

ADDRESS TO LIBERAL PARTY DINNER, CANBERRA

Margaret Reid, John Atwill, Bob Ellicott, John Knight, John Haslem, Jim Leedman and his team, ladies and gentlemen.

It is good to be here tonight, and good to see so many people coming to this annual ACT Liberal Party function.

I have been asked to speak about Canberra, and I wanted to try and say something about the future - how I believe Canberra is going to develop as a greater and greater national capital capturing the pride of all Australians.

But first I would like to trace some of the beginnings of this city and try and link together how the history of Canberra is very much bound together with the history of the Liberal Party. Because it was thirty years ago in 1949 with Sir Robert Menzies and the decisions that were made after that great election victory that really led to the development of Canberra as a great city and as a great capital.

Canberra has come a long way since its beginnings. In 1912 there were two tiny villages - Hall and Tharwa - nine large pastoral stations, a few buildings scattered near the Molonglo Crossing. In 1925 it was still fairly rural when A.P. Herbert visited Parliament House during the construction period and he wrote, "Our guide pointed to a concrete mixer and said, 'that's the Senate'. He then took us to a crowd of men hard at work in a cloud of dust. 'That's the Lower House', he said. Finally, they too, us out to a grand terrace...our friend pointed to an empty field and said, 'That's the National Library'. 'Remarkable', we said, and so it was, for at that moment there was passing through the National Library a real Australian cow".

I remember seeing dairy cows on Molonglo Flats when I first came to Canberra, about 24, 25 years ago. Just after the Second World War, the only buildings of significance were the temporary Parliament House, and Bob Ellicott is doing something about that, the Australian War Memorial, the Hotel Canberra where too many stories were probably told too late at night, the Hotel Kurrajong, the old Patent's office and East and West Block where the power of the Public Service used to reside.

Before the creation of Lake Burley Griffin in the early sixties, Canberra was in a sense, two cities, seperated by a flood plain, or a dairy farm or a golf course, depending upon the weather or your own inclination. The flood plain was even used by Lord Casey as an airport I am told at times. I do not know what the air traffic controllers were doing then.

Despite continuous opposition from people in the States, and by people who really did not know what the Liberal Party was about in seeking to build a great capital, despite the claims of waste and all the rest, over 30 years there have been dramatic changes in this city - from a little over 20,000 people in 1949 to 230,000 today.

Now, with maturity, Canberra gains dignity and becomes yearly more impressive as a significant city. The society of Canberra, the community of Canberra is more sophisticated, more cosmopolitan. People from many different lands are represented as is made quite plain by the very fact that we are meeting tonight in the Hellenic Club. On a more mundane and material level, Canberra has the highest weekly earnings of any State or Territory in Australia

In the intervening years, Canberra has seen major construction including the National Library, the Treasury, the Belconnen Offices, the Academy of Science, the Mint, the Russell Defence complex, the Woden Valley development, the building of hospitals, the National University itself which is a creation since the Second World War, the Black Mountain Tower. And I suppose many of these are musts for the 2 million visitors that come to Canberra each year.

During this time, fifty suburbs were developed, containing more than 50,000 homes, compared again with 30 years ago with about 3,500 homes. Now these developments have not just happened. They occurred because people had a conception of what Canberra should be about. They occurred because people had an idea of what the seat of Government should be about. They occurred because people believed that the main policy departments, the great departments of State - my own, Treasury, Foreign Affairs, Trade - should have their policy divisions in Canberra giving substance to the seat of Government, and at the same time, giving substance to the Australian capital.

So initiative was required, both by Government and by the private sector which must continue to work in partnership and now I believe, more than ever before. Often there was a need to overcome prejudice. I can well remember from an excursion into western Queensland and Sir Robert was attacked for building a lake in Canberra. He said, "Well, people have been telling me to go and jump into the lake all my life. So I thought it was time I had one".

Successive Liberal Governments have developed this city, this capital, and in particular I think we need to note the contribution of Sir Robert Menzies. So many buildings, so much of this city bore his print, his idea, his conception, of what a great capital should be. The National Library standing on the foreshore of Lake Burley Griffin is just one lasting tribute to his wisdom and foresight in helping to build this city. And of course, Lake Burley Griffin itself.

Sir Robert was ably assisted by Sir John Overall of the National Capital Development Commission and the continuing work of that Commission which goes on to this day.

Since 1950, the population of this city has grown, as you all well know, by nearly 8% a year. There was, of course, no way in which this rate of growth can be continued indefinitely into the future. It is now around 2%, still above the national average and hopefully at a sustainable level, but obviously there have been very real problems in the transition from that rapid rate of growth to the current growth of 2%.

That slower growth has meant adjustments. I think that at some time the change was going to be inevitable but unfortunately there have been difficulties. Bob Ellicott and your own Members are well aware of that and I am aware of it.

The Public Service transfer programme had to slow down once most of the great departments of State had come to this city. Despite what some people might think, there is not an inexhaustible supply of Public Servants to go on coming to this city from Melbourne and Sydney and other places.

It is important to make sure that the Public Service maintains its links in the commercial centers in the States just as it is important that the great policy elements of major departments should be housed and placed in the capital itself.

We have got to remember that Government spending had to be brought under control. It had to be reduced to a level which you and everyone else as tax payers were prepared to sustain on a long term and sensible basis. The hot house of Labor years had to be put behind and responsibility had to be re-established. So we are well aware that there have been, that there are difficulties, and these I hope we can work together to overcome.

But much of the solution - not all of it - much of the solution to Canberra's problems is fundamentally the same as the solution for the rest of Australia itself. Sensible economic management that enables Governments and people and industries to plan for the future. That is just as important to Canberra as it is to the rest of Australia.

To have inflation down and competitiveness up, to have overseas investment increased, and thus increase employment, to increase economic activity and to establish a growing confidence in Australia as indeed there now is, here and overseas. The Government is very firmly committed to its Liberal philosophy. and that partnership which is so essential between Government and private enterprise and private initiative. It is the role of Government to create the conditions for development and growth. I think Bob Ellicott has probably given more attention than any other Minister for the national capital to ways in which private sector involvement and interest and investment in Canberra and the Australian Capital Territory can be encouraged and enticed to come here.

I think much of the future in Canberra will lie in the success of those particular efforts. Now we are looking to the future of this city as we look to the future of the rest of Australia.

We look to the future so that Canberra can grow, steadily, firmly and confidently into the 1980s having a pretty fair idea of what lies ahead. But we can do this in a number of ways: further developing this city as a symbol of Australia's national identity, our strength of purpose and our pride as a nation; consolidating the development of the departments of State in Canberra; and encouraging the development of the private sector as we never have before.

The Government has taken a number of decisions which will set the broad guidelines for some major developments in the coming years. Decisions to construct a new and permanent Parliament House

on Capital Hill. The decision in principle to construct new Commonwealth Law Courts which include the Federal Court, the Supreme Court of the Capital Territory, the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. A National archives headquarters, a new institute of criminology, and the Government in spite of a Public Works Committee, has not forgotten the Casey University proposal.

I can remember about 11 years ago in a Cabinet meeting when that particular proposal was first put to Cabinet. I think the argument took three hours and I got beaten, but I have never ceased to believe that the concept of Casey University makes sense for Australia's armed services and for the development of the defence forces. I venture to say that that is a military view at the most senior level, just as much as it is a civilian view.

In addition to that, the High Court of course is going to be open very shortly. The National Gallery buildings are also nearing completion in year or two. In May of 1980, Her Majesty the Queen will open the High Court building, a magnificent building which will add to the dignity of this capital. The National Gallery opening will be in 1982, and that will be an exciting event. It will enable Australians to see perhaps for the first time, the excellence of the national collection that was begun by Sir Robert Menzies under arrangements made about 30 years ago, and which has continued steadily ever since.

The Director of the Gallery, James Mollison, has and is making an enormous contribution to the development of that collection and it must indeed be exciting for him as it is for Australia, to look forward to the opening of Australia's own National Gallery.

As further evidence of the Government's commitment of the Liberal Party's commitment to the development of Canberra as a national capital, as a center point of Australian pride and achievement. I am pleased to announce that the Government has decided to introduce legislation establishing a National Museum of History in Canberra. It will be the Museum of Australia.

An interim council will be appointed. It will bring forward plans for the development of the museum for the first stage of buildings - three inter-related themes, natural environment, Aboriginal history, European civilization and Australia. This is important to Australians. It will be important to overseas visitors. It will take some time to develop clearly but we need to understand that the planning and development for the National Gallery began a long while ago, and it is past time when we began the planning for the museum of Australia.

The transfer programme is important to the continued development of this city but at some point, the large significant transfers of the past come to the end. In this sense, I suppose Australia runs out of Public Servants at some point, but there are still some public transfers and they will continue while there is a need for more people to come here particularly from policy areas of significant policy departments.

While units exercising national responsibilities may come here and need to, we need also to remember that departments must retain in regional areas in the States and in the capital cities of the States so that policies can be implemented, and to make sure

that the central offices are kept informed of local issues and local needs.

But, we also need to understand that those transfers to Canberra improve efficiency of administration, the standard and responsiveness of advice, of access and of communication at the highest policy levels. Over the next five years or so, transfers will take place in the order of 1,800 jobs involving the departments of Transport, which will most significantly be involved, Employment and Youth Affairs, Postal and Telecommunications, Productivity, Industrial Relations and Defence.

Details will be finalised after consultation between the Public Service Board, the departments concerned and the consultation that we are committed to undertake with the peak councils. The actual timing of the transfers will need to be considered in the light of present and future accommodation requirements in Canberra itself.

I would like to say something more about private enterprise in this city. Tourism - Canberra acts as a powerful magnet for tourists as we all know attracting over 2 million visitors each year. The Government hopes that this can be increased very significantly. A tourist office is being established in Sydney and that office will attract more overseas tourists, assisted we would hope, by lower international airfares. But the location of Canberra, a gateway to the Snowy Mountains - its relative proximity to Sydney and to Melbourne, its accessibility by air and by road all act to enhance the tourist potential of Canberra and the possibilities for further growth.

Indeed, the more this city is developed as a great national capital, the more it attracts Australians to come and visit and see their own national capital. I think one of the interesting things is that sometimes people come here as sceptics, but if they do, they generally leave with a sense of great national pride in their capital.

Private enterprise is important and there are examples of our Liberal approach working in co-operation with the private enterprise sector now becoming more clear within this city. The old Canberra brick works are being developed as a tourist attraction, costing \$1 million or more.

The Northbourne Avenue Motel Development, again at considerable cost. The flood lighting at Bruce Stadium is going to be upgraded so that colour television can be translated. I am sorry the Soccer club, Canberra City, are not here to know that. It seemed a little wasteful to have lighting which was only good for black and white, and so the lighting is being upgraded.

Then there are other examples of tourist attractions. The Cockington Green Minature Village, the Canberry Fair project, a major tourist centre on the old Jolimont site is subject to a feasibility study. These are the kinds of things that people can be involved in, helping to forge this city through into the 1980s and beyond. We sought submissions for the development of a convention centre and a hotel, possibly including a casino in the business centre of Canberra.

The House of Assembly has recommended that a licence be granted for a casino - the Government has yet to make a decision on that but I do not believe that there is great, in principle, opposition to the concept.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting will be held in Australia in two years time. This is a meeting of 40 Heads of Government. It is a unique meeting because I do not know any other assembly where a significant number of Heads of Government are prepared to give up to eight or ten days of their time to get to meet together, to talk to each other, to understand each other's problems and hopefully to make some contribution to the resolution of difficult issues.

The last conference at Lusaka certainly opened the door to the settlement of one of the most difficult international problems of the last 15 to 20 years in Rhodesia, and the advice we have from London is that the Constitutional Conference has been moving forward steadily and making better progress than might have been expected at the outset.

The next meeting will be in Australia and it is a great honour to Australia I believe that the conference will be held here. There is no final decision yet about the actual location of the conference but we are determined to make sure that Canberra participates at least in some part of the conference if the particular needs of the conference in terms of accommodation make it impossible to have the major part of the conference in this city.

So, the Commonwealth Heads of Government will be coming to Canberra, part of the conference at least will be held this city but, we have not made final decisions about the actual location of the major part of the conference.

The natural gas pipeline will be coming to Canberra. It has been approved in principal. It will be a spur line from the Moomba-Sydney pipeline. It will provide alternative fuel source which will I suppose be all the more welcome as oil prices rise. It will supply Canberra and Queanbeyan and again will be a useful development for this city.

Bob Ellicott has established the Canberra Development Board. This city has reached the stage where attractions, the attributes of this city, need to be marketed in the wider Australian scene. I think the Quest of Quests was one example of that - bringing much of Canberra to the notice of a very large audience right around Australia.

But the Government cannot do these things alone. The Canberra Development Board under the Chairmanship of Laurie Muir, the senior partner of one of Australia's leading stockbroking firms will promote and encourage further investment in Canberra by the private sector. It is a great challenge in front of the Board but we have high hopes for its success in the years ahead. The Board will build on the infrastructure the Government has and is creating in Canberra and encouraged private sector investment in the maturing stages of Canberra's growth as a city.

The programmes I have announced tonight, the major works underway, the major works planned, the major decisions made, the continuation of the transfer programme, the creation of the Canberra Development Board

and the resources that have been developed over many years, largely by Liberal Governments in this city, have all demonstrated the firm and lasting commitment of the Commonwealth Government to a prosperous and viable national capital.

There is one last thing I would like to say about the national capital. It might perhaps be more relevant to people who live outside Canberra in the States than to people who live in it. There is some kind of a message in it for all Australians because I believe we have earned, and justifiably earned but I wish we had not, the name of being a nation of knockers. How often do we hear Australians saying, "We can't do it so well, Australian workmanship isn't so good, Australian motorcars aren't as good as some that are imported", and how often do we hear people who live outside Canberra saying something derogatory of this city and of this capital, as though it were a waste - as though it were something unnecessary in the Australian Commonwealth. Well, I think that we should have outgrown that kind of attitude long ago and I hope that people who live in Canberra, people who come and visit this city as the time passes, will all go away as advocates of Canberra. Because, if Canberra did not exist, if it had not been established here many years ago, I suspect there would be a need today to establish this capital as a mark of identity, as a symbol of Australia's national pride, of what Australia is all about, what Australia stands for, what the Government and people in partnership intend to do. I believe much has been achieved in Canberra of which we all should have a reason to be very justly proud. I would like to think that all Australians could share in that and increasingly, a number do. But still we sometimes find, you know Canberra is unnecessary, what is Government support of it all about. People I suppose think, is it popular sometimes to knock this city? Well, if it is, they ought to understand that if they knock this city they are knocking themselves and they are knocking this nation.

I believe it is time that we put that past us. It is time that we began to understand what Australia is all about and that Canberra is part of it - a great city, surely largely an administrative city but an important city, an important part of this nation, the best nation in the world.