

AUSTRALIA CLUB

Speeches at the Dinner held at the
Dorchester Hotel in honour of the
RT. HON. R. G. MENZIES, C.H.,
Q.C. (Prime Minister of the Com-
monwealth of Australia) on Monday
22nd June, 1959 with introductory
remarks by H.R.H. DUKE OF
GLOUCESTER, K.G. (President of
the Australia Club), who was in
the Chair

SPEAKERS:

THE RT. HON. HAROLD MACMILLAN, M.P.

proposing the toast of Australia

and

THE RT. HON. R. G. MENZIES, C.H., Q.C.

who responded

37 Dover Street,
London, W.1.
July, 1959.

H.R.H. DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

Gentlemen; On behalf of the Australia Club, I welcome our distinguished guests. I thank them for honouring us and enabling us to make this a unique and historic occasion.

I have often dined at Vintners Hall in the City where they boast a room where five kings were entertained at one meal.

But some of those kings were captives, whilst our Prime Ministers and ex Prime Ministers are *freemen* and have never been captive to anything but their ideal of service to their countries, the British Commonwealth and Empire, and to world peace.

For me, personally, this is a great occasion: to have under my control, assuming that to be a fact, such a posse of Prime Ministers, or should I say a "pride", is something of which nightmares are made, but in reality is an enormous pleasure and honour.

Looking at them, I am reminded of something one of their great predecessors—Disraeli—said exactly one hundred years ago: "The Australian Colonies, though now in their youth, but in the youth of giants, have already, as it were, thrown their colossal shadow over Europe." Well, I am glad we have here in our English team a figure whose shadow, mentally and physically, grows no less.

But I feel that these words of Disraeli's could not better describe the powerful figure and personality of that great and representative Australian, Mr. Menzies, whom we delight to honour tonight.

I now call upon the Prime Minister of England, Mr. Harold Macmillan.

THE RT. HON. HAROLD MACMILLAN

Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury:

Your Royal Highness, your Excellencies, My Lords and Gentlemen, this is a great responsibility which has been entrusted to me tonight to propose the Toast of the evening—Australia—and in the presence of so many great men, and above all my master, leader, chief, it needs a very bold man to dare to speak. You described, sir, in a generous phrase the proper way of giving an account of a number of Prime Ministers, “a pride of Prime Ministers.” I think it was a less generous undergraduate who was asked how you should describe a number of heads of colleges and answered at once, of course, “a Lack of Principals”. (*Applause.*)

This is a very great occasion for me because it recalls to my mind that it is only eighteen months ago—it seems only a month ago—since I had the honour of a visit to Australia. That was indeed for me an unforgettable experience. I never can be sufficiently grateful for the kindness which you showed me, Mr. Menzies, and all the people of Australia showed to my wife and myself on every occasion. There were, of course, one or two moments of disenchantment. I remember as I drove into Sydney on my first arrival there I was amazed to see the great numbers of people on the streets and issuing from all houses; a huge crowd had turned out to welcome me, far greater, I thought, than any similar crowd could ever be in the old country, and I was deeply touched. Then someone told me the truth. It was six o'clock (*laughter*), that dramatic hour when they open in England and shut in Australia. Of course, I was duly impressed by Sydney and I described it, if I remember, in a speech written for me by my advisers as “the greatest City in the British Commonwealth, if not in the world”. Naturally a few days later I said the same thing about Melbourne. (*Laughter.*)

It is a great opportunity for me tonight to have been chosen to propose this Toast, if only because it gives me the chance of

expressing publicly the deep impression which was made upon me by that visit, and then I am able to pay my tribute to our guest of honour tonight, my friend—I am privileged to call him my friend—a great man, a great Prime Minister, a great figure, perhaps the greatest figure in our Commonwealth today. (*Applause.*)

As you know, quite apart from a spell in office between 1939 and 1941, he has now been Prime Minister without a break for ten years. That is not a bad not-out innings even for an Australian (*laughter*) and he has not just stayed in but he has scored quite a lot of runs. I must say at times I envy him. Then he seems to do it so easily; he organises his life so well that every June (*laughter*) happily we find him in London—Mid June, about the time the Test Matches are coming on. I never get there. All I can do is to sneak away from the Cabinet room and have a look at the tape every now and then.

Under the guidance of Mr. Menzies, the stature of Australia in the world and her influence in world Councils have increased beyond all recognition. I remember when I was a boy the popular imagination in this country was that Australia was a land of sheep farmers and cricketers, especially fast bowlers. Well, you have since added tennis players, golfers, and four minute milers to the cricketers, and, by the way, may I make my passing tribute to the cricketers and say how much we admire their skill in the arts of fielding and occasionally of throwing, (*laughter.*) But perhaps I had better be careful about that or I shall be no-balled. You have sheep farmers, cattle farmers and you have a great deal else, too and if we look back only a generation, how extraordinary has been the growth. Thirty three years ago—I will take that year because it was one of the years in which England won the ashes, but it had another distinction. In that year the Imperial Conference met at which the philosophy of the modern Commonwealth, the economic philosophy was defined for the first time and there is in a corridor in Downing Street a picture of the members of that Conference, dressed in what seems now rather an old fashioned. I would even say Teddy

Boy, appearance. But sitting in the front row is the leader of the Australian delegation, your Prime Minister of the day, a certain Mr. S. M. Bruce; how proud we are to have this great man with us today. (*Applause.*) That Conference was the beginning of a new era not only for Australia but for the whole British Commonwealth. It also marked in a sense the end of the old era for Australia, for it was the last year in which the Commonwealth Parliament sat in Melbourne before moving to Canberra. In those 33 years Australia has indeed travelled a long road. Her achievement has been staggering and one of which every Australian has a right to be proud.

Let us think first of the economic achievement. Australia is still, as she then was, largely a primary producing country; at least three quarters of her exports are in primary exports and we, I am happy to say, in the United Kingdom still take about one third of these exports. In this way, I think, we have contributed to the stability of the Australian economy. In the same way, you take a great proportion of your imports from the United Kingdom. We are thus involved together and the more we are the better it will be for both of us. But of course, each country has its problems which have come with this generation and indeed it would be strange if it were not, for you cannot take the world twice in a single generation, break it up into pieces, and then expect everything to go on exactly as before. The amazing thing is how much goes on as before and in the same spirit. Our economy has changed. At the moment we have an abundant supply, almost more than an abundant supply, of coal. We lack ashes, of course (*laughter*), but you seem strangely unwilling to export these. In these years, Australia has made an immense stride forward in the industrialisation of that country. Her economy now shows a great variety and, of course, that very process brings with it, as we know so well, new problems, and hence the revision of the 1926 Agreement which we made by agreement with you in 1957.

But leaving for the moment the economic side, it is in the political stature in the world councils that Australia has made

such a significant advance. Her net-work of diplomatic representation has spread over the whole world, and its quality has, if I may say so, steadily grown and served to enhance Australia's prestige, and with this expansion of Australia's political ties has marched the inevitable increase in her world wide interests and her world stature. In Commonwealth countries, partly no doubt from the character of the Prime Minister and partly also because of the strength and power of the country itself, Australia's voice is heard more and more convincingly; nor can we forget this—that whenever we are in trouble or any difficulty in the Old Country, we know we can look with absolute certainty to the support and loyalty and sympathy of the Australian people. (*Applause.*) They came from the same stock, share the same loyalties, and many of the common interests. There are, of course, some countries—I am sorry to harp on this theme but as it is being broadcast to America I thought it would be good for them—although unintelligible it would be good for them. There are some countries and one's heart bleeds for them, who do not yet play cricket. At the time of the 1954 Geneva Conference a British diplomat was said to have observed to a South Korean colleague "I see your Foreign Minister is batting first on our side". The Korean was a little at a loss, but answered "Yes, I hope he makes first base (*laughter*). All the same, I think this is a great gift, a symbolical gift, which England has given to the World. The Speaker's wig and Mace and the Umpire's white coat may perhaps be said to be legacies to the world of which England can be justly proud, for, after all, they both embody the same general idea.

I am glad that the Prime Minister of Australia has been able to do so much travelling. He fixes these things very well; he has been to Canada; he has seen for himself how the new concept of Commonwealth interdependence is growing. He is a frequent visitor to the Indian sub-Continent and to New Zealand, and he has been able to include South Africa in his travels. In a divided world the Commonwealth has, I believe, more to offer than ever before to the cause of peace. Australia not only

takes her general responsibility but her regional responsibility. Her membership of S.E.A.T.O., her keen interest in the Colombo plan activities, her intelligent strutting of Asian affairs—all these have marked out for her a constructive and valuable role in the future, and I think I ought to add, as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, a special word of thanks for all Australia has done for us at Woomera.

Now, sir, since it is your guest and not me you wish to hear, I would now conclude, if I might be allowed to do so, with a few words on a wider theme. We live in an age, I expect we always have done so, in which the voice of the croaker, the moaner, the faint-hearted and the cynical, are often heard, and now, of course, amplified by all our modern means of communication; these people declaim to us in flat and boring voices how they see coming the decline and fall of the British Empire. What they are really witnessing, if only they had the eyes to see, is something vastly different. It's re-birth. The curtain is not falling on our British story; it is rising on a new Act and as the transformation takes place, from a dependent Empire, into a free partnership of independent and interdependent nations under the Crown as the head of the Commonwealth. Of course, in this process complicated and different problems will arise. They arose, also, in its foundation. We must surely approach this new phase in a firm spirit of confidence and faith, and fortunately this is the spirit of Australia and I firmly believe of the Old Country, too. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Chairman, this habit of denigration is nothing new—it runs right through British history. It has sometimes been powerful and sometimes partly answered. I would venture, if you would allow me these few moments more, to read to you a sentence from Macaulay—the essayist, not the Yorkshire bowler (*laughter*). Writing 120 years ago, he used these words at a period when it seemed to many that the whole history of England was finished and would end in chaos and revolution. He said:—“We cannot absolutely prove that those are in error who tell us that society has reached the turning point, that we

have seen our best days but so said all who came before us with just as much apparent reason. On what principle is it", he went on to ask "that when we see nothing but improvement behind us, we are to expect nothing but deterioration before us". All that I saw of Australia during my visit convinced me of the immense future that lies before her. Her material reserves are vast, and so too are the moral qualities that will allow people of Australia to make the best use of those resources. We in the old country can rejoice at this prospect which opens up. Our two countries have done much together and been through much together. We have shared sorrows and we have shared triumphs. Ours is a partnership that will endure. Together we have battled for freedom and we have won and together we will work to give the world peace and prosperity. (*Applause.*)

THE RT. HON. R. G. MENZIES

Your Highness, my Lord Chancellor, my Lords and Gentlemen, I always feel at a singular disability when I come after the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, my friend, Harold Macmillan, who has a superb technique. When called on to speak, he rises looking at if this were an entirely unexpected honour (*laughter*) he gazes around the audience quite diffidently as much as to say "Pray help me!" (*Laughter*) and then delivers his magnificent speech! Whereas I, of course, get up full of brash confidence (*laughter*) hoping that somebody will be hostile (*laughter*) and have to follow him! I must say I was a little uneasy at the beginning of his speech when he referred to Disraeli, because, while I am not a master of history like the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, I have some sketchy retrospective recollections (*laughter*) of him, and when he referred to Disraeli in a strange context, because he was referring to the fact that there were former Prime Ministers here, I thought he was going to quote that rather nasty little bit of Disraeli's when he said that he saw sitting opposite to him a row of extinct volcanoes! (*Laughter.*)

Well, I am not yet extinct (*laughter*) thanks to some extraordinary inadvertence on the part of the Australian electors not so long ago. But I think I would like to say something about some of those who are here at the top table. I would like to begin by saying that I think that it is a remarkable honour to be paid to anybody that Sir Winston Churchill should have come here tonight. (*Applause.*) That he is and was always a volcano nobody will deny (*laughter*) but extinct?—nonsense, here he is! I am very glad to think, though I am otherwise sad about it, that what is being said here tonight is being precipitated by modern art and science into another room in which his wife and my wife are sitting. And so I hope you will forgive me if I break the normal rules on such an occasion by saying that everybody here tonight, and certainly everybody in Australia, having as we have the deepest affection for the

great man, would like to send a message of deep affection to his wonderful wife. (*Applause.*)

I don't need to say anything about other people, perhaps, but it is fascinating to me, as a man from the "back blocks", as you might say (*laughter*), to come into London and to be able to read in one newspaper on one day "Attlee on Churchill on Eden." (*Laughter.*) This, I think, is most fascinating, and I am lucky enough to have been Prime Minister of my own country so long as to have sat under Attlee, under Eden, under the great Churchill. And this is, I think, one of those things which for somebody like myself constitutes a sort of subtle title of honour not to be forgotten. (*Applause.*) I would like to say to them how much I appreciate the fact that they are here; I would like so much to say to Clem Attlee how much I am delighted that he should have been here. (*Applause.*) Indeed, the last time I saw him was not in person but on that strange and revolting instrument, the television (*laughter*) in which he was interviewed at great length and offered a series not of lengthy views but singularly monosyllabic views on a great number of affairs, and, as I sat and looked at it, I enjoyed it, I envied it. You know, when a current politician is being interviewed either on television, or on the wireless, or by the Press in person and he is asked a question and he says "Yes" or "No", he is regarded as something of a cad! (*Laughter.*) And perhaps they said that about my friend Attlee. Anyhow, he said "Yes", "No", pulled the pipe out of his mouth and said "Rubbish" and put the pipe back again. (*Laughter.*)

One other thing I would like to say to you of a personal kind, and that concerns not my old friend the Lord Chancellor but my old friend the present Lord Chief Justice, because when I opened the newspapers and for once believed what I read (*laughter*) I saw that he had become, Hubert Parker had become, Lord Chief Justice of England. (*Applause.*) Beggared as I am by politics, my memory is not entirely imperfect, and I remember on a certain celebrated occasion in the Privy Council, I had, purely ex-officio but also vocally led, two distinguished

lawyers of the English Bar. He was the second and I sent him a cable, and the cable if he just does not mind my referring to it, said this: "Isn't it wonderful. After all, there was a time when for a solid fortnight in the Privy Council, I argued the case and I had two juniors. One of them has been Lord High Chancellor of England, and the other is now Lord Chief Justice. After this, even my opponents in Australia can't say I have never had any respectable period in my life." (*Laughter.*)

Sir, I don't want to make a long speech—I think that would be not appropriate—but, if you would allow me, I would like to say just a word or two about my own Country, my own proud Country, of which I am infinitely proud myself, something about this Country, the Mother Country of the whole Commonwealth and Empire, and perhaps a glancing reference to the state of the World. Could you bear that? (*Hear, hear*) because if you could, I will be as brief as is decent about each of these three matters.

First of all, about my own Country. I do not think that it is widely understood as it might be that Australia has gone through a period of growth and development beyond the expectation of anybody a decade or two decades ago. (*Hear, hear.*) I remember before the war, when we took the finest advice we could get—that is to say, from economists and from statisticians, both of whom are extraordinarily good men—retrospectively! (*Laughter*) and they said to us, not only orally but in writing, that Australia would, in due course, by about 1975, have 7½ million people, and the population would then begin to decline. I remember this so vividly; it coloured the whole of our policy for quite a time. And here we are in 1959 with 10 million people, and I assure you with every expectation of having 20 or 25 million people by the turn of the century. (*Applause.*)

Now, it is a matter of great comfort to me—and I raise no controversial issues about that—when I tell you that the population of Australia is increasing, for the first time in recorded modern history, at a greater rate per cent. than the population of Japan. (*Laughter.*) Now that is very important; that may, of

course, mean that the Japanese have accumulated certain modern ideas (*laughter*) but I would not wish to go into that unduly. The fact is, however, that the growth of the population in Australia both by migration and natural increase has been, I think, the dominating factor in the development of my Country (*hear, hear*) because it is not merely a matter of having more people: what counts is that all those who consider the future of their various business enterprises, all those who consider whether they are going to put money into a country, are always and properly concerned to know that they have an increasing constituency, and, in Australia, I think that that has had the most remarkable results.

I think that nothing pleased me more as I came around the world this time than to discover how many people, who were knowledgeable and significant emphasised their own surprise at the fact that in a period in which our great staple commodities like wool and base metals had had a sharp recession in price. Australia had gone along with stability, with growth, with optimism and that no recession of any kind had occurred. This is something worth recording; it is worth thinking about because, after all, it is not so many years, as my Lord Bruce will remember so well, when a similar decline in export income produced the most devastating results.

And similarly, when I came to this country, this wonderful Country, this country which is at the very heart of our entire inheritance, I find—and, as my colleague has somewhat offensively reminded me, I am here quite frequently (*laughter*) but I find this time a spirit of optimism, a general air in the country and outlook in the country, and, added to that, the objective statistics of the country which persuade me completely that this Country, battered as it has been twice in this century, battered on behalf of mankind, as it has been twice in this century, is once more resuming its position of success and confidence and courage and leadership in the world! (*Applause.*)

Any man who is so inveterate a traveller as myself is bound, of course, to meet many people, and I have become somewhat

accustomed in recent years to that gloomy dyspeptic character, to whom Mr. Macmillan made a glancing reference, that gloomy realist, as he calls himself, who says: "Well, of course, old man, let us begin by admitting that Great Britain is now a second-class power." Oh, how I love those people! (*Laughter*) a second-class power. And when you say to him: "And why, pray tell me", if I may borrow an immortal expression, "do you think Great Britain is now a second-rate power?" The wretched creature will always answer by casting out mathematical tables. "Well, you know, there are so many people; somebody else has so many more; somebody else has only a few less, you see."

Gentlemen, this, if I may venture to use one of my favourite expressions, is utter drivel! (*Laughter.*) How long is it since we became obsessed by mathematics, when we measured up the quality of a nation. I can't remember in my reading of history any time since the spacious days of the Great Elizabeth when in this country people said "Well we are a third-rate power because between us we muster fewer people than somebody else, or somebody else." This is utter nonsense! This is merely an arithmetical outlook on the world. The one thing that matters, and matters today more than ever before, is the qualitative outlook of the world. (*Applause.*) Nothing will ever persuade me, although I occasionally find my colleagues at Whitehall a little difficult to deal with, nothing will ever persuade me that this country, with all her Sister Dominions about her, in the words of the ~~Rotary~~ ^{Royal} Club, is not one of the great powers in the world because she is. It is nonsense, it is defeatism, to get away from that profoundly important idea, because, after all, the greatness of a country, the greatness of a Commonwealth, the greatness of the United States, Mr. Ambassador, with all its enormous resources, is not to be cast out merely in terms of numbers of people, or tons of steel. Its greatness depends upon the quality of its contribution to the thought, the moral dignity, the moral leadership of the world. (*Applause.*)

Therefore, sir, I belong to those millions of people who like to feel that when we think of our own Country, Australia, we

think of the British World; we think of the ancient homes of our race; we think of those who have in every testing period been not only leaders here but leaders in my own Country. Does anybody suppose that when the war was on and the voice of Winston Churchill came out around the world it was the voice of one man, or the voice only of one group of islands in the world? Forget about it—it was the voice of free men all over the world, and, in particular, it was the voice of the people of the British Commonwealth all over the world! (*Applause.*)

I hope we won't fall into the elementary error of thinking that when great events, dramatic torturing events, of that kind, are over that we relapse and we get back into our own little groups and we forget the marvellous unities produced by crises. I hope we won't fall into that error. I hope that the next time you meet a man who talks about this Country as a second-rate power, you will remember those famous words which have just occurred to my mind:

“I would grasp Metternich until I felt his red, wet throat distilled in blood betwixt these two hands.” (*Applause.*)

That, no doubt, is an incitement to violence and could not be approved of, even by a former Home Secretary! (*Laughter.*)

But all I mean to say is that in whatever vernacular you may offer it, tell him—you know exactly what I mean (*Laughter*)—what you think about his views!

Sir, as for the state of the world, I just content myself by saying this, because time marches on, I have had the great privilege myself in the last few days of having much discussion with the Prime Minister here and his colleagues, about four hours' discussion with Chancellor Adenauer at Bonn, and about three hours' of discussion with President De Gaulle in Paris, and, more than ever, I am a believer in conference and in talk.

I know that those who can't talk very well have a rather acute disregard for those who can. (*Laughter.*) I know that politicians are regarded as a somewhat dubious form of life, but, believe me, talk is, perhaps, the most important thing in the

world. You have only to do what I have been doing in the last few days to realise that there are misapprehensions in the minds of people which can be removed only by talk, only by conference, only by thrashing it out across the table.

And this is why I firmly believe that you can't have too many conferences about the state of the world. Any differences that exist are all the better for being isolated and looked at, because the average difference when you look at it, when you discuss it, disappears like a spilt piece of ice cream on a tablecloth. It is very true—let's talk.

X
The present Prime Minister of the United Kingdom has said this time after time; his very distinguished predecessor said it in his usual vivid terms more than once. But I believe in conference. People say to me: "Oh, the Geneva Conference, this has gone on for weeks and nothing has happened. They have now adjourned. Another flop." And some distinguished patriot, who has a large-paying audience in some vehicle of information, establishes his patriotism by publishing to the world: "All this is nonsense. It is a failure."

Gentlemen, I want to say this to you. I do not believe that honest talk between our kind of people and other kinds of people was ever a failure, because, believe it or not, what is said, what has been said at Geneva, gets known around the world. Here in Great Britain, here in London, you are naturally exercised about the state of Europe: so are we. Why should we ignore the problems of Europe, because it is out of Europe that the great crises of this century have come. But you must never forget that in our corner of the world we lie offshore, in Australia, and so does New Zealand, from a vast Asian population, scores and perhaps hundreds of millions of whom are not yet deeply committed either to the East or to the West. as we call it; resistant to Communism but not completely involved in what we call the broad scope of Western Policy. But these are people who are moving up into the light of self-government. Every time they hear or read an honest case manfully presented, fairly presented, the kind of case that has

been presented at Geneva, in which there is no greed and no injustice and no slavery, but on the contrary freedom from slavery, for millions and millions of people, their minds must be affected, and, as to the extent to which they are affected, they are doubly affected when they find these noble and splendid views opposed by dead silence, by blank negatives or by overt or covert threats.

Gentlemen, don't forget that. Don't become too upset because a conference at a certain time doesn't produce a concrete result. I believe in my heart that everything that has occurred at Geneva, that the whole presentation of the case of the Free World has done infinite good to the cause of freedom, and, nonetheless, because it is brutally rejected by other people. (*Applause.*)

In short, sir—and I have been too long already, but “in short” means in short at last! . . . (*Laughter*) . . . never let us forget that the struggle in the world, the struggle in the Cold War is a struggle for the minds and hearts of ordinary men and women all around the world . . . (*Hear, hear*) . . . and in that struggle for the minds and hearts of ordinary men and women, the steady, faithful, honest presentation of decent policies and decent proposals can never be overthrown.

Sir, it is for that reason that I am a great believer in conferences. I hope that they will go on because I do not believe for one moment that the leadership which has been generously put forward by this country and by our great friends in the United States of America is to be easily overthrown by people who simply say “No, no, I will take when I can.” They won't take, they won't dare to take if the decent opinion of hundreds of millions of normal people around the world is against them. (*Applause.*)

CONCLUSION.

At the conclusion of the Dinner Viscount Bruce of Melbourne expressed warmest thanks to H.R.H. Duke of Gloucester for attending the Dinner and taking the Chair on this memorable occasion.

He mentioned that an invitation had been sent to Sir Anthony Eden but unfortunately through ill-health he had been unable to come. Had he done so there would have been present all the living past and present Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and Australia.

His Royal Highness thanked Lord Bruce for what he had said and for the manner in which the Toast had been received.