



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

21 MAY 1978

ELECTORATE TALK

Last Friday, Australia paid tribute to Sir Robert Menzies.

Messages had come from many countries. His Royal Highness, Prince Charles, represented The Queen. Men and women flew in from the United Kingdom, the United States, countries of Asia, from New Zealand, from all parts of the Pacific, from all parts of Australia to pay tribute to a man who had served this country for a life time.

The service was simple. It emphasised Sir Robert Menzies' concern for Australia and for all the people of this country.

Even though many had come from around the world, the greatest tribute of all came from the tens of thousands who waited outside the church and who lined the road to the Springvale Crematorium. They, in their own way, were showing their respect for a person who had served Australia with courage, with integrity.

Many of us have forgotten, I think, that Sir Robert Menzies began his Parliamentary career in 1928. He entered the Federal Parliament in 1936, before most Australians were born.

After the War, he formed the Liberal Party. It is a Party designed to serve all Australia, owing no allegiance to any section or group, but believing in a philosophy of freedom, based upon the character and dignity of individual men and women. He designed the Party to serve all Australia, to govern for all Australians.

Over a record period as Prime Minister he did just that. He is respected as I believe, not only by his political supporters but also by those who would never have voted for his Party.

He became a symbol of stability, and strength in Australia. He led a country where people could plan their own future, work for themselves, for their families, knowing that the policies of Government would support them in their efforts, knowing that the Government was concerned for their well being.

It was a record period of prosperity and growth, of social change, of innovation. He brought universities within the reach of all Australians, he did much to shape Australian society.

As his reputation grew within Australia, so too our status as a nation was enhanced among the nations of the world, In Commonwealth conferences, in our own region, in Britain, and in the United States, Australia won a reputation beyond that owed to our mere physical size.

A clear sighted view of events, a capacity to express what was happening or what should happen in terms that captured the imagination and support of people, won respect around the world.

As testimony to that, look to those who came from overseas, from many countries, to pay homage to the memory of Sir Robert Menzies.

Whatever service he was able to give to the world, the real debt we owe is for his service to Australia - as tens and tens of thousands recognised on Friday, as they lined the route.

Let us think of Australia, let us ask ourselves, how our own actions affect Australia, how they affect our neighbours. Let us seek to contribute to the development and growth, the tolerance and strength of this nation. As we so act, then in part we will pay that debt.
