

FROM AN ADDRESS AT A FUNCTION HELD 4th NOVEMBER 1939.

Legatee Eric Russell, who was in the chair, said that it was a family gathering of members of Legacy, far and near, to pay tribute to Legatee Savige "as one whom we regard as our founder". He went on to say - "On the right of our guest is our well-loved Patron, Sir John Gellibrand. His was the inspiration which caused the Legacy movement to be founded, and I think it is fitting that he, and nobody else, should propose the toast of "The Founder of Legacy". Today he has travelled many miles in order to be here tonight, and to do this job for Legacy."

Sir John Gellibrand said:

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It is one of the consolations of extreme old age that from time to time one is permitted to perform an entirely unnecessary function, such as assuring Stan Savige that he possesses the goodwill and affection of Legacy throughout Australia. Still, custom demands (and he, of course knows that just as well as we do) that he should be informed of this patent fact, and now is the time.

In proposing the health of our three guests - the legatee, the citizen and the soldier - who some forty-odd years ago agreed to combine to form the syndicate that is known as Stan Savige, I have in mind that each one of those first-line components (it is so customary now to talk in jargon whenever one talks of military subjects, that I have got into the bad habit) in each of these particulars has acquired eminence as a representative as well as an individual. I have in mind that the work of fostering and guiding the progress of Legacy, extending its operations throughout the length and breadth of Australia, has ripened and matured the character of our guest, and has made him a past-master in the art of securing immediate, loyal, single-minded co-operation in any task he undertakes.

At the present time, it seems such an easy thing: you take the approved personnel from the A.I.F. and put them to work on any job. I say it sounds an easy thing but, when you come to experience, you find that their very excellence make them difficult to keep up to the mark, moving in the one direction which they want to follow; but for some perverse reason these tend to separate them and turn them not in opposite directions, but in different directions. I say the work of Legacy has made our guest a past-master in the art of bringing his fellows along in such a way as to avoid any feeling that they are having their hands forced, and also avoiding any suggestion of playing the part of a dictator. At all turns in Legacy work we recognise with gratitude the wisdom and the influence and the work of Legatee Savige.

He continued by speaking of Legatee Savige's qualifications as a military leader and the task that would be his and how well it would be faced..

After the toast Legatee Savige replied as follows:

Eric (Russell) has said that his job tonight has been to me a most memorable one, but one feels somewhat disturbed in responding to the very kindly feelings displayed by you fellows who are here, and to the number of letters and telegrams received from various Legacy Clubs throughout Australia - and, believe me, it is not an easy task to respond.....

So far as Legacy is concerned, I find myself looking back over the past and trying to get a picture of the future. It is well, first, to size up the position we are in at the moment. We belong to the Legacy Club, whose work today is recognised by the community of this country. Legacy doesn't belong to Melbourne. Legacy has spread over nineteen Clubs, from the north of Queensland to Western Australia. I think we can say, with the utmost confidence that the 1,600 members who make up Legacy today, by their efforts in the past, have done a job. They are men who are trained leaders, and trained thinkers; men who can take on a task for the nation and the community. I believe that whatever extra work Legacy is called on to do is the penalty for doing a first-class job in the past. In some cases - particularly in the early days - we had people who looked on the privilege of being a member of Legacy as a stepping stone to social status. No one made a greater mistake than that. Rather, we were men who pulled together as a team and, by trial and error, evolved a system by which we got the machine working in first-class order, controlled by men who were trained, and therefore my feeling is that during these days of trial

members of the Legacy Club will be called on to do a much more important duty for the nation than anything they have attempted in the past.

Looking back over past days of the Club, the ideals we held, and the efforts we made to carry out the ideals, form one of the most interesting parts of my life. This is so not only because of work itself, but because of being associated with fellows with whom rank or place did not count. The only thing that mattered was the job of work in hand.

There is one man here tonight who was at the meeting when six of us received the inspiration in a letter dated August, 1923. Bob Irving who is still a member of the Melbourne Club, was amongst the six when we endeavoured to carry out the task allotted to us by our beloved chief (Sir John Gellibrand), whom we had served on the other side. There are other members who served under him and by some means or other his grip upon us, his inspiration, and the way he moulded our lives, taught us the real things of life; that is something one cannot quite describe.

We received that letter, and then we sat down to attempt to put the ideals which it contained into force. This was carried out in the same way - to get straight ahead with the job, as we had done on the other side. We had our first meeting, and we elected a Chairman, who, unfortunately, could not carry on - and you can imagine the tremendous blow that was to our small band, endeavouring to get on with the task put to us by our Chief. But he taught us, no matter how we might be bowled over, to pick ourselves up and try again.....

Our first ideals might, I think, be summarised like this. A demonstration was required to convince the public, without any misapprehension at all, that the men of the A.I.F. were a decent crowd of fellows, capable of standing on their own little flat feet and finding a niche for themselves in life. It was also proved to our minds, that, if any help was to be given to the returned soldier, no greater help could be given than by his comrades endeavouring to establish him in business, and that became the second plank in our platform.

On those ideals we endeavoured to carry on the job of work - a job that did not promise any reward for an individual but the greatest possible help to all in endeavouring to serve those who had been with us, yet were less fortunate than ourselves.

Some time afterwards, at a meeting where a few of us were gathered Frank Doolan brought up the idea of endeavouring to do something for the dependants of the men who fought alongside us. We, like other soldier organisations, had perhaps become more concerned in work to sustain the man who had returned and was up against it. We had forgotten the responsibility of looking after the dependants of the men who did not come back. And then began a very careful investigation to see how this could be tackled.....

The problem arose as to how we would start work. Somebody was sent off to see the Widows' Association. The lot fell to me, and I refused to go without the help of the only V.C. member of the Club, Donovan Joynt. We told our stories to the ladies. They said it was the very thing they were looking for, so we were then full steam ahead.

That was followed by a meeting of the boys who would be interested in the show. We thought 25 or 30 would turn up; 70 arrived. We discussed the matter with them, and began the system of co-operation at once. We told them that that night a month ahead, the gymnasium would be started; they would be issued with gymnasium togs, the instructor would be there, and they would be advised of the location of the hall.

We didn't have a hall, we didn't have a bob, we didn't have an instructor. We advised them in due course, and started on that night. We issued them with uniforms. We took a bit of a risk about that (or the firm who backed the bills did). As instructors we had my little "playmate" (Legatee F. Meldrum) and Billy Williams, and Dr Hubert Jacobs examined the youngsters before they went on the floor.....

We then had a most interesting experience when we resolved to get on to the girls work. The Board of Management - as all Boards are - was rather harsh in its outlook (I have been a member of most Boards) and they could not cotton on to the idea of taking on a job of work with the girls.

We on the J.L.C. decided that it would be worthwhile. We didn't know what opposition would be levelled against us when we met the Board at a conference. However, we got a fellow to go along and find out the reasons the Board intended to put forward against us, and we used each of these as a reason why the job should be gone on with. The Board found nothing to object to; we got their blessings and so another phase was commenced.....

He then spoke of his belief that "our work in regard to values is more of a spiritual rather than a material nature", and added that history showed that any great cause founded on the highest motives declined when it degenerated to material affairs and forces for its work.

He went on to say -

Recently the Clubs honoured a few of us by accepting a plan drawn up by Kem (Legatee A.N. Kemsley) and me, Here's the remarkable part of Legacy; we have often had arguments where we have expressed different views. Kem and I have stood toe to toe and walloped each other as hard as we could, but there has never been an argument on any one point when if we sat down to explore it, we didn't find the way out of the trouble of the moment. As a result of this particular argument - Kem was my greatest opponent at the time - the Board didn't know what to do, and so it asked Kem and me to draft a scheme. We did it, and in due time it was accepted by the other Clubs. I think the greatest pleasure and privilege I have had, together with my colleagues on the Co-ordinating Council, is the trust that has been reposed in us by the Clubs of Australia.

I know a point of view some of you have held has been this:

That each Club has its own problems, that a definite set of rules won't apply to each Club in Australia, that each Club will find its own work at hand, and that it is the job of each Club to work out that problem to the best of its ability. The "economist and accountant" idea began to creep in, and rules and regulations were drafted; and immediately you had all the cats with their backs up, and there was a grave danger of the Clubs not playing together. The result of the plan drafted by Kem and me is reflected in the spirit existing between the Clubs today being of the highest possible order. We have Perth writing to us and asking if such-and-such an action would conform with the views of the Co-ordinating Council. We have a Club like Ararat - in whose area the need for service is not so great as the amount of money in hand - sending a substantial amount of money to us to pass on to a Club in need. We found the Fremantle Club, with eight members; two of them are now on military service, leaving six active members. Fremantle has 80 wards, and is carrying on its job in an industrial district - and the Fremantle Club got that amount of money from Ararat. Ararat has the satisfaction of knowing that a Club in need has been helped materially.

At first we were supposed to carry on the work of the Co-ordinating Council for four months. At the Sydney conference it was agreed that we should carry on for a further twelve months; then the Council was to go to the Sydney Club and the Adelaide Club in turn. The greatest compliment paid to the Council (representatives from each State in the Melbourne Club) was that the Sydney Club (which was to be the next home of the Co-ordinating Council) should move a motion that the Council should remain at Melbourne. That was seconded by the Adelaide Club, whose turn it was next - and passed with the understanding that the Council could only be shifted from Melbourne if some Club moved for that purpose.. That is not only a compliment to the members of the Co-ordinating Council, but to the members of the Melbourne Club.

Legatee Savage discussed the part the Club might take in raising money for works of service, the helping of soldiers about to go abroad, and so on, and added:

Our average age is estimated at about 46 or 48; in another ten years we will all be stymied. We settled the basis of camp work this year, by bringing in boys who have passed through our hands to control the camps. The three of us who are most interested in the camps have no doubt whatever that this will be successful. It seems to me that the development of the service idea, on the part of those who were trained as juniors with us, will lead to a most useful job being done for the nation.

I think we must anticipate a continuance of the work as a result of this war. The work arising from the last war won't cease until 1948 or 1950 and I feel that the way in which we can tackle the job during the war is to use the services of the youngsters we have trained. Let us put them into jobs

and give them a go. I think we may have to anticipate further wards and further members as a result of this war. Are you and I prepared to scrap the machine so carefully built, and running so smoothly, just because the rules of membership relate to the last war? Isn't it a duty which we cannot shirk to inspire others to serve and to hand over the machine so carefully built, to enable them to avoid the errors which we made when we built up the system on the basis of trial and error?

I believe there is a tremendous job in front of us. I believe the President must have a different outlook in the future. He will have to stand well back from the rails so that he can see the race. You will have to force him to give up a lot of duties - some of them social - and others -which Presidents in the past have carried out. Men who have held office in the past will be managers of departments under the President as managing director, and will be guided and controlled by him. He can't be tied down by detail - that will be attended to by the managers of departments, I feel that is a line of thought which must be considered in the future.

Legacy started as a great exploration. Guided by fellows such as yourselves, 1,600 men throughout Australia have done and are doing their jobs. I believe that machine is to be handed over to the service of the nation during the war, and that it will be kept in smooth running order for the use of others coming on. The machine cannot be scrapped. We must gracefully retire as old age overtakes us, and inspire the fellows who are coming on to do the future job.

December was the month of the annual meeting and the election of office bearers. There was the obligation on the President and his responsible officers to submit a statement of activities, this made good reading. At the annual meeting, Legatee Russell passed over the reins to Legatee R.G. Heley and said: "We are all aware of his qualifications and he is the man for the job. Strangely enough, he has never been elected to Legacy despite the fact that he belonged to two Clubs. It is well to explain that he was a foundation member of the Ballarat Legacy Club and he came to the Melbourne Club on transfer. Perhaps he is unique in that, though a transferee, he should become a President of the Club of his adoption. Since he came to Melbourne he has had wide experience of the Club, particularly in regard to the work among the boys and girls. He is a past Chairman of the Junior Legacy Club committee and he has served on countless other committees. He has, in all the avenues in which he has served in Legacy, shown a calm judgment and a sound wisdom."

Legatee R.G. Heley, replying simply, said that he would endeavour to shape up to the job as other members of the club face up to their jobs. Like himself, there was another Ballarat member. One of his Vice-Presidents was Secretary of Ballarat Legacy Club.