What else do Liberal supporters seek from their Government? To my mind, having spoken of material things, one of the requirements you would wish - a requirement essential if a nation is to be truly great - is proper care of the aged, the widowed, the children of widows, the ill and the handicapped amongst us. That will require, and has indeed called forth, careful analysis of our social services system as it at present exists, in an endeavour to isolate the areas of greatest need and give more assistance to those areas. And, at the same time we must deal with a problem which is with us now and which in the future will grow, and that is the problem posed by those who during their lives have themselves saved in one way or another, such as contributing to superannuation, or in some other way. Some of these people now find themselves little better off, possibly even, when one takes into consideration their ineligibility for pensioners' fringe benefits, possibly even worse off than those who have not contributed during their lifetime.

*Means Test*

I think that it is cynical in the extreme, improper in the extreme, to talk about abolishing the means test. For if there is to be \$150 million more for social services, and that is what ultimately the

*Means Test*

the abolition of the means test would cost - \$150 million more a year - then that amount would go into this one proposition without one single cent flowing to ameliorate the lot of those who are really in need. But having said that, it still remains true that if saving is not to be discouraged, and it must not be, then we must see that those who do save and have saved get some advantage from that saving and do not find themselves in a disadvantageous position as against those who have not. This kind of compassion, this kind of thought-out approach as opposed to the past practices of merely raising pensions all across the board is something that I think you would wish to see happen in this country and something we are determined to see happen.

*National Health*

On the other fronts, on the other problems which face us, there are many difficult choices of priority. Of course, throughout this nation we want better hospitals, more hospitals, cheaper hospitals and a health scheme which works better than the existing one. Not that that scheme is as bad as is sometimes painted, for 77 per cent of the Australian people are covered by health insurance, another 12 per cent are covered by repatriation or old-age benefits or in similar ways, but not enough citizens are covered sufficiently to meet the calls of illness, particularly prolonged illness.

*Education*

Then there is the need for more technical schools, since if the nation we have in our mind is to grow as we hope it will, then it will only grow by the proper application of modern technology. This can only be done by properly trained technicians and technologists, the demand for which is immense and will grow in geometric proportions in the years ahead.

There is a demand for more education. I speak not now of technical education but of general education. A requirement for better communications, a call for more to be spent on roads, a multitude of requirements and nobody can meet them all, quickly. Should anybody come before you, as I suspect somebody might, and say "I will overcome the problems of health; I will overcome the problems of education; I will build a new naval base in Western Australia; I will build new railways everywhere; I will provide powerhouses there; I will provide ... you name it and I will promise it", then he would not be able to deliver on that promise, and all men of sense must know this. We would not adopt that attitude. We would select what we would consider the highest priorities for the national good, provide finance sufficient to see that all our manpower and all our materials and all our resources were put to use, and would necessarily - if we are to avoid inflation and the raising of taxes - have to do this over a period of time. But we would wish to put before you our goals and the steps by which we hope to approach and hope to solve them. And perhaps when you think of it, that is another

difference between ourselves and our opponents. For I think that is a more honest approach, I think it is a genuine approach, whereas I think those who promise all things to all men at once, must be seen to be lacking in credibility.

Sir, in endeavouring to do what the people in this room would want us to do, I am sure that from time to time we will make some mistakes, for no man and no woman and no government can avoid mistakes. If we do, they will be mistakes which have been made honestly after examination of all the facts, and when they are realised, they will be admitted and the course of action changed. I do not think there will be many such mistakes. I think that I can only make this one promise - that the team we have in Canberra, strengthened as it is by the members who come to us from West Australia, will do their utmost to carry out what I feel you have in your own minds as objectives for the future of this, our nation. And we will try to do two things which are not finite. We will try to encourage and increase a feeling of pride in being Australians, even if that overrides pride in being Victorians or West Australians. So that wherever in this nation a man may live - Queensland, New South Wales or Victoria - he will be proud and pleased and happy at the development going on in other parts of the country. And we will try to do something else if we can. We will try to foster amongst the Australian people a feeling of unity of purpose. I don't mean the acceptance of uniform ideas but I do mean the acceptance of the concept which I am sure is true, that there is no longer room in our nation for the idea, for example, that employees are automatically opposed to employers and that their interests are different. Rather, looked at properly, must they be the same, for a manufacturer must wish to see as much purchasing power as possible among the people, most of whom are employees, and an employee must wish to see as much efficiency as possible, because in that way the goods he and his friends buy are cheaper. So there is no longer room for a concept of employees on one side and employers on the other, no longer room for a concept of owners of industrial factories having interests diametrically opposed to those who are on the land. Rather there needs to be a feeling that what happens, happens for all Australians, for the good of all Australians and there is no divisive requirement because a man is an employee or employer or works in the city or works in the country. This is another thing, I believe, that is required of a great nation.

Given the continuation of the climate I have spoken of, given an attempt to approach these non-definable things I have spoken of, given the approach to defence and social services and the other calls

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*Industrial  
Relations*

upon us which I have mentioned, then I think we have, through you, a better chance of turning this country into the one I think we all imagine in our hearts it can be, a better chance than any other group or any other organisations existing in Australia today, or likely to exist in Australia in the future.

We will, given your continued support, make our efforts join with yours to realise the promise of this sunburnt country and pass this promise on to our children and our children's children. This, I think, is why you leave your homes to hand out "how to vote" cards, why you work, what you want to see happen, and if it is, then we will try our utmost to be worthy of your confidence.

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