

OPENING OF TASMANIAN STATE COUNCIL - LIBERAL
PARTY OF AUSTRALIA - DEVONPORT

16 JULY 1971

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. William McMahon

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Premier, Senator Wright, my Parliamentary Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen :

While I am here I want to pass on, if I can, something of the spirit that is abroad in Australia today on behalf of the Liberal cause.

As our President has said in the last four months I have visited four of the six Australian States. Of course I don't count in New South Wales because it's the State in which I live. But what I can say to you, and I can say it to you with emphasis, is that I have been heartened by the obvious vitality of our movement, the enthusiasm of the Party members and the readiness of the organisation and the political wings to get together and to get things done.

Only a few days ago my Press Officer and my Department gave me a record of our achievements of the last four months - 40 independent and separate initiatives taken successfully by the Government. Frankly it gave me a great cause for pleasure.

We've got a good team in Canberra, and I've been conscious of a new unity among the Branches and the councils of the Party. There is a coming together and a gathering of the clans, as I see it, in readiness for the next election. I honestly believe we have the team and the policies to win, and not only to win, but I believe we will pick up seats. It's the size of the victory I want to be sure about. Now is the time for all of us to get cracking and to make that victory, and the numbers that we have in the House, a big one.

I'd like to get Franklin back for a start. As I said a few moments ago, I believe that our record in the last few months has been pretty good - over 40 initiatives successfully taken. I've met the Premiers of the States on two occasions in that time, and I believe each time successfully.

I think I've made it clear that the Commonwealth doesn't want to play the role of Headmaster. For political and economic and for social reasons I believe in a Federal system of Government. But what I do want is to work together and to co-operate closely, as we are meant to do under the Constitution. And that Constitution belongs to you and shouldn't be altered unless it is with your consent. I want it to survive until you change it, and I want to be able to play my part in making it work better.

The things we've done so far have included growth taxes for the States. We gave a special increase to the pensioners, and in many other aspects of our social welfare we have shown new initiatives. In particular I want to emphasise what has been done for our aborigines. Because here I believe the story has been imperfectly told. All the reforms that William Wentworth asked me to carry out as a result of consultations with the aboriginal councils themselves, were in fact either carried out or bettered. And our massive programme for aboriginal development in the Northern Territory is, I think, a very good one.

We've also been tackling a variety of problems arising from the pressures of the economy - including a review of the arbitration system - to see what can be done about cost inflation arising largely from excessive wage increases. I'll say more to you about this subject in a few moments'time.

We are giving very special attention to the crisis in our rural industries, especially how we'll be able to help them when Britain enters the European Community. But before I touch on these subjects, let me come back to Labor Party activities. Because I believe that by their tolerance and tacit encouragement of industrial disputes they are indifferent to the problems of the economy.

In the time that I have been Prime Minister I have not heard one Member of the Opposition - other than Alan Fraser of Eden-Monaro, who is a Liberal in mind and in thought - raise his voice in opposition to the activities of the left-wing trade unions and the activities of the left-wing in his own Party.

There has been an indifferent and a gross affront to law and order in the community by elements in the trade union movement during the Springboks tour. I believe most Australians want that tour to be successful. They don't want politics to get mixed up with a sporting event.

You know too, the waterside workers cut off Tasmania from the Port of Melbourne as part of an industrial campaign against the Springboks. That was a blatant political act without any industrial motive whatsoever. And in recent weeks, in defiance of a promise given to the ACTU and the Australian people, they're again engaged in these tactics of depriving you people of the ability to carry on your businesses effectively.

Now the Labor Party also wants to write down our rural industries. They said as much at their Launceston conference. Mr. Hayden, a not very eminent member of the Labor Party, and not a man who can be regarded as gifted or knowledgeable in rural affairs, but he said, speaking as it were for an industrial metropolitan community, that our primary industry should be controlled on a self-supporting basis and that whatever reforms were to be carried out should be carried out in a defined period.

What he meant was that many of our great industries - the wheat industry and the sugar industry, both of which have stabilization schemes, should be deprived of them, and the wool industry shouldn't be given protection because it has to be self-supporting. Those industries should be permitted to fight their own battles within a definable period, and be permitted to fight an international company without the support of the Government and the Australian people.

Now he, and those who voted it through just didn't know what they were talking about. Their one so-called expert in primary industries, Dr. Patterson, virtually disowned it publicly on television on the night the decision was made - or if it wasn't that night it was immediately after the conference. But it is the self-same Dr. Patterson who is now playing the games of the Communists in China, by being critical of our attitude to the sale of wheat to China. We don't want to interfere, because we know what a magnificent job the Wheat Board is doing, and we're fairly certain that if these attacks had not occurred, then our Wheat Board had reasonable prospects of commencing negotiations with the China purchasing agency within the course of the last few weeks. But their activities have harmed the cause of the Wheat Board, and having harmed the cause of the Wheat Board have, I believe, harmed the cause of the Australian wheat producers.

Now if I may go further, the Party Leaders have been on parade in Peking, in a massive propaganda exercise, skilfully contrived by Chou En-Lai, offending as many of Australia's friends as they could. In fact, Mr. Whitlam and his entourage, and I ask you to remember who they are, and the type of people they are, are the advocates for China against the interests of this country. And it must be our task as Liberals to expose the shallowness of all these activities.

Let me take two of them, and two only because as our President has said, my time and your time is limited. I'll talk first of all about the industrial intrusion into non-industrial matters as one subject, and our attitude to Mainland China as the other.

Let's have a look into the industrial fields first. You've heard of Mr. Hawke I take it - he's our new foreign demagogue. But he's doing a cook's tour of Europe at the moment, after stirring up a hornet's nest here, and finding it a pretty angry one. For some months now, we have seen some elements in the Trade Union movement, Mr. Hawke as their principal spokesman, butting into all sorts of fields where they have no right to be, and where no industrial issue was involved, poking their nose in because they wanted to tell you exactly what they wanted you to do. They tried to stop the export of merino sheep and they failed. Mr. Hawke busied himself with some gratuitous advice to a television station on the kind of programme it should have.

If he could do that, couldn't he do it to the media, all the media - press, television, radio and other kind of activities that he thought came within his sights. He led the way in an attempt to stop the Springboks tour. And what they did was really an attempt to deny people their freedom of choice within the law, and an attempt, as a final result, to have a showdown with the Government.

They inspired and provoked demonstrators into actions which became a challenge to public law and order within the Commonwealth. I believe the Australian public is fed up with all of this, and I believe a lot of responsible trade unionists - the bulk of whom are good, hard-working Australians - are also fed up with it too.

I have said many times that my Government and I find apartheid repugnant as a political and a social philosophy. But apartheid wasn't really the issue in the challenge to law and order when the Springboks arrived. It was a pretext and it was an excuse by Mr. Hawke and some of his colleagues to show their form and to show their capacity for intimidation.

And the professional demonstrators and dissenters - and a lot of them were - jumped on the band wagon without wasting a second of time.

Now the Government, our Government in Canberra, had to make its position clear. And at the time I stated three important principles that were dear to us, and that we would ensure were followed and observed. I think that they're worthwhile repeating at the moment. And they are - and I repeat what I have said but a few moments ago : that the Australian people, the you and me's of this world, the people that constitute not only the Liberal and the Labor Parties, the uncommitted, the young and everyone in the community, have a right of freedom of choice within the law at all times. Nobody has the right to deprive them of this freedom of choice.

And the second great principle is that no group or organisation should be permitted to intimidate the lawful Government of the country - whether it happens to be State, Local Government, or Federal Government as it exists in Canberra. Now we reject absolutely any attempt by elements in the Trade Union movement to achieve their objectives, industrial or otherwise, by force and intimidation.

And the last one - a fairly simple one - is that frankly we believe there is an area of politics, we believe there is an area of sport. We believe there are areas of cultural relations such as musical activities, or the movement of ballet companies, and we do not think for one moment, that the sporting and other organisations should be under duress from any source purely for political motives. I also remind you too, if I can, of the basis on which we operate.

I believe that the principles that we have held ever since we were first formed as a Party remain just as valid and absolute today as they did when they were first announced. So what I want to read to you now is a part of what was said by us in a little document published by Sir Robert Menzies called "We Believe". It's this :

"The Liberal Party offers the spirit of adventure, the fine freedoms of thought and speech and choice, the great human right to choose an avocation and fail, or to choose an avocation and succeed."

In other words, to put it in my own way, to act as men and women, and to be able to do what you want to do, providing you do it, as I said before, within the law. I think we should keep on remembering this against the possible background of increasing industrial outrages in the months to come.

May I now come to the other subject I want to mention and that is China. And before I come into the body of my speech, may I just mention two facts to you.

The first one relates to the fact that memories are short, and that there are some discussions taking place today about the possibilities of another Geneva-type convention. I well remember, shortly after I became the External Affairs Minister (now the Foreign Minister) going up to South Vietnam to see our own troops and to see how Vietnamisation was progressing. And on the way there I met representatives of various Asian countries. Together we decided that we would have a conference in Djakarta, dedicated to trying to get peace in Cambodia and to permit this country to be able to live free, and particularly free from intimidation from the North.

We invited China, we invited the Communist countries, but they blatantly refused to come. But we did send emissaries around the world trying to find out whether there was anything that could be done and we even tested the United Nations without result.

So I want you to understand that we as a Liberal Government have been seeking for peace. Thinking that the cause of peace was one of the highest ideals that we as Liberals possess, and consequently I now want to debunk any idea that somebody has taken the initiative away from us. It is totally false. We want peace, we know that Vietnamisation is succeeding and we do know it now, we at least want to preserve the basic cause for which we fought, and that was the right of the South Vietnamese to be able to determine their own future.

Now may I come to the second point that I wanted to mention to you, and that is about recognition of Continental China, the People's Republic of China in the United Nations, and recognition itself.

Shortly after I became Minister for External Affairs, I called for papers to be prepared and presented to the Cabinet, as to what our attitude should be at the United Nations, because as I mentioned a few moments ago, we had then taken up a precise and definite attitude.

Similarly, too, did I decide, or did I recommend and the Cabinet decided that we would make the preliminary move, called a dialogue, with the People's Republic of China to see what their attitude might be, to recognition. Now when I talk about the People's Republic for brevity's sake I'll say "China", but I want you to understand that it means Peking China, or Communist China. We have had meetings with their plenipotentiaries - so far unsuccessful. Not because of our attitude - we did make an attempt to show them what we were prepared to do - but because of the fact that they were not prepared to listen unless we agreed to all of the terms that they had proposed.

So now may I come back then to the speech that I want to make and speak to you about China itself.

There has been, as we all know, certainly most Liberals will know, some evidence that China was getting ready to lift the boom which has kept her isolated from the Western world for so long. And, as is prudent, we have had our China policy under review for a considerable time. I repeat this again, because I don't want to let somebody jump onto the band wagon and say the opposite - that recent developments in our policy have been precipitated by public interest in China's person-to-person - or as somebody calls it - the ping-pong diplomacy.

Neither do I think China's new interest in the outside world reflects a change of heart. I don't. It would be more accurate to describe her recent initiatives as a new tactical approach to old goals. Not new, but with skill, and with diplomatic common sense, they have used the Labor mission for the benefit of the Chinese themselves.

Now the goals, and I want to emphasise this of the Chinese people, are these. You know that up on the Ussuri and other parts of the North, they have the problems with the Soviet, and consequently one of their biggest and most immediate problems is that of border security. They want a reduction in the influence of the United States and of the Soviet. They want a check on Japan and they want the spread of Maoist revolutionary theories by securing better relationships with smaller powers. And, of course, they do want the recovery of Taiwan, that is the Republic of China.

Nevertheless - whatever our dislike of her political philosophy, we regard China as a fact of life in the region. And, indeed, as a fact of life in the wider world, and we must look forward in the long run to normal relations with them.

But I want to emphasise, we will have a dialogue not on their terms, but on terms that we regard as satisfactory to us as Australians and to the people of this country.

The position now is that fifty-four countries have diplomatic relations with China and sixty-three with Taiwan. Since last October nine countries have announced they will establish diplomatic relations, but none of them was in our region. None were immediately to the North of us, none were countries with which we have regional associations and relationships, and whose security we regard as important to our own.

Not only as a result of my mission to the United Nations, but in what I have been able to learn since, I have formed the opinion that it is probably that either this year or next, Peking will become a member of the General Assembly of the United Nations and will I think have a seat on the Security Council. We will not oppose membership: I have said this over and over again. It mustn't be forgotten. Some people will attempt to jump on the band wagon and try and prove to the contrary.

But what we will do is this, we will do all in our power to ensure that Taiwan, that has 14½ million people, that is a member of the United Nations now, and is recognised by us and is a very good trading partner of ours - Taiwan is a better trading partner than China itself, that is Continental China - that Taiwan's position is recognised and its position in the United Nations sustained.

When we are taking this action, of course, we consult with our friends, particularly the United States, Japan and New Zealand. They, too, have already had some contact with China through diplomatic sources. Or perhaps I should take that back and I should localise it to ourselves. I don't want to speak for them. I repeat again that we have had contact with the Chinese Government through other national sources.

We have set out directly to Peking what is our long-term goal and our desire to take progressive steps towards this. It would be very optimistic to expect any quick returns. We must move cautiously, with our own national self-interest uppermost in our minds at all times. And I want to repeat that because I want you to understand the contrast. We will move slowly and cautiously, because it is our vital interest that must be uppermost in our minds. And the contrast is ^{that} the mission of the Labor Party recently in Mainland China was moving not in our interests, but dangerously close to the interests of Mainland China, and dangerously opposed to the interests of many of our great friends.

Now the question of recognition will arise in due course, but as I said, it may be a long way off. And we don't intend to rush it. Let me give you a few more facts about the relationships we already have with the People's Republic. This is important, because some would create the impression that they are completely isolated.

There has been a two-way trade between us both for a good many years, and recently, and the businessmen here should be told this, we recently liberalised the list of strategic exports so that the range of trade could be widely extended. And I ask all businessmen to have a look at this restricted list because they will see, that that range of opportunities is great, and has been expanded by the Liberal-Country Party Government in recent months.

There is no discrimination against China in our tariff and import policies. Although China is not a member of GATT, we have applied GATT rules against nondiscrimination to China and we will continue to do so. We give her, like other countries, most favoured nation treatment.

Furthermore, we have no barriers to visitors from the People's Republic. They want to come here, and unless there are defence or strategic reasons, we permit them to come, and to come freely. They can come as it were, like any other visitors, subject only to procedures of a normal kind which I've just mentioned. But on its part, China exercises the strictest control over visitors. Here there is no reciprocity and this must be understood by all of us.

Now gentlemen, you will have been reading about this - and I've spoken about it a few moments ago - and that is the Labor Party's mission to China in the last week. I have already exposed the shams and the absurdities of it all. But I want to go over some of the points again because they are of considerable importance to you and they are of overwhelming importance to the security of this country.

They went to China to play politics with wheat. I emphasise they went to play politics. Mr. Anthony said yesterday, that we want to leave it to the established organisations to carry out our trading relations, particularly if they have been as extraordinarily successful as the Wheat Board. Mr. Anthony said only yesterday that the Wheat Board itself has been in constant contact with the Chinese purchasing agencies. The Board felt ^{that} they had strong hopes that the Wheat Board would soon have received an invitation to go to Hong Kong to negotiate further contracts.

But because of the attitude, and the activities of the Labor Party, those hopes were dashed. Instead of going, they have had to be suspended for some time.

I want you to understand that politics and trade relations don't mix. If you do play politics you can do great harm and damage to Australia's rural industries. In this case I believe they have done damage to the cause of wheat.

In a series of public statements, Mr. Whitlam committed himself and his Party to a policy, which I think is an affront to most of Australia's friends and allies in South-East Asia and the Pacific. And here again I want to interpolate that Dr. Patterson apparently says that I have been attacking China. Far from the truth. I've been attacking not China but Mr. Whitlam's intrusion into Foreign Affairs, and his insulting references to our friends. I can understand Dr. Patterson's confusion of mind.

Whitlam has become the advocate for China. He is not the advocate for this country. This I have said can be dangerous for us.

The Chinese Premier, Mr. Chou En-Lai cannot be blamed for taking up the opportunity for some telling propaganda when Mr. Whitlam went to see him. What is dangerous, and what is damaging, is the extent to which Mr. Whitlam picked up and made his own the points China has been trying to impose on the world for years.

He said he would recognise China immediately if he were to win the next elections. He went further. He would sever diplomatic relationships with Taiwan and further still, he would declare Peking the "sole Government to China".

In other words, he would abandon Taiwan that has been very close to us, and friendly with us, and as I said a few moments ago, has been a good trading partner, and one that has assumed its proper role in the diplomatic and international world and does play its part as a responsible member of that world. These are perhaps the most startling by a political leader without power or authority in many, many years.

I wonder if this could have happened if it had been the late Mr. Chifley - or the late Mr. Curtin. Could they ever have conceived of operating in a way that could be inimical to the interests of this country and dangerous to them.

He made matters worse by gratuitously insulting countries like Thailand and the Philippines, who are friendly, and a country like the Soviet Union with whom we are trying and have, in fact, developed a better understanding.

There was no dialogue about his meeting with the Chinese. He took the bait and he swallowed it whole. He came away without any assurances from Premier Chou at all. He made all the concessions in a field which was not in his area to operate anyway. This is an area for Government, and not an area for an itinerant politician moving into China, and now trying to move into other parts of South-East Asia.

In addition he allowed himself to be used as a spokesman for the North Vietnamese and Chinese propositions at the Paris peace talks.

Altogether it was an extraordinary performance. For us it is a warning and a sample of what Mr. Whitlam and the Labor Party would do if they ever come to power. We as Liberals, every single one of you, from the Premier to myself, you joining with us, must make certain this does not happen.

I come back to where I started, that the Liberal Party commands the loyalty of the great mass of Australians. Everywhere I've been in the last four months, I've become more and more convinced of the certainty of that statement. I believe we Liberals have a record behind us to justify that confidence, and that we have progressive policies to keep that confidence alive. I am sure we will win the next elections, but with your help, with the help of Angus Bethune, with the help of the other Liberal Premiers, let's make it a good one. Let's make it a handsome victory and give us the opportunity to carry on our policies, for at least another three years.
