

Liberal Party Launched at Albury

Greg Ryan

The headline read “New Party Is Australia’s Only Hope, Says Mr Menzies.” The *Border Morning Mail* was reporting on “the biggest political event in Albury since Federation,” a conference held over three days in December 1944 in the upper floor lounge of Mate’s store, Dean Street Albury.

Sixty delegates, men and women from all over Australia, met to form the Liberal Party of Australia and to “formally adopt a constitution, establish an administrative organisation, and set up a Federal Council and executive.”

In welcoming delegates to Albury, a *Border Morning Mail* editor wrote “If, out of this week’s deliberations, Mr Menzies and his associates are able to hammer a policy for the future of Australia that will appeal to the imagination of the people, they will have gone a long way towards the restoration of national political sanity” and concluded “The eyes of Australia will be upon Albury this week. In wishing the visitors success in their deliberations, the citizens of this town hope to be able to say: ‘This is where political history was made.’”

At the opening of the conference, the only local delegate, Alexander Mair, Member for Albury and former Premier of NSW, welcomed delegates to Albury, “Queen City of the South.”

A conference in Canberra two months earlier had carried resolutions providing the first step towards formation of the Party. Opposition leader and leader of the United Australia Party, Robert Menzies, presided over the Albury conference in a double-breasted suit, seated under a Union Jack flag.



The caption in the *Border Morning Mail* read “Men and Women who claim to have lighted a new political torch for Australia.”

Robert Menzies is standing in the middle in his double-breasted suit.

Menzies opened the conference declaring that the new party was formed “as an instrument to combat Communistic and Socialistic influences which daily are making inroads into the lives of the people.”

In his closing address to delegates, Menzies went on to say that the party would represent “the forgotten people,” the office workers, shopkeepers and small business folk. He made a plea for a greater number of persons who were “somebody else’s employees” to seek a Parliamentary career, “there were graziers, farmers, a lawyer or two, some employers, but rarely any were employees ... employed people are the backbone of our organisations, and they should be in the National Parliament.”

The membership fee of the party was set at 2/6 (25 cents) per year and 1/- (10c) for juniors. A provisional Federal executive of thirteen men was appointed to supervise implementation of decisions made at the conference and to advise on matters of policy.