



## PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
PARLIAMENTARY DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE TAOISEACH,  
CHARLES HAUGHEY  
CANBERRA - 12 JULY 1988**

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Taoiseach,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen.

Some Australians have not a drop of Irish blood flowing in their veins.

Some Australians have rectified that shortcoming by marrying into an Irish family - and I include myself in this category.

And some of us have the great good fortune of being able to claim Irish blood by birth or ancestry. Indeed almost one in every three Australians can make the proud boast of having been born in Ireland or into an Irish family.

I speak for all Australians, however, regardless of the nature or degree of their Irishness, in extending to you, Taoiseach, and your wife, the warmest of welcomes to Canberra.

This is the first visit of an Irish Prime Minister to Australia. Maureen, this is your second visit this year, as you represented Ireland at our Australia Day celebrations. These visits coincide with Australia's nationwide celebrations of our Bicentenary.

Your visit gives us an opportunity therefore, as part of our national process of stocktaking afforded by the Bicentenary, to more fully understand the length and strength of the Australian-Irish relationship.

It was Arthur Calwell, a great leader of the Australian Labor Party and a man deeply imbued in Irish culture, who most eloquently described the nature of the Irish contribution to Australia.

Arthur Calwell was the architect of Australia's great post-war immigration program and was a giant of the labor movement.

It was on St Patrick's Day in 1952 that he had this to say of Ireland's role in world affairs:

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"from the dawn of history and even from the mists that preceded that dawn, Irish men and women have gone from Ireland to many countries. They went as colonisers but never as conquerers; they went as educators but never as exploiters. They never were imperialists, and they never took away another people's freedom. They brought their culture and their virtues with them to enrich the heritage of whatever land they chose to dwell in".

Last year, I was given the honour of addressing the Dail in Dublin. Drawing on those insights I have just quoted, I said that Ireland is in fact the head of a huge empire - an empire acquired not by force of arms but by force of Irish character - an empire not of political coercion but of spiritual affiliation, created by the thousands upon thousands of Irish men and women who chose to leave their homeland, or who were banished from it, to take part in the building of new nations overseas.

A greater number of Irish have gone to the United States than have come to Australia but they form a smaller proportion of the total population there than in Australia.

So Australia is the principal province of that Irish empire, having been endowed as no other country has been with the hard work and determination of generations of Irish men and women.

If this is true, as I firmly believe it to be, then surely the epicentre of that Irish empire in Australia must be the Australian trade union movement and the Australian Labor Party which I have the honour to lead.

Because from its earliest days the labor movement in this country has been enriched by those enduring characteristics of the Irish people: their commitment to justice, their overwhelming egalitarianism, their enduringly loyal comradeship.

Indeed the fact that Australians were among the first in the world to form trade unions and to build an industrial framework for the protection and enhancement of working conditions was due in no small measure to the vital presence of the Irish Australians.

Australia's greatest Prime Ministers were Labor men of Irish extraction: John Curtin and Ben Chifley.

Even today, my own ministry has a strong Irish representation.

But it is not just in politics that Irish surnames keep cropping up.

In literature and the arts, in education, in the law, in sports, throughout Australia's history and throughout contemporary Australian society, our proud Irish streak is clear to see - from Charles Gavan Duffy to Ned Kelly, from the Wild Colonial Boy to Clancy of the Overflow, from C.J. Dennis to Tom Keneally and from Bill O'Reilly to Sidney Nolan.

Taoiseach,

For all these reasons, when I arrived at Dublin at the start of my visit to Ireland last October, I felt immediately at home.

The truth of that initial impression was thoroughly borne out over the succeeding days of my visit.

For the Irish and Australian people are united by ties of history and of kinship - ties which span the oceans that separate us.

Those ties were first formed by the thousands of Irish convicts and settlers who came to settle in Australia; today they are daily renewed by the many Australians who visit Ireland each year and by those engaged in business between us.

It is good to see an increasing pace of political exchanges between us.

In 1985, President Hillery became the first Irish head of state to visit Australia. My visit last year was the first by an Australian Prime Minister. Parliamentary delegations and ministerial meetings have multiplied.

So it is my sincere hope, Taoiseach, that while you are in Australia you too will feel you are among friends. I can assure you that you, and your wife and party, are very welcome visitors.

Taoiseach,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the new home of the Australian Parliament. You are the first Head of Government we have hosted at dinner in this building.

These Parliamentary chambers - like those in which I had the honour of speaking in Dublin - represent the democratic values which Ireland and Australia hold firmly, our shared commitment to vigorous and open debate, and our common view that the people are best governed when they govern themselves. It is those fundamental values which provide the deepest of the links between us.

Of course, the creation of a free and democratic state of Ireland is the more remarkable an achievement because it was only possible after a prolonged struggle for independence and the horrors of a civil war.

We applaud, Taoiseach, your commitment to seeking a peaceful resolution to the troubles in Northern Ireland. We welcome the mechanisms such as the Anglo-Irish agreement, which provide a framework to facilitate positive change. We completely endorse your Government's actions against those who blindly see violence as a solution.

And I repeat what I said in Dublin: the Australian Government will do all within its power to discourage any Australian citizen from adding in any way to the violence in Northern Ireland.

You will find, Taoiseach, as you travel around Australia, that Australians of Irish descent have largely left the bitterness behind them. Instead, like so many people who have come to settle in Australia from overseas, while they retain the love of their land of origin it is commitment to their new home that is paramount.

Taoiseach,

Both Ireland and Australia have found that economic challenges must still be overcome if we are to safeguard the prosperity we have enjoyed. We have both had to take hard decisions to secure the longterm prosperity of our countries.

Australia has a newfound determination to tackle our underlying economic problems, to diversify our economy and broaden our work skills so we become a more competitive and more outward looking country, venturing on to world markets rather than sheltering behind the constricting barriers of protection.

We see a need to lower such trade barriers. We are doing just that at home and - because trade for Australia as for Ireland is vital - we are urging abroad a new effort to safeguard the international trading system, through the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

Taoiseach,

Both Australia and Ireland have earned reputations around the world for our efforts to lessen conflict and tension, and to control and reverse the arms race.

We live in a time when the stakes are higher than ever before, in that world conflict could well lead to the obliteration of mankind. But we have seen in recent months a significant easing of tensions between the superpowers. The signing of the first treaty ever to eliminate a class of nuclear weapons - the INF Treaty - and the generally positive dialogue conducted at the Summits between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev give us all some cause for hope. And, to the extent that we have encouraged the leaders of those nations, they give Australia and Ireland some particular cause for satisfaction.

Taoiseach,

As you know, 1988 is both the Australian Bicentennial year and the millennium of the City of Dublin - a fact that dramatically emphasises how recently Europeans came to this continent.

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The Irish contribution to our Bicentenary celebrations has been a generous and valuable one.

The Irish sail training vessel, the Asgard II, participated in the Parade of Tall Ships. There has been a tremendous number of exchanges in the artistic and scholarly fields. And only this afternoon, Taoiseach, you presented the computerised records of some 40,000 Irish men and women transported to Australia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These records will provide an invaluable resource for scholars and for those many Australians seeking to trace their Irish ancestry.

But that is not the end of the Irish Bicentennial presence in Australia.

When I was in Dublin, the Irish Government hosted an official dinner which was memorable in every respect. We sat down in the magnificently refurbished Royal Hospital Kilmainham. We were very well fed. Those of us who drink were very well drunk.

And we were superbly entertained with singing and dancing. I was particularly impressed with a group called Siamsa Tire, which performs Irish folk dances, and I made the promise then that I would see to it that Siamsa Tire was able to perform before Australian audiences sometime during 1988.

It is my pleasure to announce that arrangements for the tour are now firm. Siamsa Tire will visit nine Australian cities for performances in October and I wish them well for a successful tour. I look forward to attending one of their performances myself. I want to express my appreciation to Qantas, Australian Airlines and the Australian Bicentennial Authority for their support of the tour.

Taoiseach,

Ireland has produced a pantheon of great writers over the last one hundred years and one of the greatest of them was Oscar Wilde.

Australians, of course, were from time to time the butt of Wilde's satire. A character in Lady Windermere's Fan said she thought Australia must be so pretty "with all the dear little kangaroos flying about".

But in a serious vein, Wilde once described what he called the great drama of his life. "It's that I have put my genius into living my life; all I've put into my works is my talent".

Australians can be proud - and it's proper tonight that we express our sense of debt - that our country has received in unequalled measure both the spark of genius and the vast resource of talent that characterise the Irish people.

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