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Address by

THE RIGHT HON SIR ZELMAN COWEN AK GCMG GCVO OC DCL

at

THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE BRAY CENTRE

ON THE NATHAN CAMPUS

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

BRISBANE

14 FEBRUARY 1995

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We are here to take part in an important ceremonial event in the life of this University, the official opening of the Bray Centre on the Nathan Campus. That function will fittingly be performed by the Chancellor. The event honours the foundation Chancellor of the University, Sir Theodor Bray, and it follows closely upon a great occasion, his ninetieth birthday. That actually took place last Saturday, February 11, so that our hero is well on the way to racking up another decade. This is certainly in the public interest; we have need of the wisdom and experience of such a nonagenarian as he. This is an occasion for celebrating the living life - how better can I express it? - of a remarkable man who has served the Australian and particularly the Queensland communities well. The honour of paying tribute to Ted Bray - forgive me if I slip so early into familiarity - has fallen to me, and while I did not barefacedly ask for it, I am not caught surprised. He was sixty five when first we met and I was fifty. There has been no catching up, but over the intervening quarter century we have had

a good and growing relationship. I have great affection and admiration for this special, incredibly energetic and feisty man, and I know that there is a firm friendship between us.

He was born on February 11, 1905 in Adelaide, the son of a market gardener. He went to state primary and state high schools; it took until 1977 (more than the statutory three score years and ten) to get him a University degree and even then an honorary one, of this University.

At fifteen, he left school and worked for a short time for his uncle Fred James on his fruit block at Berri on the Murray River. At this point, there is a great temptation, only barely resistable, to talk about Uncle Fred. The Chancellor, certainly, and I know of Uncle Fred, and so will other lawyers present. Fred James was the most celebrated litigant in Australian legal history. He has a substantial entry in the Australian Dictionary of Australian Biography in which he is described as merchant and litigator, and it is in that latter capacity that he makes it into the Dictionary. It is said that while learning typing and shorthand Uncle Fred had practised by repeatedly typing the text of the Australian Constitution. That led the dried fruits grower and merchant into his great battles with State and Commonwealth governments over the legal validity of marketing schemes. In this way, says the biographical writer, began a series of 28 law suits with government

and other bodies. Ted Bray says that he doesn't know who financed Uncle Fred's litigation; his (Fred's) son tells me that it was the National Bank. He was a great contributor to the welfare of the legal profession, and he was overall a very successful litigant. And the Bank later had a substantial reward in its successful litigation, involving the same section of the Constitution, section 92 as Uncle Fred invoked.

But he was not a generous man: Ted tells that Fred wanted him to work simply for the honour and experience, and Ted, unable to secure a balanced diet by living exclusively on dried fruits, decided to go elsewhere for his sustenance. So began a great career in journalism: he became an apprentice reporter and sub-editor in Adelaide, and in 1929 transferred to the Melbourne Argus. He had the inspiring but hardly cheering responsibility for writing for the paper on economics during the great depression years. In 1936 he came to Queensland to become Chief Sub-editor of the Courier Mail and Sunday Mail. He racked up an amazing 26 years as Editor of the Courier, a record not likely to be eclipsed. In 1968 he became joint managing director of the Courier and retired in 1970 after fifty active years in journalism, and he remained a director of the company until 1977.

It was in 1970, when I came, in uncomfortable times, to the University of Queensland, that I first met him; I remember receiving a short letter which, after a somewhat

rocky start, heralded a very good and important relationship with the paper to the great benefit of the University and I think, of the community..

As an editor he maintained the highest standards of discipline, accuracy, and fairness; his son, who followed him into journalism, speaks with great admiration of his father's professional qualities; another major figure in Australian journalism speaks of his determination as an editor to achieve wide understanding of the community which his paper served: he had the feel of his readership. He was tough in his insistence on high standards. He travelled widely and often, and he realised the importance of wide contacts - world wide indeed. He attended Commonwealth Press Union conferences and assemblies of the International Press Institute which he did much to keep alive in this country. He was on the Board of Australian Associated Press for some years and was for a time its Chairman; he had close links with Reuters. He was nominated as one of a small group of Australian journalists who reported the founding of the United Nations at the historic Conference in San Francisco; he has fascinating stories to tell about it. One Australian, highly respected in journalism, says of Ted that of all Australian newspaper men, in his time he had better international contacts than anybody. If an introduction to Reuters, to Lord Rothermere or whoever was needed, or a link to someone in the United States - in the press context of course - Ted was the one who

could effectively provide it. In the course of preparing for today's occasion, I wrote to one of the great old men of the Press, Sir Edward Pickering, whom I also knew from British Press Council days. Ted Pickering sent me this statement which I will read to you.

*"Ted Bray is not just a great Australian; he is for many people throughout the Commonwealth, an inspiration - and so he has been for so long as this octogenarian can remember. He has been a determined upholder of high standards in journalism, a defender of Press freedom, and an advocate of learning and education to give all young aspiring journalists a firm foundation on which to build their careers. His contribution to newspapers and public life has been immense."*

Knowing the source of that comment, I am immensely proud to know that an Australian journalist and editor commands that reputation. In recent years, I have had some press experience, first as Chairman of the Press Council in the UK from 1983 to 1988, and as Chairman of John Fairfax here from 1992-1994 - as game keeper turned poacher. I have spent many hours talking with Ted about shared interests. As some sort of representative of the contemporary Press I have had every form of chastisement from our man except the birch rod, and that may be in the cupboard. He does not have a high regard for contemporary press performance.

I asked one of Ted Bray's children what he regarded as the best thing his father ever did. There was no hesitation: he married our mother. Rosalie Trengove was his wife for fifty-eight years, and she will be well remembered by many of us. She was dux of Methodist Ladies College, a University woman and a great supporter of University women's associations. They had five children: three sons and two daughters. A working busy editor and traveller does not have a great deal of time at home, certainly irregular family hours, and so mother - who nevertheless "travelled twenty times around the world with him" - was a key figure in the home. She died suddenly in 1988 and on such an occasion as this, particularly, she is missed.

And so I come to the long association with Griffith. Sir Theodor speaks of two careers: fifty years in journalism and fifteen in Universities. By way of background let me say that when I came to the University of Queensland as Vice Chancellor early in 1970, one of two questions insistently asked of me was about the steps being taken to establish a second University in metropolitan Brisbane. The pressures on a crowded University of Queensland were heavy; the anticipation of demand for University places was expansive. Some tentative steps were taken, but there were no firm decisions. There was the model of James Cook University in Townsville which became an autonomous University in 1970, and it had been

constituted as a College of the University of Queensland. I said that this should not be a model for a new University in Brisbane; that it should be a separate University from the very beginning. For my part, I believed that the University of Queensland's energies were fully absorbed in coping with our own development and problems; more positively that a separate and autonomous institution would shape itself more distinctively and imaginatively.

The decision of Government accorded with this view, and late in 1970 the decision was taken to appoint an interim Council to plan and design the second metropolitan University. Sir Theodor Bray was appointed as Chairman and our story begins with that. In what followed there was much cooperation between the two Universities; one very early decision was to "lend" Sir Theodor my personal assistant, John Topley, to be "temporarily" Secretary to the Interim Council. It may be that the Statute of Limitations ran against us, but whatever the reason, the University of Queensland never got John Topley back. He missed some of the excitement of 1971 at St Lucia, and that, I suppose was bearable. He played an active role in Griffith, and after some time away, has returned and he has substantial responsibility for today's ceremony. He knows probably more than any living man about Ted Bray's long association with Griffith, and I have talked with him. From the beginning, when the Government informed the Interim Council that the University was to

be named for Samuel Griffith, the Chairman and later the Chancellor, the one Ted Bray, worked without cease and with relish for its welfare and development. I was there on two historic occasions; the one in 1975 when the University opened its doors for undergraduate teaching; the other in October 1981 when it celebrated the tenth anniversary of its formal establishment when I came as Governor-General and received an honorary degree. On both of those occasions, Ted Bray presided as Chancellor; he continued in that office until his retirement in 1985, at the age of eighty. In 1977 he was awarded the honorary doctorate of the University at a ceremony at which the first Vice Chancellor, the late John Willett, spoke with precision and eloquence about him.

*In the affairs of the University, he has been a ceaseless proponent of lively and relevant teaching and of University service to the community believing that students and staff should be engaged and challenged in matters which have importance beyond the walls of the University.*

*His knowledge and skill in dealings with government, commerce and industry have attracted much support for the University and have smoothed the way for its planning and development.*

*Sir Theodor's commitment to and involvement in the University have never faltered.*

Characteristically, he was urgent in his demand that matters be settled; yet he wisely ensured that the University have a generous lead time - a four year planning and development time. These four years of planning and development enabled the University to do its work thoroughly in deciding what should be its academic scope and teaching style, as a basis for planning appropriate physical facilities and organisational structures. It also allowed time for thorough academic and pedagogical planning before the arrival of the first undergraduate students in 1975. He had specific concerns: he pushed for a comprehensively developed study of Asia as a region, a set of nations, a group of peoples seen from an Australian perspective. He pressed for environmental studies to be conducted comprehensively but in a disciplined, rigorous way. He had a special interest in the well being of students and in particular wanted them to be taught by skilful, exciting and committed teachers. He had a lively interest in the role of a contemporary University in its society; as in his newspaper days he travelled widely to observe other Universities in Australia and abroad; he was a dedicated ambassador for Griffith in University congresses and in the course of his travels. Australian Chancellors characteristically play a significantly larger role in the lives and governance of their Universities than, for example, in the United Kingdom; he was regularly involved in the important task of selecting the academic and

administrative leaders of the University. All this and much more; one note strikes a special response in me: "the senior officers of the University learned to expect telephone calls and visits from the Chancellor and to be called on to explain policy proposals and suggested decisions." Neither Ted nor I can doubt that people welcome being awakened in the morning half light for such worthy ends.

Ted retired after the search for a Vice Chancellor to succeed John Willett was successfully completed and you, Mr Vice Chancellor, were in place. He remains active: he travels into distant places in the State in the interests of the Arts Council; he is a master bowler: he is gregarious and he commands the admiring attention of groups of ladies who attend him with great devotion. He is above all the Chairman of the Body Corporate of Alibe Court, the architecturally strange but very comfortable block of units in which we both have our Brisbane residences. So I sleep without anxiety in distant Melbourne, thinking only to say to Ted's devoted ladies: please look after him; he is a national treasure and useful to boot.

His contributions to the press and to education have been recognised by high honours and on this occasion we add to these in a distinctive way which should give him great pleasure. For what this says is: if you seek my monument, look about you. For there is no doubt that in

this place he has monuments, not only in brick and stone,  
but in the lively living, enquiring entity of this place  
of learning.