



## PRIME MINISTER

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE, LIBERAL PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF WOMEN'S SECTION

ST. KILDA. VIC.

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

30 October 1972

Just as the strength of the family rests with women, so does the strength of the nation depend upon the quality of its women.

And that leads me to say that I believe the same principles apply to national political parties like the Liberal Party of Australia. I don't think we could have succeeded as well over the last twenty-two years, nor could we have endured for so long and have such bright prospects as we now have, if it had not been for the Liberal women.

Here, I am not talking exclusively about women members of Parliament. I am talking about the women of the Party who comprise the backbone of our electoral and of our campaign organisations.

So today, I want to pay tribute to you on behalf of the Liberal Party as a whole. But, now I am going to ask you to work even harder during the next five weeks, or six weeks, in order to ensure that we have a bigger majority in the House than we have at the present time. I know you will. And I know you are going to ensure your return on December 2 with a resounding victory, and I repeat again with an even greater majority than we have in the House now.

Now this election campaign will, I believe, be decisive for all of us. It will in fact be a crucial decision. On December 2 Australians will be making their choice between a way of life that puts the individual, the family and the nation first, living in and working in and sharing in the Government of an Australia which has modern defences, strong alliances and good neighbours. That is the Liberal way; that is the Liberal choice.

We will be choosing between this and a radically different way of life, a radically different Australia, compulsorily squeezed and moulded by artificial controls to conform to Labor's foolish and repulsive socialist policies.

It is, I believe, becoming clearer, as the tide of public opinion continues to turn in our favour, that Australians will emphatically reject the wrong-headed visions of our opponents. I want to emphasise this just as strongly as I can. Labor's blueprints for remaking of Australian life are alien to everything on which we have based the nation-building of our post-war generation of progress, growth and development.

In every phase of national and personal life - from external security to private morality, they want to attack the way of life that the great majority of Australians have built and which we want to preserve. For these reasons, Australians are realising that this is an election not between similar Parties and similar policies, with nothing more than a minor shade of difference to tell them apart - because the differences between us are sharp and they are real.

So, it will be a major part of the Liberal Party campaign in the next few weeks to drive home these unbridgeable differences in public understanding. It is essential that all of us in the Liberal Party make certain that no Australian goes to the polls without a clear understanding of these differences. That is one vital aspect of our campaign. But the most important message that we should bring to the Australian people is this. It is the message that in the past eighteen months this Government has achieved more changes and reforms than any other Government in history in a comparable period. This pattern of change and reform matches, I believe, the new aspirations of the Australians of the 1970's.

But that is only a beginning. We have shown that we have a combination of youth and experience in Government which successfully translates imaginative ideas into constructive and into responsible action. In the next few weeks Members and Ministers will be travelling the length and breadth of the nation and we will convince Australia that the return of this Government will be a mandate for continuous, constructive, contemporary, and above all, responsible change.

And so I want to put this to all Australians. Put back a Government that will guarantee your freedom of choice while it goes on changing and reforming and improving the quality of life in a dynamic Australia. Whilst we are proud of what we've done, we are not content.

Before I go on to examine some specific areas of policies and issue in this election let me go back a little over what we have done in a very short period of Government. I remind you immediately of the success of Premiers' Conferences and of the Loan Council.

But I want to move now fairly quickly to what occurred three months ago when we brought down the most humanitarian, wide-ranging and far-sighted Federal Budget in memory. We slashed personal taxation. They were the largest cuts in the nation's history.

We also demonstrated that this is a Government of real social concern going well beyond any previous actions. The Means Test has been eased and we are pledged to its complete abolition within the next three years. Pension rates in the last eighteen months brought an increase of 29 percent in the standard rate of pension, never before equalled in so short a time - from \$15.50 per week to \$20 per week - or more than three times the changes in the cost of living at that time. All other pension levels went up to give them the largest buying power ever. The wives of all pensioners become entitled to receive benefits ranging up to an increase of \$16.25 per week, and because we allowed superannuation pensions and annuities to be treated as property, many thousands of people will receive further pensions for the first time.

Our nursing home and home care reforms will be a milestone in the care of the aged. For care in the home, there is now a home care allowance of \$14.00 a week in addition to their social service benefits.

The personal income tax cut has been cut an average of 10 percent following a 2½ percent reduction we made in April.

For the man on the average wage with a wife and four children, the amount of tax paid is down by a quarter and his take-home pay is increased by \$3.10 a week. Dependants' allowances have been increased by \$52 a year.

We have exempted 600,000 taxpayers from tax completely by lifting the tax threshold from \$417 a year to \$1,041 a year. Estate duty exemptions have been doubled and the Home Savings Grant has gone up from \$500 to \$750.

In education, we are allowing up to \$400 as a deduction for self-education expenses. Deductions for student children have gone up from \$300 to \$450, and secondary and tertiary scholarships have been increased dramatically from \$53,000 to \$123,000 a year. Living allowances have been raised and limits on scholarship holder's incomes abolished.

We have begun assistance in child care with an initial \$5 million for centres for children in special needs and those from low income families.

These, I assure you, are but part, and only part, of our Budget measures, and this I can assure you, is only part of the story.

Let us look at other major policy decisions. We have within recent weeks, in fact within the last ten days, implemented controls on foreign takeovers, and if the advice tendered to me is correct, and I believe it is, it will cover 90 per cent of the cases. But equally important, I believe, that not only does the law itself provide a major deterrent, but it is also indicative of the fact that we will take whatever strong measures are needed in order to ensure that no foreign takeover takes place if it is contrary to the national interest.

We have acted to protect the environment. We have established an ambitious new framework for urban growth. We have already established an inquiry into poverty.

Now these are just some of the things we've done, and they are the kind of actions which we have shown we can initiate and implement both capably and responsibly. We will do more, we will do much more, but no Government can build this nation without ensuring its basic security.

Not so many years ago we relied for our defence and security on the might of the British and American Navies and to a lesser extent upon their airforces. World War II and subsequent events, particularly the dramatic changes that are occurring in Asia, have changed that basic concept. For centuries the Asian nations remained unchanged and unchangeable. Today this area of the world is one of the most changing and dynamic and we are participating in that change and those dynamic areas where the change is taking place.

There can be doubt, however that, China in its international policies, continually promotes the idea of insurgency in other countries, for example, in Thailand and Malaysia, which are both very important to our security and to our trade.

People might argue, that is all right, but we cannot see immediate prospects of danger of an attack upon our nation's frontier and on Australia itself. For them who argue this way, I want to give an unequivocal answer. Any person who is prepared to take a risk with the security and defence of this country is acting in a way that is completely intolerable and will not be accepted by the vast majority of Australian people because the unexpected can happen.

Let me give you a few illustrations. You will remember the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia a few years ago and the possibility that this could have spilt over into East New Guinea. You will remember the insurgency in East Malaysia and in North Malaysia and in Thailand and of the activities of the Communists in Thailand and the military operations between India and Pakistan and you know, too, of the growing presence of Russia in the Indian Ocean. In these circumstances, we just could not take a risk and any person or party who promoted the idea that the risks should be accepted is not worthy of representing the Australian people. Of course we would wish for policies of bipartisanship but this is not the nature of politics and cannot be for long periods anyhow.

So you see there are great and fundamental differences between the Government and our opponents but let me summarise them to you.

In our regional defences we are building good relations with Indonesia and the Five Power arrangements with Malaysia and Singapore were reaffirmed as in good shape during my visits to those three countries earlier this year.

Labor, the alternative, would pull Australia out of the Five Power arrangements. We will remain as long as those nations want us to do so. We continue to support, and give full support for the ANZUS Treaty as a guarantee of our security, while continuing to build our self-reliance and our ability to help others within the region.

Labor would downgrade ANZUS from a primary defence treaty to a social welfare document and concept. It would, in fact, make ANZUS completely lacking in concept, lacking in vitality for purely defence purposes.

Similarly they would write off SEATO as useless, even though it is a regional arrangement which links the powers in our part of the world, both to Britain and the United States and they would do this through the immediate abolition of National Service and they would straight away destroy the traditional strength of the army which military experts state is the basic minimum structure

necessary for the army to be able to field in any significant force. In fact they would reduce the size of the army from about 41,000 to 26,000 and they would reduce the strength of our army from about nine to somewhere about five or six battalions.

This would inevitably mean that our army would immediately drop out of the currency of diplomacy and of deterrence in the region. Career opportunities in the army would be irreparably damaged. Our security would be undercut, and our ability to give our Asian friends our word and be able to back it up would be non-existent. If this is not the recipe for an isolationist, friendly, and ultimately defenceless, Australia, I cannot imagine what is.

They see no problems emerging in the Indian Ocean, and they would deny America access to defence communications installations in Australia. These are all very great differences between us.

I now turn to the important issue of immigration, because, here again, my Government and the Labor Party are poles apart. We believe that it is essential that the Government should control population policies. Through our Liberal Party immigration policy we exercise this control.

Labor runs away from this responsibility. It wants the entire migration programme based upon sponsorship by relatives of migrants already living here.

Now this assumes that the sum total of the individual wishes of relatives of migrants will always equal the sum total of Australia's immigration needs. This is nonsense and many people in the Labor Party know it and they let their views become known.

My Government combines two processes: A sponsorship process to encourage family reunions and a process of actively seeking migrants under Government sponsorship to fulfil those of the nation's needs not met by sponsorship. Labor's policy of non-control is doubly dangerous. It abandons the means of making adjustments to meet the nation's varied social and economic needs. Worse, it ensures that there will be an immediate and substantial cut-back in immigration followed by a rapidly accelerating change in the pattern of immigration.

In the past five years, only half of all settlers in Australia were either Commonwealth or State nominees, only thirty eight percent were privately nominated settlers. To abandon Government nominated immigration as the A.L.P. would do - would have the effect of reducing settlers by at least one half, despite the

weight of expert opinion that migrants put far more into the economy than they take out of it. We would also lose an essential supply of skilled workers and these, I believe, are very important figures to present to you.

In the past five years, Labor's policy would have denied Australia 73,700 of the 98,000 skilled workers who came here as assistant migrants. These skilled workers are essential for regional development, such as the development over in the North-West of Western Australia and the development as well in various parts of Queensland, including the alumina developments and the development of our bauxite deposits.

The other major effects of Labor's sponsorship-only policy will be an inevitable change in the pattern or the composition of immigration programmes because of the sponsorship rates of various nationalities. These show that the non-European migrants have by far the highest sponsorship patterns of the highest sponsorship rates. Under Labor there would be a pyramiding effect of immigration amongst those migrants with a traditionally higher sponsorship rate. This would mean the systematic elimination of immigration from Northern Europe, the United Kingdom and the Americas. Mr. Whitlam has done this with complete disregard for the national interest. He even admitted on television, as you probably know and saw, that this policy was to get him "off the hook" on the issue of discrimination.

In summary, therefore, Labor would abandon the existing immigration policy which, while by no means exclusively European, is strongly oriented in that direction. Labor's policy would ensure that no selection was to be made on the ground of the country of origin. It would, in short, ignore the lessons learned in other countries and it would significantly alter the ethnic structure of Australia in the long term.

By contrast, we support the existing immigration scheme, with intake scaled to ensure maximum employment. Skilled workers, 30 per cent of which would be eliminated by Labor, have benefitted everybody by adding to the nation's productivity, and their substantial demand for goods and services has helped to sustain employment.

This policy, based upon assisted European migration, has encouraged rapid assimilation and it has given us an integrated nation with minimal ethnic problems and controlled yet rapid population growth, with an increasing insurance on our defence potential.

The last issue I want to mention to you today is the question of freedom under the law and how it affects our society. Democracy and the guarantee of individual human rights to freedom and independence depend upon two concepts: They are the rule of law and the maintenance of public order and regular free Parliamentary elections.

The rule of law means this, that everybody has equal freedom and equal rights under the law which are administered fairly, impartially and honestly. This means freedom for everybody, freedom without any sort of discrimination. To be effective, the rule of law requires discipline in the use of sanctions which in turn require legal enforcement. That is what the maintenance of public order means.

It is truly said that without law is without liberty. When we speak of freedom we mean your freedom under the law. It is not a licence to do as you please without restraint or without respect to the rights of others. Particularly some young people think it fashionable or exciting to become involved with the so-called conscientious breaking of the law through civil disobedience. Such people are easily exploited and manipulated by a small hard-core group of militant activists because of their relatively innocent political idealism. This hard-core group makes no pretence whatsoever of respect for the law or concern for democracy although, as most of us know, they fully exploit democratic freedoms to preach their own propaganda.

Our political opponents try to ridicule and degrade freedom under the law with a smokescreen of self-righteousness or attacks upon the police. The question must be asked: Why?

Here in Victoria, the Labor Party has answered by its action in endorsing as a candidate for an unwinnable seat a young man who is on a run from the law. That endorsement must cast doubts on Labor's belief in our political system of democracy, or at least that section of the Labor Party which took part in, or applauded this candidate, because the endorsement of the young man did nothing less than throw the concept of the rule of law of which I have been speaking into ridicule and contempt. You would think that a democratic constitutional party would immediately disown this sort of action as political delinquency, something to be condemned.

What happened? Mr. Whitlam was asked about it, and he retorted:-- "Draft dodging is not a crime." As you know, or you should know, Mr. Whitlam is, or is alleged to be, a Queen's Counsel.



And what did Mr. Hawke do? He took part in the young man's campaign. Mr. Whitlam, I can assure you, put his mouth to it, but Mr. Hawke went one better and put his foot in it.

Now Mr. Whitlam and Mr. Hawke are engaged in a contest about who is going to be the front-runner in the Labor campaign. Whichever one it is, this provides a fair indication of their attitude to freedom under the law and the public order.

We are, unfortunately, living in an increasingly violent society. This year alone, there were twenty-four bombing incidents in an Australia, previously relatively free from them. I ask you as Liberal women and those others, those other guests who come within Liberal women today to ask and to frequently to ask others this question: Which Party would you trust to preserve law and preserve the authority of the law from the contempt which eventually incident by incident will attack the foundation of our society - a foundation, steadily built up by the Liberals over the years, steadily developed in a way that has given not only the maximum of security internationally, but which has helped us to develop a world of our own where traditional values do matter, where welfare of our own people is of paramount importance and where we have created an impression overseas that is one of envy for what we as people have done.

You, the women of the Liberal Party, who have played such a magnificent part in developing this as a realistic concept and making life better and better for every succeeding generation of Australians deserve, I believe, the wholehearted commendation of all Liberals and certainly deserve the respect of every Australian.

For these reasons, I have much pleasure in being invited to come here, and I now officially declare this Conference open.

---