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AM Archive - Shane Stone

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AM Archive - Saturday, 26 June , 1999 00:00:00

Reporter: David Weber

PRESENTER: He's the boy from Wodonga who once lived in a Housing Commission estate and became the top politician in the Top End who's now risen to be federal president of the Liberal Party.

Well, that's the way that Shane Stone, former chief minister of the Northern Territory, sees his elevation to the position being vacated by Tony Staley next week.

Mr Stone, who was dumped by his Cabinet colleagues in the Northern Territory earlier this year, was the only person put forward for the position.

David Weber spoke to Shane Stone in Darwin.

SHANE STONE: As a Territorian I am filled with a great sense of pride in that this is an opportunity for people outside of the triangle of Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra to make a contribution to conservative politics. And given the importance of regional Australia, particularly in the second term of the Howard Government and the results that were delivered by the people of regional Australia, I look forward to playing a very important role, in partnership with the state and territory divisions in the time ahead.

REPORTER: Do you see that as your role then-sort of, expanding the Liberal Party more into regional areas and regional concerns?

SHANE STONE: It is important that the conservative side of politics reaches out beyond the capital cities, and as we've already seen, there is a strong support for the conservative side of politics through regional and country Australia, and with the federal president of the Liberal Party now coming from the Northern Territory-from Darwin-and being able to work closely with our colleagues in the National Party, I believe that this has to be a positive step in the right direction in the cause of conservative politics in Australia.

REPORTER: So, you'll be staying in Darwin? You'll be conducting the presidency from Darwin, as it were?

SHANE STONE: I never had any intentions of leaving Darwin; and it's very much to the credit of people like John Howard, Tony Staley, Gillian Storey-who is the senior vice-president from New Wales, and Bruce McDonald from South Australia, Ron Walker from Melbourne-that they were all supportive of the notion that you could have the federal president coming from outside of Melbourne and Sydney, and it demonstrates what the Prime Minister John Howard has been saying all along-that the Liberal Party of today represents a broad church of the Australian people. And when you consider the fact that someone of my humble origins off a Housing Commission

estate, the boy from Wodonga, state schools all the way, has risen to the position of president of the Liberal Party of Australia, it's a working example-a real illustration that John Howard is fair dinkum when he talks about the broad church of the Liberal Party and the way it reaches out to all Australians.

REPORTER: You've been an outspoken republican. Being the president of the Liberal Party, what-will your role in the republic debate expand, do you think?

SHANE STONE: Well, let's be very clear about this, and as someone who's been a state president of the CLP and also as a head of government of the Northern Territory, I clearly understand my role as the head of the administrative wing, and it is not to get tangled up in issues of government policy. My role is to work behind the scenes to support the conservative government of the day-in this case Prime Minister John Howard, and I'll be doing that enthusiastically.

Now, I have views on the republic. The Prime Minister is aware of those. I spoke out very openly and very stridently in the Constitutional Convention, and I don't resile from any of those, and the Prime Minister respects those views.

PRESENTER: Shane Stone, shortly to be Liberal Party president, speaking to David Weber.