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PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT THE WHYALLA WORKERS CLUB
1 NOVEMBER 1975

...engagement for months past up at Port Augusta tomorrow morning. It's a diamond jubilee, an ecclesiastical diamond jubilee. And I get so few of these invitations I found it irresistible. So I thought in the present situation I should spend a day on the way at Alice Springs and then, of course, we flew on here and I welcome very much the opportunity to drop in at the Club.

There is perhaps a couple of things I might say to you. The situation that we have in the national Parliament is one to which you're very much accustomed in South Australia. Because there is no part of Australia which is so very much aware of the intrusions and the usurpations of an Upper House of Parliament as you are in South Australia. Because the Legislative Council here for years has rejected legislation from the House of Assembly and for years has prevented South Australia having a decent, equal, fair electoral system. And Don Dunstan has suffered from this and Steele Hall suffered from this. That is, anybody who wanted to bring about any reforms has suffered from the Upper House of South Australia.

Now for three years that we've had a Labor Government in the Australian Parliament, we've been suffering from the Senate, the Upper House there. And in the last three years the Senate has rejected more Bills than it had rejected in the previous 72 years of its existence. Fewer than 70 Bills were rejected from 1901 to the end of 1972 when we came in; and since then it's rejected over 90 Bills. Now it's come to a climax when the Senate has gone on strike over the Budget. It hasn't rejected the Budget Bills. But for three times on each of the three basic Bills it has carried a motion to defer the debate, to go on strike, as far as the Budget is concerned. And they are doing this partly because they know that if there is a vote on the Budget it would be carried.

Mr Fraser's own Senators, some of the Liberals, have said they would not vote against the Budget; that was Senator Bessell of Tasmania said it on Four Corners last weekend and he also said that there were several others of the same mind. So if it came to a vote on the Budget it would be passed.

Now the attempt that is being made is to stand over the elected Government. Because in Australia as in British democracies all round the world, the Government is formed by the Party or Parties with a majority in the Lower House, the House of Commons or the House of Representatives. That's where the Prime Minister has to be; that's where the Treasurer must be. And, you know, the Senate in Australia now, is behaving as the House of Lords used to do before 1911. Just as Asquith in 1911 broke the power of the House of Lords over Money Bills we now in Australia have to break the power of the Senate over Money Bills.

As you know, in Britain the House of Lords can't hold up any Money Bill for more than three months. And it's never tried even to do that. And in Australia for the last 75 years the Constitution says that the Senate can't initiate Money Bills; it can't amend Money Bills; and all it can do is make requests to amend them. And the House of Representatives may then, if it likes, make amendments. But this time the Senate hasn't rejected, it hasn't in fact even made requests. But what it is trying to do is to say that whenever a Government hasn't got a majority in the Senate, then the Senate can bring about an election for the House of Representatives.

And they tried this in April last year and I then accepted the position, we had a double dissolution - but for three months we were without a Parliament, it took so long to hold the election and to count the results. I'm not prepared to have another three months without a Parliament at this stage. I'm not prepared to say that the Government which has been twice elected, twice elected for a three year term is to be interrupted and brought to a halt and the whole system interrupted at the behest of the Senate. Because the Liberal and the Country Party, they haven't got a majority in the Senate, they had 165,000 fewer votes last May for the Senate than we had, 165,000 votes more for Labor candidates for the Senate in May last year, than for the candidates for the Senate of all the other Parties in the Senate. And we ended up with 29 Senators; they ended up with 29 Senators and there were two Independents. One of them, Steele Hall, has remained pretty independent. The other one joined the Liberals. But they still haven't got a majority in the Senate. We have a majority in the House of Representatives; we have a majority in the whole Parliament. The Joint Sitting showed that. We are entitled to govern. When we went to the people they elected us for three years; the other side have not accepted that. Never before in the 75 years that there's been an Australian Parliament has the Senate ever voted against a Money Bill. Although again and again, 139 occasions, there have been Money Bills passed by the Senate although the government of the day didn't have a majority of the Senate. Because if the Senate is evenly divided then the motion or Bill is not passed. Now it's on that technicality that they're relying. Although if it went to a vote there would be sufficient Liberal Senators to vote in favour of the Bill, for the money, the Budget and it would be passed.

What's been happening is that Bjelke-Petersen, the Country Party Premier of Queensland, appointed an anti-Labor man - a scab, Pat the Rat - to succeed a Labor man. And if Senator Milliner had still been alive he would, as he had always throughout his life of service in the Labor movement, have supported the Labor Party. And the motion to defer the debate would have been defeated because there would have been as many people voting against it as voting for it. But it's purely over a dead man's body as Steele Hall has put it, that this motion to defer the Budget, to go on strike in the Senate, has been carried.

Now I want to conclude on this: an area like this at the top of the Gulf, this Iron Triangle you depend very much on Australian Government employment, and Australian Government orders. Places like this would be hard up indeed if it were not the Australian National Railways; if it were not for the subsidies which are paid for the ships which are constructed in the largest shipbuilding yards in Australia, here in Whyalla, And you know better than most people in Australia what happens to your employment and to your amenities and to your prosperity if the payments made by the Australian Government are interrupted or reduced. My Government has been the first one which has taken any interest in local amenities. Your Council here, has received money directly to spend as it sees fit. In the last two years - it's in the Budget at the moment which is waiting to go through - you've have assistance from the Australian Governmen- for sporting and cultural and educational facilities, such as no previous Australian Government has ever paid.

Let me give you some of the figures on that: Local Government here, the Whyalla City Council last year got \$178,000 from the Australian Government. In this year's Budget there's \$210,000. The Australian Assistance Plan uptil 24th of October so far has \$18,000, and that's the rate it will be getting for the rest of the year, if the Budget goes through. You've had a community recreation centre, \$360,000 from the Australian Government. And a supplementary grant of \$40,000; you've had things for the lifesaving club; for the sewerage program \$73,000; pensioner dwellings \$105,000; the RED Scheme over half a million.

Ladies and gentlemen these are indications of what the Labor Government of Australia has been trying to do for areas like this which no previous Australian Government has ever attempted to do. We set out to do it. We want to make certain that company towns, such as Whyalla or Port Augusta or Port Pirie, are assisted to provide the amenities which people want in their spare time: education, culture, recreation and so on. No Australian Government has ever done it before. Previous Governments afforded not to. Do you want a Liberal Government again to cut off all these things? You have your answer mate; you have your answer. The Australian people have twice elected an Australian Labor Party Government in Canberra. It's entitled to govern. And you can't have the usurpations, my Lord, of the Senate taking over from the elected government of Australia. Ladies and gentlemen, stand firm on this. So many people came to Australia because they thought that it was possible here to elect a government at a secret ballot to change the Government by peaceful means; their faith is being destroyed by these impatient, these unconstitutional, these greedy people in the Senate: the Liberal and Country Party. In an area like this in the next few months you will have an election for the Senate. Make certain that once again you give a majority in this area, this State, to the Labor Party candidate.
