

Rudd says Murdoch media is a political party

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Former prime minister Kevin Rudd has used an address to the Labor national conference to deliver a fresh swingeing attack on the Murdoch media, declaring “it is not a news organisation, it is a political party”.

Rudd said for Labor and for Bill Shorten, “dealing with the Murdoch mafia is kind of like dealing with a daily evisceration”

“It ain’t fair, it never will be and as soon as we acknowledge that fact, the better we will be in our response.”

Rudd and his wife, Therese Rein, were receiving ALP life memberships at the conference. Life memberships were also bestowed on two other former Labor prime ministers, Paul Keating and Julia Gillard, who were not present.

Attacks on the Murdoch media come frequently from Rudd, with a notable one in the 2013 election campaign.

Rudd told the conference the Coalition had “a very robust” partner in the “Murdoch party”, which had an ideology.

“Our movement has the audacity of hope to stand up and say ‘we don’t accept your ideology and your commercial interests. We actually will fight against it’. That’s why they hate us so much.”

“That’s why they hooked into Bill, that’s why they hooked into Julia, that’s why they hooked into me, that’s why they hooked into Paul, that’s why they hooked into Bob - because we represent a threat to their core commercial and ideological interests.”

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He contrasted the treatment of Labor meted out by the “Murdoch party” with that accorded to “Saint John” Howard.

Rudd said he had a simple message for Rupert Murdoch: “you don’t own Australia. Murdoch doesn’t have Australia as his own personal belonging. This country belongs to the working men and women who build Australia.”

Shorten, introducing Rudd, paid tribute to his performance in the 2013 election, saying while that election was lost, “your campaigning skills ... ensured that we entered opposition as a strong, viable electoral fighting force”.

Party sources said the opposition leader regarded it as important to pay tribute to the former prime ministers at this conference as a gesture of unity. Earlier conferences bestowed life membership on Bob Hawke and Gough Whitlam.

Shorten said in his tributes that Keating was a “hero of the true believers” and Gillard was a “continuing inspiration for women and girls”.

He said there had been a lot of pain but it was “time for healing to make peace with our past in the same way we are united about our future”.

“At our best, we are a movement focused on the future - but as Australia’s oldest continuous political party we have always revered our traditions and we take inspiration from our struggles in the past.

"And we are better, we are stronger, we are more confident and more complete when we extend to our former leaders and legends the respect they deserve, the gratitude they have earned.

"Labor can do more, indeed Australia can do more, to recognise the contribution of our past

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leaders - and to call upon their wisdom, their talents and their capacities in the continued service of our country.”

In his address, Rudd attacked Home Affairs minister Peter Dutton as a reminder of “that whole generation of Queensland coppers in the days of Bjelke-Petersen” and denounced the government’s recognition of West Jerusalem as Israel’s capital as “a lunatic decision”.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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