

NOTES FOR THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY UNION CENTENARY

DINNER, 19 JULY 1974

1. THIS IS THE FIRST UNION I EVER JOINED. I BECAME A STUDENT MEMBER IN 1935 AND A LIFE MEMBER IN 1947. SO I'VE BEEN A UNIONIST FOR 39 YEARS - LONGER THAN BOB HAWKE. AND I'VE NEVER SEEN A MORE ELEGANT, DISTINGUISHED AND PROSPEROUS UNION MEETING THAN THIS. IT'S A PITY YOU'RE NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE LABOR PARTY.

2. I WISH CLYDE CAMERON WERE HERE THIS EVENING. THIS MUST BE THE ONLY UNION THAT HAS NEVER BEEN ON STRIKE DURING THE PAST 100 YEARS. YOU HAVEN'T EVEN HAD A WORK-TO-RULE.

3. THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY UNION IS AN AMALGAMATION OF THE SYDNEY UNIVERSITY UNION AND THE SYDNEY UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S UNION. THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN UNTIL 1972. 1972 WAS A GREAT YEAR FOR ALL OF US - INDEED THE YEAR OF LIBERATION. IT TOOK 23 YEARS FOR MY PARTY TO COME TO POWER. IT TOOK 98 YEARS FOR YOUR UNION TO BE CONSUMMATED.

4. IT WAS VERY UNSATISFACTORY FOR ME TO BE IN ONE UNION AND MY WIFE IN ANOTHER. WE HAD CONSTANT DEMARCATION DISPUTES.

5. AS YOU KNOW, THE GOVERNMENT HAS TRIED SEVERAL TIMES TO PASS LEGISLATION FOR UNION AMALGAMATIONS. WE HAVE BEEN BLOCKED BY THE SENATE. THE SYDNEY UNIVERSITY SENATE IS A MUCH MORE ENLIGHTENED BODY THAN THE SENATE IN CANBERRA. IT'S 120 YEARS OLD. SOME OF OUR CANBERRA SENATORS WOULD FEEL VERY MUCH AT HOME THERE.

6. YOUR CONSTITUTION SAYS: "THE OBJECTS OF THE UNION SHALL BE TO PROVIDE A COMMON MEETING GROUND FOR MEMBERS....; TO PROVIDE DINING AND REFRESHMENT SERVICES; TO PROVIDE CONVENIENCES, SERVICES AND AMENITIES FOR MEMBERS; TO PROVIDE SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES; TO PROMOTE THE INTELLECTUAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF ITS MEMBERS BY DEBATES AND ACTIVITIES...." IT SOUNDS LIKE A VERY GOOD DESCRIPTION OF PARLIAMENT, NO WONDER I FIND THE UNION SO CONGENIAL.

7. ALTHOUGH THE UNION WAS FORMED IN 1874 ITS CONSTITUTION WAS NOT ADOPTED UNTIL 1911. IT JUST GOES TO SHOW THAT WE CAN GET ALONG WITHOUT A CONSTITUTION IF WE TRY.

8. I REGRET TO SAY THAT I WAS NOT A VERY GOOD UNIONIST IN MY DAYS AT UNIVERSITY. MY PROLETARIAN INSTINCTS WERE NOT WELL DEVELOPED. I TOOK NO PART IN UNION DEBATES. INTER-COLLEGIATE DEBATES WERE MORE IN MY LINE. LOOKING BACK THROUGH THE OLD UNION RECORDER, HOWEVER, I FIND THAT SEVERAL OF MY DISTINGUISHED CONTEMPORARIES WERE PROMINENT IN DEBATES AND UNION AFFAIRS.

THERE WAS TALBOT DUCKMANTON, WHOSE POLISHED ACCENTS ASSURED HIM OF A GREAT CAREER IN RADIO. THERE WAS BRUCE MILLER, WHO WAS A RADIO ANNOUNCER BEFORE ATTAINING HIS PRESENT EMINENCE AT THE A.N.U. THERE WAS HERMAN BLACK; HE ALSO MADE HIS NAME ON RADIO. SIR HERMAN WAS A GENERATION BEFORE HIS TIME. HE WOULD HAVE RIVALLED JOHN LAWS AND BOB ROGERS ON TALK-BACK PROGRAMS.

THERE WAS DONALD HORNE, WHO WAS GATHERING NOTES FOR A BOOK ON "THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG DONALD", J.H. WOOTTEN, NOW PROFESSOR OF LAW IN ANOTHER PLACE, AND JIM PLIMSOLL.

THE UNION WAS A HOT-BED OF RADICALISM IN THOSE DAYS. MY POLITICS, OF COURSE, WERE WELL TO THE LEFT OF THEIRS. I MUST HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY ENOCH POWELL.

9. TWO OF THE GREAT PERSONALITIES IN THE UNION'S HISTORY WERE PROFESSOR E.R. HOLME (WHOM WE KNEW AS 'SUNNY' HOLME) AND PROFESSOR F.A. TODD. I HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE TO BE TAUGHT BY BOTH OF THEM. E.R. HOLME WAS MY ENGLISH PROFESSOR AND F.A. TODD GAVE ME SOME ACQUAINTANCE WITH LATIN.

10. THE UNIVERSITY WAS A DIFFERENT PLACE IN MY DAY. IT WAS A MUCH STUFFIER AND MORE CONSERVATIVE INSTITUTION. IT WAS QUIETER AND VERY MUCH SMALLER. WOMEN STUDENTS WERE DECIDEDLY IN THE MINORITY. I NOTICE THAT DESPITE YOUR AMALGAMATION YOU HAVE YET TO ELECT A WOMAN AS PRESIDENT OF THE UNION.