

STATE COUNCIL MEETING OF THE VICTORIAN
DIVISION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY

Melbourne, Vic.

30 JULY 1969

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Mr. President, Mr. Premier and Delegates:-

This is, as the President has said, merely a fleeting visit. I have to be in Queensland by lunchtime, then have a meeting of the Women's Sections from all over Queensland, and then attend a fund-raising dinner for one of our candidates. So you can see, it is not an uncrowded day. But this part of it is one that I would not, for anything, have missed.

Elections

I speak to you at a time only some months before there will be a decision made by the Australian people as to what Government will carry them on and through those exciting seventies which beckon to us now. It is my hope, and my belief, that with your help the Australian people will choose as their pilots through these years ahead a government which continues those policies and those philosophies which have, over the last twenty years, transformed this nation; a government which will adopt new approaches and policies to take full advantage of those great opportunities which await us.

Roads

It is a little inhibiting speaking to you on the eve of a Budget, but perhaps I might remind you of some of the things which have been done in the space of very little more than a year or eighteen months, things which already indicate, I think, the courses we will take in the future. I would remind you that we have adopted an entirely new approach to the system of building road communications throughout Australia and Victoria, and this is an important avenue of approach, not just a gimmick. For the first time, there has been a cost-benefit analysis of the construction of roads and where they should be. For the first time there is no longer a requirement that a fixed amount of the total road money available - whether it is of cost-benefit or not - should be spent in particular areas, and for the first time there is a requirement that the congestion of the cities should be relieved by a proper road programme. Accompanying these new approaches has been the addition of half a billion dollars for the road programme.

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Shipping

We have, let me remind you, taken the not inconsiderable policy decision to enter, or perhaps I should say re-enter, the field of overseas shipping so that Australia will have ships plying with Australian produce between this country and Japan, between this country and the United Kingdom, between this country and the United States. And this will not only be profitable, it will save invisibles in our import bill. And it will also enable us to know precisely what the economics of this trade are and to see that our producers, and to this extent I speak of our primary producers for they provide the bulk of our exports - to see that our producers are not mulcted by freight charges higher than they should be.

Defence

We have accepted a responsibility in the new changed situation to our north, although let us make it quite plain that we cannot take over the role of sheriff which Britain had. But we will be clearly seen to be members of the posse and have there in that region, visible for all to see, an Australian presence. And these were not easy decisions to make, and are but some of those new approaches in this relatively brief period of time.

Social Services

I would add just one more to them before I leave. We have, I think, already shown our awareness in a practical way of those of whom I have so often spoken and those whom I believe you think of so often - that is the handicapped amongst us, the ill, the aged. This will continue, and it will continue in the seventies at an increasing tempo, with more people coming in (for our immigration programme is already a record), with more development taking place, with more overseas capital required to do it and more Australian ownership being offered in that development - and the key word is "offered". And as those material goals before us are reached, we will not only seek to look after those ill and aged of whom I have spoken, but try to see if we cannot improve the quality of life in Australia, as the material resources of Australia grow. And by the quality of life I mean the opportunity for people to train themselves for whatever field of endeavour they may wish to enter. If they wish to train to be a television producer, a film actor, a plumber, a carpenter, a farmer, in the field of business management, a scientist - whatever it is they wish to be; that opportunity to receive the necessary training is what we would wish to see provided as part of the quality of life. And to try to see that our younger people are brought up with the opportunity not only to achieve that of which I have spoken but to take part in outdoor activities - surfing, skiing, riding, in whatever it may be that is a healthy outdoor interest and is as much a part of the quality of life as is intellectual attainment.

Educ. Trans.

Sport

These things become easier as material resources grow, but they are an integral part of a full life in a nation such as Australia, and will be achieved under the leadership of the Liberal Party, and with the help and assistance which you of the Branches, however you may differ on minor matters, are united to give us.

Unity in Liberal Party

What a difference there is between those of you in this hall who will argue out matters of detail but on matters of ideology - the climate which provides employment and growth - are as one. What a difference between some other meeting, which I seem to have heard is taking place somewhere or other in Melbourne, where the whole of the time appears to be devoted to pretending that those deep schisms which exist don't exist and can be papered over and can be hidden for at least long enough to pretend to the people there is something difference from what there really is.

A.L.P. Policy

We will come before you, as we always have, putting programmes that can be achieved without inflation and without pretence. We will make no promises that can't be carried out. But if I may, just before I close, be a little repetitive, I would like to bring to the attention of those of you who have not already read it, a little piece of doggerel I wrote at Question Time one day in the House - no-one was asking me questions at the time, so I thought I would put the time to good use! - which seems to me to put in one nutshell the different approach of our opponents, particularly their Leader. And the little piece of nonsense runs like this - and of course you will understand it is in the mouth of the Leader of the Opposition -

I promise you, I promise you
To do anything at all you want me to
And if I get rather lost
As to how much it will cost
I can always raise taxation
On - guess who? You.

Well, you think of it and he'll promise it. But this will not be our approach. It would not be the approach you wanted. It would not be the approach you would support. But with that support you give us - and I thank you for it now - I am sure that we will see, with the team of candidates we have, that towards the end of this year there will be opening for Australia three more years of increasingly exciting government and increasingly exciting development for this nation which we all love.
