

PHILLIP ELECTORATE GARDEN PARTY

ROSE BAY, N.S.W.

Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. William McMahon
CH, MP

94 MAY 1972

Thanks! Dr Derek Freeman for your very kind welcome, and thanks Frank Theeman and your charming wife for your kindness and generosity and for inviting us all to enjoy your hospitality this afternoon.

I am delighted to see so many of you here today. Like you, my main purpose is to lend the strongest support I can to Bill Aston and the Liberal Party in Phillip.

Bill has been an outstanding Liberal and has occupied the high office of Speaker with distinction and authority for so long. So we are all here this afternoon to make sure that when our Speaker is returned, it will be with the kind of majority he richly deserves.

Amongst us today, there are representatives of the Liberal Party as a whole - Federal and State politicians, officials of the Liberal Party organisations, Branch officers, Party members and strong supporters. I am glad, too, that this Garden Party is being held in Leslie Bury's territory. Because this is teamwork in operation and that is one of the great contrasts between the Liberal Party and our opponents. Unity, loyalty and teamwork are our insurance policy for success.

In the past few days, we have seen the confirmation of the swing back of support to the Government. Our support is rising, and it will be much higher later on in the year as confidence surges ahead.

I ask you to redouble your efforts at the Branch and organisational level in the coming months. Now is the time to spread our campaigning and our support throughout the community.

Our policy positions are sound. We have a first-rate story to tell. It is a story of constructive achievement and imaginative action. I say let's get on with it as one team and with one voice. Don't let us be diverted or distracted by side issues or irrelevancies.

We must fight and win on our grounds - on the themes of our choice - with our timing and with complete unity of purpose.

By way of contrast, our opponents are uniquely vulnerable this year on just about every main issue that Australians are concerned about.

On the other hand, we are strengthened by our policies and accumulated practical experience of many years of proven record in government.

We all know there are very real and unbridgeable differences between our policies and the dressed-up impractical proposals of Labor. Ours are the practical policies of a Government which knows how to implement and finance them.

The Labor Party is completely confused, even on agreeing what their own policies are, let alone on how they would implement, administer and finance them.

Let me illustrate this today in three vital areas of community and national life - in our management of the national economy, in the vital area of education, and in Commonwealth/State relations.

First of all, the economy. In common with many nations, we have in the past few years, faced new types of economic problems, problems which have not been as amenable to the traditional responses and adjustments of previous years.

In the face of this, we have been prepared to be more flexible than we have ever been before. We had to frankly acknowledge where predictions were not being borne out, to be ready to correct trends as they emerged and to adjust our economic strategy accordingly. We adopted a flexible and very responsive stance and I think it is now paying off.

We took a series of actions in the second half of last year, starting with monetary policy. Most recently, there was the mini-Budget which will provide a big lift in demand, and in confidence. This was active and positive decision-making in the highest area of government.

Then there is education, and with it the desire to help - in a very substantial way - both Government and independent schools.

Last December, I announced a special \$20 million emergency grant to the States. It was the first time the Commonwealth had moved specifically to provide grants for classroom construction at primary and secondary schools.

Then at the beginning of the year, we announced increases in the per capita grants to independent schools. Then a few days ago, details were given to the Parliament of what I called imaginative proposals to introduce certainty in planning as between the Commonwealth, the States and the schools, and to make both grants for capital construction and per capita assistance part of permanent Commonwealth/State education policy.

We announced a five-year programme of \$215 million for school building, and with it arrangements that are designed to meet up to 40 per cent of independent school running costs. This continued a policy our Government started in 1963, when the Commonwealth first approved the science laboratory plan for Government and non-Government schools.

I am proud to say that right from the beginning, I have taken an active part in the formulation of this scheme. Our objective then was to provide a good and adequate education to all Australian children in all Australian schools. It is still my own and the Liberal Party's objective and I think we are getting a great deal closer to our goals.

Last, let me mention Commonwealth/State relationships. We approached the most recent Premiers' Conference at three levels :-

1. A very substantial increase in financial assistance to the State Governments and to local and semi-Government authorities. New South Wales was particularly well treated.
2. Substantial increases in unemployment benefits and for unemployment in rural areas.
3. Assistance to the free enterprise system. We restored the investment allowance and later on announced a new and better research and investment scheme for industry.

These three illustrations are positive examples of an active Government - a Government of decision in the areas that count, in the areas that mean so much to us all.

This is the message we must get across. With teamwork we can. Members are not sitting in Canberra watching opinion polls. We are improving and introducing practical policies, policies designed to make this a stronger, richer, more Australian and exciting nation.
