

## **Policy Launch Speech: Stanley Bruce, Prime Minister (NAT)**

### ***Shire Hall Dandenong, 5 October 1925***

“In the past it has been the practice for the Prime Minister, in announcing the policy of the party which he leads, to recite in the greatest detail the record of the Government, to set out a defence of all its actions, and to make elaborate promises which are designed to attract different sections of the electors – to support the Government. Following closely upon the policy speech of the leader of the Opposition, in which he condemns all the actions of the Government and makes even more lavish promises. This practice has led to elections becoming contests in which parties endeavour to outbid each other for the people’s favour, and in which an appeal is made to the cupidity and the lowest instincts of the people. As a result great and vital problems, upon the solution of which the happiness of the people, the prosperity of the country depend, are lost in the welter of the party struggle. That course I refuse to follow. The times are too critical. For any National leader to-day to deceive the people by promises which, either for financial or constitutional reasons, he could never redeem would constitute a betrayal of the obligations and duties resting upon him which should never be forgiven. Australia is at the turning point of her national history, and is on the eve of the greatest opportunity ever offered to a people.

It is necessary that we should determine what are the ideals towards which every Australian would desire to strive. I think those ideals might well be stated as being to secure our national safety, and to ensure the maintenance of our white Australia policy to continue as an integral portion of the British Empire, and to play our full part as a great self governing Dominion; to ensure world’s peace by bringing to the councils of the nations ideals of world’s co-operation freed from the ancient hatreds and antagonisms of older civilisations; to assist in the solution of the world’s economic problems by the production of that new wealth which the development of our resources would endure, and to promote the prosperity of Australia and the happiness and well being of all her citizens. To accomplish these things, and to realise the destiny that lies before us, we must be a united people, with a national vision knowing no distinction between Commonwealth and State, town and country, employer and employed. This ideal is the foundation of the Government’s policy.

The birth of the present Government was a practical attempt to unite differences, and sink petty party issues in the interests of the country. The Nationalist and Country parties came together, the present Government was formed, and has received such a measure of support from its followers, both in Parliament and in the country, as should be an example to the whole nation. We are now going to the country, presenting a united front, on issues which are of such vital importance that we believe they transcend all petty party differences. The Government points with justifiable pride to the record of the work which it has done, and to the progress which Australia has made under its regime, as an earnest of its sincerity in carrying out its programme for the orderly development of this great country. It now feels, however, that the time has come when it must demand a fresh mandate from the people. The events which led up to this decision are now familiar to every Australian. Deriving, as we do, our authorities direct from the people, we feel that when the supremacy of Parliament is

challenged our constitutional and democratic institutions are subverted, and law and order threatened, we should at once appeal to the people and place the issue clearly before them.

The circumstances in which we find ourselves to-day have been made possible only by the capture of the great trade unionist organisations by a few extremists. An overwhelming majority of unionists are against what is being done. There is no way in which the people can repudiate these men and their actions except at the ballot box. Political labor, which claims to be representative in Parliament of industrial labor, has kept silent in this great crisis, afraid of the strength and power of those who control the organisations. Industrial labor with its machinery completely captured, is helpless and the only manner in which citizens of Australia can declare their attitude is at the poll. This opportunity is now presented them, and on such an issue I am prepared to trust their judgement. I have no doubt as to what their verdict will be. The Government is determined to defeat the nefarious designs of the extremists in our midst, and armed with the mandate of the people will take all necessary steps to accomplish this end. Recent happenings have clearly demonstrated the existence of actions prejudicial to the peace of the Commonwealth. The time has now arrived when the Commonwealth Parliament should exercise its powers and pass effective legislation to deal with offences against the peace of the Commonwealth, including action against those persons who are actively engaged in associations and propaganda work having as their object the overthrow of the constitution, interference with Commonwealth activities, resistance to its laws, and generally taking part in unlawful action for the purpose of subverting external and internal commerce and intercourse in Australia. But while the vital and paramount issue at the forthcoming elections is the question of the maintenance of the supremacy of Parliament, our democratic institutions, and law and order, it is necessary that the people would know clearly where those who ask to rule over them stand with regard to the other great problems which confront us as a nation.

The greatest of these problems is that of the security of Australia. On this question the Government has a policy which is clear, definite and unequivocal. The people of Australia desire above all things to see the maintenance of the world's peace by the substitution of peaceful methods in the settlement of nations differences for the hideous arbitrament of war. We believe that this can only be brought about by the securing of the safety of all nations, lending to general disarmament. We will support every practical effort made by the League of Nations to guarantee the world's peace, and to bring about disarmament. Until that great ideal is accomplished, the Government stands for the greatest measure of defence compatible with the man power and financial resources of the nation. Our defence must be in co-operation with the rest of the Empire, and particularly with the British navy. Our problem of defence is primarily a naval one. Recently the Government laid down a five-years' programme to ensure continuity and in order that at the end of that period, a definite objective might be reached in a co-ordination plan for the defence of Australia. This programme provides for an additional defence expenditure in each year, over and above the amount spent in 1923-24, of £1,000,000, in addition to an expenditure of £6,250,000 on naval construction.

The naval programme includes the provision of two 10,000 ton cruisers, two ocean going submarines, a seaplane carrier, a floating dock, and an oil depot in the Northern Territory. The army programme contemplates the provision five infantry divisions, and two cavalry divisions, with the necessary munitions and equipment. Steps are

being taken for the adequate training of the staff; and a progressive scheme for the provision of munitions by the establishment of factories with nucleus staff; and a progressive scheme for the provision of munitions by the establishment of factories with nucleus staffs, and the co-operation of our manufacturing industries, has been inaugurated. In addition, reserves of munitions are being acquired annually, in order to reach a definite objective at the expiration of the period of the programme. The air programme contemplates the provision of the units essential for co-operation with the sea and land forces, together with the necessary depots, workshops, hangars and other buildings. The Government proposes to submit to Parliament suggestions for an increase in the expenditure in this direction. The question of coastal defence has also been receiving the earnest consideration, and an additional expenditure will be requisite in order to render it effective. No party should be entrusted with the executive powers of government which is not prepared to subscribe to the fullest possible measure of defence, and to declare in detail, and without any equivocation what the proposals are on this most vital issue.

The government stands whole-heartedly for the maintenance of the British Empire. It is impossible to imagine Australia outside the Empire. We realise that in this outpost of Empire our chief task is to keep alive the traditions of our race and protect its free institutions of Government. We shall protect them if necessary, from foreign aggression. We shall play our part in assisting Britain to keep our sea communications free. And we shall, inside our own borders, preserve inviolate from internal aggression those institutions of liberty, of constitutional and democratic Government which characterise the British race. One thing only do we ask – that in this assumption of responsibility we shall be treated as a partner and not as an appendage of Empire. Never again must we be involved in a war arising out of foreign policy in which we have had no voice. We declare for the British Empires with all the privileges and responsibilities that it involves, but within the Empire we demand freedom, independence and the fullest consultation. The Government declares unequivocally for the unity of the Empire. Let those who oppose us declare themselves. There are some who use almost as a slogan, the phrase, “To hell with the Empire.”

We have in this country determined to establish a civilisation which will eliminate from national life those tragedies, and that suffering and privation which have been and are to-day an indelible blot upon older civilisations. We are determined to provide for our people a standard of living which gives to our workers and those dependent upon them a reasonable measure of comfort and of happiness. These things, however, cannot be accomplished unless we have industrial peace. If great vital services are held up, production will be retarded, industry stagnant, unemployment rife, and inevitably the standard of living which we have built for ourselves will be destroyed. When these things are recognised by the mass of the workers of this country they will rigidly set their faces against those who would bring industrial turmoil into our midst and attempt to undermine the whole basis of our national prosperity. They would be cast out, and we need never fear them in future. It only needs an awakening, and I believe it is coming. Industrial peace and the enthusiasm of the Australian workers depend upon our assuring for the worker a fair wage and conditions of reasonable comfort for himself and those dependant upon him. Bolshevism and Communism are obviously against the workers interests, and have inevitably brought degradation and suffering to those who have adopted them. The only antidote to these evils is a happy, contented and adequately remunerated people.

We have in our midst men who strive to foment industrial strife, class war and direct action. They are methods foreign to all our instincts, and they have no application to Australian conditions. Unhappily those men have gained influence far beyond what their numbers warrant. If we are to ensure the industrial peace and the progressive advancement of the condition of our people, the influence of those men must be ruthlessly destroyed. Just as the canker of those men advocating Communistic doctrine must be cut out of our national life, so must the efforts of those reactionaries in our midst – fortunately few in number – who regard themselves as a privileged class, and would defeat the legitimate aspirations of the people, be fought with unrelenting hostility. Free from the influence of the extremist, whether he be the Communist or the reactionary, the nation can go forward to achieve that internal peace on which our happiness and prosperity depend.

The question of working hours is one which has considerably agitated the minds of the workers during recent years. We have had the fight for forty eight hours; we have had those who stood for forty-four hours; there are those who are agitating for forty hours – it will not be long before someone says 36 – and it is time that a halt was called. The workers of this country – thank heaven for it – have a high standard of education, and they have a right to good wages, reasonable hours and decent conditions of labor, but the average worker does not desire unreasonably short hours. What he desires is reasonable hours, adjusted according to the industry in which he is engaged, and with due regard to maximum health and efficiency, so that production may be stimulated, employment increased, high wages paid and the cost of production reduced with a corresponding reduction in the cost of living and an enhancement of the purchasing power of his wages.

The Government desires a solution of working hours on a basis most advantageous to the workers, to industry, and to the nation as a whole, and considers that, whatever determination is arrived at, should be uniform throughout the Commonwealth. It therefore proposes to suggest to the States that this question should be submitted to the Commonwealth and State Arbitration Judges, who have for some years been dealing with the matter, with a view to their making recommendations for uniform hours throughout the Commonwealth which would be considered by a conference representative of the Commonwealth and the State Governments.

The question of child endowment is also of vital importance. The man with a family is the greatest asset to the community, and it is essential and desirable that the greatest encouragement and assistance should be given to such men. As in the case of hours, this matter, can only be dealt with nationally and by cooperation between the Commonwealth and the States. It is proposed to refer this question also to the Commonwealth and State arbitration judges, with a view to their recommendations being considered at a conference between the Commonwealth and State Government in the hope of evolving a national policy.

One of the main causes of industrial unrest is the ever-present dread which haunts the workers of the privation and suffering which will be brought upon his dependants in the event of sickness, unemployment and old age. Even under the conditions existing in Australia, the wages of our workers are not sufficient to enable them to safeguard themselves against these evils. My Government recognises the duty of the nation in this regard, and proposes to introduce legislation for a national scheme of social insurance, covering the questions of old age and invalidity which have already been reported on and as soon as the further report on unemployment is received, will

legislate on such lines as will enable the work to be insured against this most deadly cause of his anxiety and unrest.

The difficulty surrounding the possession of a home and the onerous terms upon which they too often have to be acquired, is another cause of unrest among our workers. In too many instances the work has had to submit to exploitation by unscrupulous persons. The Government proposes to introduce legislation for the purpose of utilising the machinery of the Commonwealth Bank, giving assistance not only to manual workers, but to those of small means, to acquire their homes on a basis of repayment extending over a long period of years. The savings of the people entrusted to the Commonwealth Bank could be utilised for no better purpose. In addition to the funds available through the Commonwealth Savings Bank, the Government will, if necessary, invite Parliament to provide further finance to the extent of £30,000,000 to enable this scheme of home buying to be fully carried out. In giving effect to these proposals, the Government will not duplicate the existing machinery provided by the States, but will fill in the gap that now undoubtedly exists.

Although by removing those legitimate grievances of the workers which tend to cause industrial unrest a great step forward will be made towards the promotion of peace in industries, it is necessary that steps should be taken to improve the machinery for the pacific settlement of industrial disputes. Compulsory arbitration has been on the statute book for many years. For these efforts a distinct measure of success can be justly claimed, but they have not finally solved this great problem. My Government stands firmly for the principle of the peaceful settlement of industrial disputes within the law. Freedom of contract and direct action are methods of barbarism, whilst the bringing of industrial disputes under the reign of law is in accord with the first principles of human progress. The conscience of the world has revolted from the hideous arbitrament of war for the settlement of international disputes, and demands that the rule of law and justice must prevail in the relations between nations. Nowhere is this faith more strongly held than in Australia. We must act ourselves resolutely to the solution of this problem and by our action set an example to the world for the establishment of the rule of law both in the national and international spheres.

The great bodies of organised workers have tended to become more and more undemocratic. In their form of self-government their increased activities and greater financial strength have immensely increased the numbers and status of paid officials. The very success of trade unionism has tended to destroy control by the individual worker over the affairs of his union, and has increasingly made him the servant of his paid official. Particularly has this been the case in those unions of the transport industries, where the conditions of his occupation make it difficult for the worker to have an effective voice in the control of his own union affairs. The Communist and extremist has seen in these great organisations a ready instrument by which to effect his illegitimate purposes. He has bored into and white-anted many of them, and is to-day endeavouring to use them, not for the advancement of the interests of the worker, but for his own nefarious purposes.

The Government proposes to introduce legislation which will restore to the trade unionist control over his union, its officials, its funds and its acts, which he at one time had, but which to-day he has largely lost. By means of the provision of a secret ballot, democratic control of unionism will be restored to the workers. It is also proposed to strengthen the powers of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration. If this court is to command respect and inspire due authority, it should be

placed in the position of a court invested with judicial power, as was originally intended by Parliament. The Government, therefore, proposes to introduce legislation providing for judicial appointments for life, as required by the Constitution, vesting the court with judicial power to enable it to enforce its awards and better control the parties under its jurisdiction. Provision will also be made to prevent the duplication and overlapping of awards by Commonwealth and State industrial authorities. When those amendments of the law are made we believe that compulsory arbitration will be shown to be an effective means for the promotion of industrial peace, and that it will be demonstrated that industrial disputes can be settled within the domain of law in the same way as civil and commercial disputes are determined.

Australia's problem of development is bound up in the three great essentials which I referred to at the Imperial Conference as men, money and markets. The greatest of these is, perhaps, markets, and the policy which the Government has pursued in the past, and which it proposes to follow in the future, is to try and secure for Australia those markets which are necessary for her to-day, and which her expanding production will increasingly demand. In the home market, under the policy of Protection, which is accepted by an overwhelming majority of the people of Australia, we have protected our producer, both primary and secondary. We have provided through a tariff, against unfair competition from outside. The Government recently found it necessary to submit proposals for an amendment of the tariff in respect of certain of our industries. These alterations were only submitted after the most exhaustive examination by the Tariff Board and Government, and are based upon the principle of sane and reasonable protection to efficient Australian industries. The Government stands for this principle, but recognises that the incidence of a Protective Tariff, based upon the determination of the Australian people to maintain a high standard of living for our workers, places our primary industries with an exportable surplus at a disadvantage when selling abroad in competition with the cheap - labor production of other countries. This fact renders it necessary that the fullest consideration should be given to the effect upon our exporting industries of the standard of wages and conditions existing in Australia, with a view to rendering an equivalent measure of assistance to producers selling external markets, as is afforded to those who find a market within our borders. Only in this way can justice be done to the different sections of our people and a well balanced development assured.

In the overseas markets, to which we must increasingly look for the disposal of our surplus production, much has already been accomplished. We have recently obtained a valuable measure of preference in Great Britain for certain of our exporting industries. We have also entered into a reciprocal trade treaty with Canada which places certain of our producers in a most advantageous position. The Imperial Economic Committee, established as a result of my representations at the Imperial Economic Conference, has been considering the problem of how best to ensure a greater consumption of Dominion production, in Britain to the benefit of the Dominion producer and the British consumer. The most important of their recommendations to date is that all produce sold in Britain should be branded; whether of Empire or foreign origin. By means of exhortation, education and control through the customs, a higher standard has been achieved and a better export product assured. This has removed the greatest handicap that we suffered in the past – the low standard and unreliability of our production. We are, however, fraught with great and powerful rivals in the British market, and we have to recognise that our advent will be fought with unremitting and unscrupulous hostility. The system of providing for the

control of exports, together with the provision of the necessary finance, ensures that the producer enables orderly marketing to be carried out, while obviating Government control, which has so many inherent defects, and which usually operates to the detriment of the producer. This system the Government has already introduced in regard to certain of our industries, and is prepared to extend it to others, where the producers so desire. The Government of a great co-operative movement for the handling of export surplus on a national basis under which the existing channels will be utilised, and the experience of those who have handled the business in the past will be available; but the speculator will be eliminated, and the taking of an undue toll for services rendered will be prevented.

The Government has already taken steps towards the stocktaking of our resources, and proposes to carry out an investigation into the forms of production for which the most ready market will be available. Assistance will be given to stimulate the right form of production, and has already been given in some instances. In order to increase wool production it is necessary to make more land available for sheep and this can be done only by ridding the interior country of the dingo and other pests.

(A Voice : And the Bolsheviks.)

The Government is making available an amount of £3,000,000 to the States for the provision of wire netting to enable further lands to be brought under sheep, there being an absurd demand in the world for wool. Simultaneously the Government is giving assistance to the establishment of the cotton industry by way of a guarantee which it is now contemplated to change into a bonus, so as to stimulate the production of cotton. Assistance has also been rendered to industries of national importance which have been passing through a period of temporary difficulties. Such industries include the dried fruits, canned fruits and meat industry, all of which have been helped through such periods and now are on the road to permanent stability. The great sugar industry upon which the maintenance of our White Australia policy so vitally depends, has also been safeguarded.

It is essential that the aid of science should be brought to the assistance of industry. The Commonwealth Institution of Science and Industry has been established for some time but the Government is not satisfied that the greatest results possible have been achieved in the past. An amount of £100,000 has been made available under the financial proposals of the present year, and the Government proposes to submit a measure to Parliament for the reorganisation of the Institute so that it may render effective services towards obtaining a solution of the many scientific problems which so seriously affect our primary producers and those engaged in secondary industries.

The Government proposes to hold a further conference with the States at an early date, with a view to arriving at some scheme which, within the financial resources available, will enable further progress to be made in connection with the provision of the uniform railway gauge. The question of the extension of the railway to Alice Springs has been the subject matter of negotiation between the Commonwealth Government and the Government of the State of South Australia. Agreement has been arrived at between the two Governments, and subject to the concurrence of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth and South Australia this work will be proceeded with in accordance with the agreement. The connection of Adelaide with Port Augusta by standard gauge railway is also provided for under the agreement and this will constitute a further step in the carrying out of the unification of gauge proposals. The Government proposes to submit the agreement with the South Australian

Government to Parliament at the earliest possible date for its ratification, in order to enable the work to proceed.

The Government feels that the time has come when a progressive forward movement must be made in connection with a roads policy for Australia. This question is recognised in all the great countries as a national problem, and has exercised the minds of central governments throughout the world. The Government proposes to make available to the States a sum of £20,000,000, spread over a period of ten years, such amount to be provided out of the revenue derived by the Commonwealth from taxation to be collected from motor users through the Customs department. The provision of this amount is, of course, subject to a policy of national road development being evolved at a conference between the Commonwealth and the States, which is acceptable to the Commonwealth. One fundamental principle which will have to be embodied in any scheme which can be approved by the Commonwealth is that provision must be made for the permanent maintenance and upkeep of roads constructed or reconstructed under the scheme.

The question of ports and harbours in Australia is receiving the careful consideration of the Commonwealth Government, which believes that the time has come when a national scheme must be laid down for the development and control of ports and harbours throughout the Commonwealth, to report upon our ports and harbours, and their control. As soon as his report is received, the Commonwealth Government proposes to invite the States to discuss this matter with a view by co-operation between the Commonwealth and the States – to laying down a national policy on this important question.

Every thinking Australian recognises that it is imperative in the interest of our national safety, and if we are to retain this country, that we should rapidly increase our population, and develop our resources. We cannot, however, afford to expend the moneys to develop our country and bring about that necessary increase in our population, because the increased interest would place too great a burden upon the shoulders of our limited population, of approximately 6,000,000. Under the immigration agreement recently entered into, this difficulty is overcome. Loan moneys are made available to the States, or to any authority approved by the States at an interest rate of 1 per cent for five years and one third of the interest rate which the money costs for a further period of five years, for developmental purposes. The Government believes that since the advantageous terms of the present agreement are appreciated by the Governments and people of the different States schemes will be submitted which will fully absorb the amount of £34,000,000 at present available. When that point is reached, I am confident that it will be possible to make a further agreement with the British Government on terms as good if not even better than the present one to an unlimited amount. The Government believes that this agreement is the greatest step forward that has ever been taken in the solution of the problem of populating and developing Australia.

The Government believes there is no more important question to the people of Australia than that of National Health. It feels that the efforts made so far fall far short of what is necessary, if we are progressively to advance the standard of national health in Australia. The report of the royal commission will be received in the near future, when steps will be taken to consult the States, with a view to immediate action.

The Government has kept in view the fact that there is an intimate relationship between public spending and the general welfare. The expenditure has been arranged in such a way, and the finances so handled, that the Government, in spite of the heavy annual burden of war interest and pensions, amounting to £29,000,000 has been able to live within its income and grant the following remissions of annual taxation and charges:-

Indirect Taxation.....	£830,000
Income Tax.....	3,400,000
Entertainments Tax.....	360,000
Land Tax on Grown Leaseholds.....	100,000
Post Office Charges.....	1,000,000

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Total annual reduction £5,690,000

This reduction of taxation and charges has been so spread that it may fairly be said that every person in the community has received a share of the remissions. At the same time, the burden of interest has been lightened by the redemption of more than £15,000,000 of war debt. The Government's policy has been that new loan expenditure shall be made only in respect of services which will simulate the production of the country and permanently extend the avenues of employments. The redemption of the debt has been provided for by the creation of a permanent sinking fund, placed under independent control.

One of the greatest forward steps that has ever been made in Australia was brought about by the conversion of the Commonwealth Bank into a true national bank. When the Commonwealth Bank was brought into existence a cardinal mistake was made in not placing the control of the currency in its bands, and so enabling it to function as a bank of issue, discount, reserve and exchange. This mistake has now been remedied, and the Commonwealth Bank has been made a central bank, given complete management of the note issue, and a board of directors has been substituted for the previous one man control. The effect of the altered status of the bank has been illustrated in two critical financial periods during the last eighteen months. We have equipped ourselves to carry out the necessary financing which will be required by the expansion of our production, and the stimulation of our trade and industry consequent upon our increasing population and accelerated development. To our industrial workers these things may appear far from their everyday lives, but they affect them vitally.

(A man at the end of the hall: Tell us something about the Reds). I have not time to-night.

The ideal which the framers of the constitution had before them was to weld Australia into one great nation, while preserving to the States their rights of self-government. The greatest problem that had to be faced in the realisation of this ideal was the question of Commonwealth and State finance. This question was dealt with by the States surrendering to the Commonwealth sources of revenue far in excess of the requirements of the Commonwealth. Of this revenue for the first ten years three quarters was handed back to the States, and since the expiration of that period a per

capita grant of 25/ has been made by the Commonwealth to the States. The result is that the Commonwealth to-day is raising revenues in order to provide the per capita payments to the States. This is contrary to the basic principle of national finance that every Government shall have the responsibility of raising the revenue which it is expending. The development of Australia as a nation, and the necessity of dealing with many great questions on a national basis, such as that of road transport, to which I have already referred, also renders necessary a re-examination of the financial relations between the Commonwealth and the States.

Such action is also demanded by the circumstances of individual States, particularly Western Australia and Tasmania. For the circumstances of these two States every Australian citizen must have the deepest sympathy, and be animated with a desire to find a solution of their difficulties. In the past it has been necessary to give assistance to the States of Western Australia and Tasmania, and it will be necessary in the future to give consideration to the position of the citizens of these States, if they are to receive justice. In order to overcome one of the handicaps suffered by Tasmania, as a result of her geographical position, the Government proposes to introduce legislation which will permit overseas vessels to engage in the tourist traffic during the periods when the traffic is not adequately provided for.

The Government is giving careful consideration to the questions raised as a result of the investigations of the Western Australian royal commission, and proposes, in the near future, to invite the States to attend a conference for the purpose of reconsidering the financial relations between the Commonwealth and the States, and dealing with the disabilities suffered by certain States, with a view to laying down a basis for our national development, in which the Commonwealth and the States will co-operate. At this conference an opportunity will be afforded to consider all questions affecting the relations of the Commonwealth and the States, including the question of new States. Pending the holding of this conference, the Government proposes to submit to Parliament legislation to provide for the payment to the State of Western Australia of the subsidy of £450,000 recommended by the royal commission for a period of one year.

(A Voice : What about the Government of Australia?") I could tell you a great deal about that, but everyone knows it has been the best Government Australia has ever had.

After this conference has been held, the Government proposes, if necessary, to hold a constitutional session of the Federal Parliament. From time to time suggestions have been made that a convention should be held to review the constitutional position in Australia, but after the closest examination the Government has come to the conclusion that this idea is impracticable, and has rejected it. It believes that the national Parliament of the Commonwealth, representative of the whole people is the proper body to consider these fundamental questions, and proposes to invite it to undertake this great task.

(Voices: You haven't told us about the Reds. Tell us something about the seamen's strike.)

After dealing with the development of the postal service in the last three years, the proposals in regard to North Australia contained in the bill recently before Parliament, the mandated territory, the Federal capital, the search for oil, the establishment of a school of forestry, the Murray River works, war pensions and the development of

civil aviation, the Prime Minister concluded – “Our record speaks for itself. Representatives of all sections of the community the Government has sunk all party differences and legislated in the interest of Australia.

(An Interjector: Flinders-lane I)

(Another Interjector: What about the woollen mills?)

(An Elderly Man (to the interjector): For God’s sake shut up.)

I quite recognise that one or two gentlemen at the back don’t like the record of the Government. Anyone who refuse to listen is not fit to live in a democratic community where the greatest prize is free speech!

(Voice From Rear : What about the press! Why didn’t they publish Tom Walsh’s speech yesterday?)

(The Elderly Man: It wasn’t worth publishing)

The city worker, the farmer, the manufacturer, the exporter, the sick, the aged and the infirm have all been benefited during our term in office. Australia has progressed at home and abroad. The savings of the people have increased, more homes have been built, our trade – internal and external – has expanded. Given industrial peace, sane and sound finance and wise government, we shall enter an era of prosperity hitherto unknown in our history. We point with justifiable pride to that record, and ask you to again entrust us with the reins of government. You know what we have done, and you know exactly where we stand.

We are for the Empire; for an adequate measure of defence; for the maintenance and protection of a white Australia. We are for sound finance; for the protection and development of our primary and secondary industries. We are for a vigorous policy of migration, combined with internal expansion. We are for the rule of law, for justice to all citizens, and special privileges to none. But the paramount issue in this campaign is the maintenance of law and order, and the supremacy of Constitutional Government. No more important issues can ever come before a democratic people. The laws of the country have been defied, and Constitutional authority challenged. An attempt has been made to subvert democracy to domination by a few extremists. At the period of our greatest prosperity and most glowing opportunity there are wreckers who would plunge us into the chaos and misery of class war. I ask you to consider well how far we have come along the road of progress, and how far under sane leadership, wise government and industrial peace we yet may go. It is for you now to decide whether our free institutions of Government our advanced civilisation, our enlightened industrial system and our prestige within the Empire and abroad are to be preserved, or whether they are to go down beneath the feet of men who care nothing for this country. I have no doubt of your verdict.”

*The president of Cranbourne shire said that in the present time of turmoil the electors could thank God that they had at the helm a man who was worthy of the occasion. He moved –*

*That this meeting whole-heartedly endorses the policy of the Government as outlined by Mr. Bruce and pledges its whole-hearted support to the Prime Minister in his capacity as Prime Minister, and also in his capacity as member for Flinders.*

*The motion was seconded by Cr. M’Farlan, president of Sorrento shire and carried by acclamation and loud cheers.*

*At the call of Mr. Maxwell, M.P., three cheers were given for the Prime Minister. Mingled with the cheers was some hooting from the end of the hall. Mr. Bruce briefly returned thanks, and the meeting ended with further cheering.*

Source: [6 October 1925 The Age Page 11]