

LOWE ELECTORATE LIBERAL PARTY BRANCH

STRATHFIELD, N. S. W.

4TH SEPTEMBER, 1971

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. William McMahon

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My wife and I are delighted to be here. Thank you for your most generous welcome. I can assure you it is stimulating to see so many of you from my own and other Liberal Electorates here today.

Let us make today a significant date in the history of the Liberal Party and in the history of the Government in Canberra. Let us as Liberals make a new and concerted drive to fight for our own Liberal principles and our cause, in the interest of all Australians.

It is up to all of us to bring this about. We cannot expect to get it by asking - or by hoping - or by wishful thinking. We can get it by performance. Performance in our Branches, in our State Parties, in our Federal organisation and in the Parliamentary Party.

If we have differences - as we inevitably will - let us resolve them within the Party. We should be exuding confidence in the Branches - all the members playing their part. If we have doubts, let us cast them out. Don't let them eat away at us like a cancer.

Liberalism stands for the individual. For his liberties and his ideals.

All I ask for is unity in the pursuit of those ideals and objectives to which we as Liberals are committed by our platform and our policies. I ask for unity in our attack on inflation. I ask for moderation on the part of those in whose hands lies the determination of prices.

I ask for moderation on the part of industrial forces so that genuine progress is not retarded by political conflict, and above all let us see policies rather than personalities get better recognition in the media.

We have had a period of difficulties. That is true. I want to stress that the differences were never fundamental, nor did they relate to differences in policy of any substance. I know that the Liberal Parliamentary Party is united, and united behind the leadership, and there are good reasons for us to be confident. But there is a need to demonstrate that confidence. There are good grounds for us to be optimistic. There are none for us to be complacent.

I also want to appeal to the people of Australia for unity in a nation-wide effort to beat the problems of the day. They are not problems of survival, for we have security. They are not problems of bondage, for we are free. Some of them are largely beyond our control, such as excessive wage increases and the problem of the wool industry: some of them are not.

Let us pull together - all of us - to overcome them where it is in our power so to do. There is no better place for us to start than here in my own Electorate of Lowe. The people of Lowe have given me their loyalty and their support for twenty-two years. I value that beyond words.

My duties are clear. They are to represent the people of Lowe in the Federal Parliament, to lead the Parliamentary Liberal Party and to lead the nation as Prime Minister.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe that my Government has done a great deal in these past six months which has not yet had a proper public valuation put on it - because of the distractions of other events - and because the good things of life frequently pass unnoticed.

During the past six months I have visited every state in the Commonwealth and some of the states several times. I have been concerned with achieving two objectives. One was to make it clear that my Government believes in the Federal System.

We - in the Commonwealth Government - will co-operate with the states to the limit to make it work in the best interests of the Australian people. The other was to make direct contact with the State Liberal Parties and Branches. I did this to ensure that those of us in the Federal Parliamentary Party were making common cause with our fellow Liberals in presenting the platform and policies of our Party in the National Parliament.

I have been encouraged during my travels. I believe our relationships with the states at the political level are much better, and I am more confident now that we are getting a better identity of outlook between the Liberal Branches and their Parliamentary representatives. We have, in short, a solid base on which to build.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I won't go over history but I do want to make some brief comments on some matters of special interest.

The first relates to the decision of the High Court in the cement pipes case. The decision should be welcomed for the reason that it clarifies the meaning of the words "trading and financial corporations" in the Commonwealth Constitution. The 1908 definition of the words in the Huddart Parker Judgement have long seemed to me to violate the plain meaning of the words. The High Court has also pointed out the necessity for precision in the drafting of legislation.

The Trade Practices Law is designed to strengthen competition in Australian trade and commerce to the extent required by the public interest. The law is now being reviewed and a new and strengthened Bill will be introduced into Parliament as soon as practicable. On a practical basis, the decision does not, in any sense, reduce the need for the closest co-operation between the Commonwealth and the States.

Second is the state of the economy. You have just had the new Budget. I didn't expect it to be a popular Budget, but it is a responsible one. Few people have challenged us about its inherent soundness or that it was developed with a high sense of responsibility.

Would any sensible Australian expect us to act otherwise? We had already come to grips with inflation and the rural crisis. We are working hard to get a more stable industrial situation.

The Budget took these and other factors into account. Some of the problems are short term, others longer-term, but we take them together so that we have a strategy and a purpose for the future. What I want to say to you is: Have confidence in your country and in the strength of the economy.

The economy basically is sound. Our natural resources are substantial, our trade is healthy, our foreign exchange position is strong. There is no danger whatsoever of mass unemployment. Those who are starting this kind of whispering campaign are talking rubbish. They want to create alarm and despondency when there is no reason - absolutely no reason - for that.

The Liberal-Country Party Government has had the confidence and support of a majority of Australians for twenty-two years. It has never shirked its responsibilities. It has a wealth of experience to bring to bear on the problems of the day. I have no doubt that we will emerge from the present economic difficulties with our long-range prospects sound indeed.

The other matter I want to mention is social welfare. We have to look after those most in need as our first commitments in this field. We have done this with our pension rises. Those increases during my administration have been much greater than the rise in the cost of living. That, in fact, is the record in recent years. Their standard of living will be improved, but I don't want to regard our care for the needy as something based on a simple statistic or a percentage. I want to make it something which has regard for human values, for the right of every Australian to security in his life and living.

Our work in the social welfare field is by no means done. We have the whole range of Government activity in this field under review and we will press on until we have cleaned out poverty from our communities.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask you to ignore the Jeremiahs. They come out from their holes in the ground whenever they think there is someone who will listen to them.

The problems before us are being dealt with. The future is full of promise, the Government is in good heart and we have abundant faith in the good sense, the abilities and the energies of the Australian people.

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