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FROM:

Australian High Commission,
LONDON.

Excerpts of Prime Minister's speech to Australia Club dinner, Savoy Hotel tonight.

The Prime Minister said "The master of the Rolls (Lord Evershed who proposed the toast of Australia) towards the end of his speech made some reference to the Commonwealth. I think it might be regarded as a little odd if I didn't say something myself about the events of the last week or ten days. I think one should say a little about some of the events of the last ten days and of some of the dangers, as I see them, of the results of the last ten days, because I believe that last week we had some of the most dramatic events in Commonwealth history. And if we don't think they are dramatic then we have lost all interest in the Commonwealth and what happens to it.

What happened last week was that a foundation member of the British Commonwealth, to wit, South Africa, was in effect told to leave. I use those words; I will justify them in due course. And South Africa has left.

Now this is not something to be tossed off lightly as a mere incident, this is a foundation member of the Commonwealth - a country which became a member of the Commonwealth after bitter war, bitter disputes, and after a superb act of statesmanship by the United Kingdom which created the Union. We have had in the newspapers, speculation propoganda, and, if you will allow me to say, so not a little falsehood, about the events of the last ten days. Therefore I want to say something that is called apartheid which means, as I understand it, separate development. Separate development has been, rightly or wrongly, the policy of the Government of South Africa. And indeed I would like to remind you this has been the policy of South Africa since it was first erected by J. C. Smuts. He found himself confronted by choice which every power finds itself confronted - by the choice between having a policy of integration, when you have people of different races, or a policy of separate development. This is a problem of statesmanship.

In the old Colonial days it was apartheid. You had the European colonising power running the country, building people up, all very properly - a process which has led to the creation of nation after nation in this world. Or you have some other view. And so South Africa decided that it would have
* about these events as I saw them and in which, as in an obscure capacity, I had some part. All this argument has arisen about. /2
something*

this policy of separate development. Now, for reasons that I am going to give to you, I don't agree with this policy. But the great problem that we have had to confront is whether because you disagree with the policy of a country, a member of the Commonwealth, you push it out of the Commonwealth. And those are two questions that ought to be kept completely distinct. The whole problem is not one of moralising, of being superior, or passionate; the whole problem is one of statesmanship. I say particularly to my Australian fellow countrymen I am the only Prime Minister who, until this conference, had never publicly offered an opinion on South African policy. And I stand by that. I think that was right, because I am a believer in the Commonwealth. I am a believer in the members of the Commonwealth meeting together, not arguing with each other, not lecturing each other, not sitting in judgment on each other, but seeking to discover between themselves what points of agreement they have, how far they may assemble their moral force in the world. And therefore in my own Parliament, and I daresay not much to my own advantage, I said "no". South Africa runs its own affairs. We run our own affairs, Canada runs its own affairs. Who are we to be sitting here in judgment one on the other?

But all this is old hat now, because everybody has a go at it and I would not be saying anything about it tonight if it were not for the fact that in the conference Dr. Verwoerd himself, acceded to the idea that we ought to have a chance between us all to thrash this matter out.

The whole genius of the British Commonwealth and I believe in the British Commonwealth with a faith in my guts - has been that we are tolerant; we agree to disagree, we seek to understand, we look for points of agreement but we don't stand up and lecture each other in the face of the world. Never, until this year, have we sat in judgment on each other. These are things worth remembering. Now I, never having before offered a public word about South African policy, am now called on to do so, not by my wish. I am old fashioned enough to believe in tolerance and in living and letting live and in the virtues of Christian faith, hope and charity. I believe in these things, but if this is out of date and I am to be misunderstood about these matters then I simply say this to you: here is a time of passion and rhetoric, broad sweeping statements, the kind of things you expect to have in the United Nations Assembly but not in the British Commonwealth.

I don't moralise about South African policy because I think moralising is a pretty cheap thing. All I say is that I don't think apartheid will work. You see this is the pragmatic British approach. Nothing was more impressive to all of us in this conference than the way in which Dr. Verwoerd with obvious honesty, with great courtesy, with great lucidity explained his policy..... but I don't think it will work in this day and generation. The more his policy succeeds, the more he brings the Bantu up in matters of health and living standards and education, the more intolerable will they find it to be second class citizens. This is a purely pragmatic approach, not sentimental, but practical, and I have said to him time after time in private "I know you believe this is right.

I believe that the more it succeeds in the first instance the more it will fail in the long run because the more you succeed in building up the Bantu the more you succeed in giving them proper standards, educational standards, and give them universities, the more will you develop that proper pride in people which will make them say I am not to be pushed on one side".

If it goes on that way you may find that the ultimate conflict will be bloody and devastating. I offer this for what it is worth. He is familiar with my view on this matter. But if he goes back to his own country and says, I am unmoved by that, then I want to tell you that I stand for the right of any Commonwealth country to run its affairs in its own way.

May I remind you that in May of last year we had a Prime Ministers' Conference and this was the first matter to come up. And after we had had a discussion we issued a communique which said the Commonwealth is an association of independent sovereign states each responsible for its own policies. Those, I venture to say, were fine words and true words. I emphasise them because if somebody in a Prime Ministers' Conference wants to tell me what the policies of Australia ought to be, I will tell them to go and jump in the Serpentine.

The United Nations - and that is a body with which I don't invariably agree - concedes the point. It says "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorise the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state". Mr. Menzies continued "Any suggestion for the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth misconceives the nature of our association. We don't deal with the domestic political policies of any one of us, for we know that political policies come or go with Governments and that we are not concerned with Governments and their policies so much as we are with nations and their peoples.

If we ever thought of expelling a member of the Commonwealth it would, I hope, be because we believed that, in the general interests of the Commonwealth, a nation, as a nation, was not fit to be our associate. The Prime Ministers' Conference, I said in my Snuts Lecture at Cambridge, would break up in disorder if we affected to discuss and decide what we thought to be the proper measure of democracy in our various countries. Whether particular groups should or should not have the vote, that is a fascinating inquiry, whether oppositions should be respected, whether a Parliament should control the Executive; on all such matters autonomous or independent nations must have the right to manage their own affairs in their own way. Every Government, every member of the Commonwealth has achieved self government a right of complete independence. Do I want to go around and say to anyone of them "This is how you ought to govern yourself"? of course not, its too stupid for words. You will have a high degree of authoritarian Government in one country, you will have an advanced stage of Parliamentary Government in another. But when you look back on these things and you remember that from first to last, from the Balfour Declaration onwards, we have emphasised that we are autonomous Governments, masters of our own fate, masters of our own problems, don't you think that it is a monstrous thing for us to be sitting in judgment one on the other. I would not have said a word about South African policy, which I think is doomed

to disaster, except that I am the only man yet among the Prime Ministers who has not said something about it. And its all been exposed to the public eye and there no one can be misrepresented. Next time it might be Australia. How do I know? We have things in our policy which are our policy and our business, which somebody may disagree with, I would not tolerate having these things discussed by other people. I would not tolerate being lectured by other people on what we ought to do. Today it is the fashion to talk about racialism. It is still the fashion to talk about colonialism so long as you don't talk about Communist colonialism which is the greatest and most aggressive colonialism in the world.

But who talks about the rule of Parliament, the rule of Law? I could very well have a word or two to say about some of these things like imprisonment without trial, if the drill is that in the Commonwealth this is to be changed so that we're sitting in judgment. Then I am bound to tell you I will have something to say about that, and by the time I have said it, by the time the answers have been made, there won't be any Commonwealth, because we will all have expelled each other.

I don't mind if 99 nations at New York go on making speeches lasting two and a half hours each, and going into Committee, and doing all these things.....this is highly experimental. It may produce some good results, but what hurts me is that this great Commonwealth is being dragged into this area of thought which has no relation to it. Nothing will ever persuade me that you can identify the exquisite personal relations of the Commonwealth with the debating society that goes on in New York.....We have had a special family relationship and if anybody wants to do something which converts the Commonwealth with all its warmth and its intimacy, its capacity for hostility within friendship, which is the great thing about any family relationship, so that all this is gone then all I can say is that, with great devotion to Her Majesty, it is a sorry day for the Commonwealth Why can't we disagree with the South African policy without pushing South Africa out, and believe me it was pushed out.

Harold Macmillan, the distinguished Prime Minister of this country, with his colleagues and with myself, we worked like horses to develop a communique which would expose the criticisms by other members of the Commonwealth and the answer of the Prime Minister of South Africa and, having exposed then, would then make it possible for South Africa to remain within the Commonwealth as a Republic as every other Republic had. But I must tell you in view of all this propaganda that goes on, that while I was saying to myself "Well I think this fixes it", one, two, three four, five people got up and made it completely clear that they wouldn't have this. They didn't want South Africa in, and every convenient opportunity or inconvenient opportunity would be taken to attack her. Well I am not Dr. Verwoerd and I am not the apostle of apartheid, though I have my own Immigration policy. I am bound to say that in his place I would have left, certainly not later than he did.

So don't let's have humbug, which I rather think is one of the more serious offences in the world. The fact is that in all these circumstances South Africa is out. What I am saying to you is "don't let us jump on the latest band wagon, let us

think of this Commonwealth of ours. What does it mean in tolerance, in understanding, in points of contact, for us who are Australians in a superb allegiance to the Throne? What does it mean, if we think it means nothing, then it doesn't matter. Let it all go to the United Nations, but if we think it means something, then I beg all of you to look back on these events saying: Did we go wrong? Has what has happened strengthened the Commonwealth? The answer to that question will depend on whether you think our marvellous association depends upon tolerance and kindness and understanding and the long view, or upon the popular passion for denunciation. I don't need to tell you that I don't feel good about this. But since my earliest days in politics I have had a great vision of what the Commonwealth should stand for. I hate to think that it is blurred".

21st March, 1961.