

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES, AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY, 16TH JUNE, 1960

Sir and ladies and gentlemen:

I have had a very, very exciting 22 hours in Harvard. I arrived at 5 o'clock last evening. I came into this famous yard. I lit a cigar, hoping that there was no local rule against it, and I occupied any one of the fourteen thousand seats available to me. I had an idea that when there were other people on the platform, there would be a bigger audience. But at any rate I sat in a seat and I meditated on life; and studied Harvard - for the first time, I blush to say. I saw respectable looking gentlemen, like myself, walking along with red bands on their hats marked with such symbols as "1935". (Applause) The mystic puzzled me a little, because I noticed, as a rule, what I took to be a wife who also was "1935"; and then a quite grown up daughter also branded "1935" (Laughter) and a somewhat disorderly small child of about 5 years old (Laughter) also marked "1935" (Laughter). A little reflection, of course, gave me the clue, but it was puzzling for a start.

And then I thought I would like to see the Undergraduate on the spot. I had made up my mind that all undergraduates in the United States of America would not only have the characteristic untidiness of undergraduates, but that they would have nothing to do with any old world customs if they were here. And so I sat and comfortably thought, "Well, there's one thing: this not being Great Britain, I will not see any umbrellas carried". Well my ear was pleasantly attacked by the choir which was then rehearsing and which I regret to say started rehearsing and woke me up in the President's house this morning. (Laughter) But they had been rehearsing. And they came out. Do you know that every third man carried an umbrella? (Laughter) Oh! What a disillusionment this was for me. The only thing that really delighted me was to discover that no one was so old fashioned as to carry the umbrella by the handle, by the crook, or whatever you may call it: it was usually seized a little lower down as if for purposes of self-defence. This delightful reconciliation of the spirit of the pioneer and the habits of the old world moved me very greatly. (Laughter, Applause)

And then of course this morning, when young Mr. Davis, who I should think is destined to be the best known man in the world inside five years, gave his Latin oration - do you remember? - so superbly done that I understood most of it myself. (Laughter) Full of a vein of irony which, in my days as an undergraduate, was reserved exclusively for classical Professors. All they had to do was to look as if they were being funny and, so far as we were concerned, they were funny. (Laughter)

Well, Sir, I give you those somewhat irrelevant and impertinent observations, because really this is a great day for me. I've had the great pleasure of having a lot to do, particularly in recent years, with the development of Universities in Australia and as I am a graduate of an Australian University myself, an honour paid by this most famous body is one that I appreciate quite beyond the power of words to express.

And of course to the political leader, almost a chronic political leader of the Australian nation, it means even more. Because on this day, through you, the most powerful nation in the world offers a courtesy, so to speak, to one of the smallest nations in the world, weak in numbers, but strong in will, a nation whose future is bound up with yours, and the body of whose intellectual and spiritual character forms part of a great common tradition.

Sir, you have honoured me by asking me to speak. I would not want to acknowledge that honour by offering you the commonplaces of that rather escapist piety of sentiment which characterises after-dinner oratory. You know what I mean? Most of you have suffered from it: I have practised it. (Laughter) And because I want to avoid that I don't want to say to you that "we are cousins" because, quite demonstrably, we're not: we get on much too well for that. I won't say that we have the same kind of parliamentary democracy, because we have not: we in Australia live in a constant blur of good-natured bewilderment at some of the "oddities" of your constitutional processes. And in case you think that that is a gross impertinence, I want to say that that is a bewilderment that I have found is shared by most of the Americans I meet. (Laughter)

But, Sir, we do have great things in common; so great that if we avoid insanity in the English-speaking world, we shall always be friends and allies. (Applause) To preserve this friendship, we are to face up to our tasks, accept our responsibilities with some favour, and I hope with some affection, but certainly without fear.

Today, Sir, fear is our greatest enemy. So far, a century of the most brilliant scientific achievement, of growing political consciousness, of material advancement, has been marred by fear, suspicion, and actual hatred, to a degree without modern precedent.

Many have developed a fear of life and its problems, so that - if I may say so with respect - the psychiatrists flourish like the green bay tree. Many of us have learned to fear our own unruly impulses and the individuality which is our divine gift, and we therefore seek the protection of conformity. If we seek to "Keep up with the Joneses", it is mostly because we want to be like the Joneses and avoid the accusation of being odd, or different, or conspicuous. We fear to be unpopular. When we do something we regard as generous or helpful, we are dismayed to find so much ingratitude. On quite a few occasions I have been asked by prominent Americans why the superb American international generosity of recent years has so frequently been received in other countries with either covert resentment or open hostility. My reply has always been that the world power of the British in the 19th century may well have inspired respect, but certainly it did not purchase popularity. Power exacts its own reactions. Friendship cannot be bought, and great power - however benevolently exercised - will always produce the most puzzling resentments. "Why should this rich nation, why should this rich man, have more than I have?"

Sir, we are frequently invited to fear the potential enemy. In destructive technology, we find him so clever, and we forget that in the constructive sciences the contribution of the free world is so infinitely greater than his. (Applause) We rejoice in power; but we sometimes fear and misunderstand the responsibilities it brings. We are tempted to withdraw into ourselves, to enjoy the fruits of our own labour and let the world go by. And this, Sir, brings me to the point that I want to make today.

Tennyson is now, I believe, unfashionable among the younger intellectuals. But he once wrote a few lines that have been much misunderstood - commonplace lines, if you like:

"We sailed wherever ship could sail,
We founded many a mighty state;
Pray God our greatness may not fail
For craven fear of being great!"

Now, Sir, that wasn't just tub-thumping; that wasn't just an old-fashioned form of imperialism. It was brilliantly perceptive. It saw quite clearly that greatness imposes responsibilities: that power which is merely enjoyed is a menace, but that power with responsibility can be, and will be, the salvation of the world.

The great free powers are on trial today: none more so than the greatest of them, the United States of America. The way in which they survive this trial will depend upon how they rise to the splendid, but awful responsibility of power: how bravely they guard the inner liberties of man; how utterly they cast out fear; how clearly their light shines before men; how far they keep the feeling of adventure, and avoid the defensiveness of riches.

Sir, a desire for power seems natural in mankind. Among politicians - and I am one - it is, I believe regarded as endemic, the desire for power. But the great men and the great nations are those who, having achieved it, do not weakly recoil from it, afraid of leadership, or rejoice in power for its own sake and for the precarious comforts that it may bring.

The twentieth century might so well have been the golden century of civilisation. It has been bedevilled by the lovers of power without responsibility. We don't denounce the infamous memory of Hitler because he gained and exercised power. Much greater men than he gained and exercised power to defeat and destroy him. Hitler is infamous, as are the other malevolent dictators of our time, because with all his power he had no smallest sense of responsibility for the true good of men and women. He obtained power, and became a monster.

Today, the communist threat is the result of another and terrible misconception, or denial, of the duties of power. If the men who come and go - because they do appear to come and go - as the controllers of the Soviet Union were content to pursue their philosophy in their own land, because they believed that their system, so alien to us, was the one to give peace and security and social justice and happiness to their own people, we might well wonder, but we would stand aside, on the principle of "live and let live". But when we see them as an aggressive force, aiming at the bending of hundreds of millions of free people to their own will, we know that we are again witnessing the search for power without responsibility.

What is the answer to power without responsibility? It isn't power simpliciter, though some people are prepared to believe that it is. "Get tough" has an appeal, particularly if the slogan-makers - and I suppose there might be some here if not in my own country, before the year is out - can stigmatise those who wish to negotiate as "appeasers". In a world such as we live in, power is essential, but it is not all. The truth, self-evident though it may be, is that the only answer to power without responsibility is power with responsibility. (Applause) Sir, it isn't sufficient to say that this is the truth - though I believe it is. As usual, it is necessary to say what it means.

It is a matter of famous record, referred to by my distinguished colleague M. Spaak just now, that in this place that very great man George Marshall announced the greatest and most generous aid plan in history. But greater even than its generosity was its intelligence. It was only a great power that could give great aid to others. But the giving of that aid was an acknowledgment of the responsibility that goes with power; a responsibility based on an understanding of international facts and of the true foundations of peace.

Here we have, I believe, great scope for the imagination. We know that on our side, the greatest of all wars was fought for freedom. But this did not have a purely selfish connotation. It didn't mean freedom for those who already enjoyed it alone: for Americans and British and Frenchmen and Australians and Canadians, and so on. No. It meant freedom for all men, including those hundreds of millions in countries moving towards independence, for whom self-government is the greatest of all adventures. When you, in your great way, and we in our small way, tax ourselves - you tax yourselves; we tax ourselves - to help new nations, we are not being just more or less comfortably generous, and feeling good about it: we are recognising the one-ness of humanity, and the profound responsibilities of power and of possessions. It isn't philanthropy, but wisdom, to accept the task of guiding and helping other nations and peoples so that they may acquire, not only the institutions of freedom, but, much more importantly, those rising standards of living and of thought without which free institutions will wither and decay. True, we may properly admit that we wish to restrain the expansive move of communism. To this end, as in the case of the South-East Asian Treaty we enter into military engagements and make military preparations. But, Sir, these will fail, unless, in those new nations which stand at risk, economic growth is stimulated, the development of the individual is pursued, and the communist powers find themselves increasingly confronted by communities resolved to accept no slavery of the mind.

In the performance of our responsibilities there is no time to be lost. Since 1945 the hitherto little-known new world moves rapidly to a series of new nationhoods. Look at Africa, until recently a nest of colonies, where a score of new nations are coming to birth. Are we to be just kind to them, giving to them that which we feel we can comfortably afford, the "crumbs from the rich man's table", or will we see in their emergence a great challenge to the wisdom of western civilisation? Isn't there a wise self-interest to serve, not a narrow selfishness for self-protection, but a self-interest based on the understanding that our own freedom is dependent upon the freedom of others: that we can't have peace and prosperity for ourselves alone.

Sir, may I venture to remind you of one of the great economic phenomena of our time? It is that, nationally speaking, the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" is becoming greater.

I believe that this isn't true inside our own boundaries, where social responsibilities, expressed in terms of schemes and social welfare and social justice, have led to a narrowing of the gap between riches and poverty. High and graduated taxation is, within reasonable limits and subject to legitimate grumblings, that we all understand so well, accepted. More and more, in our own place, - you in your country, I in mine - carry the burden of being "our brother's keeper".

But internationally this, in spite of great efforts, is not by any means true. We live in an age of amazing technological growth. Aided by the most superb technical skill, the great industrial countries make progress in almost, what I might describe, as a non-mathematical fellow, geometrical progression. The luxury of yesterday becomes the mass-produced commonplace of tomorrow. And so, nationally speaking, and in the words of the old song, "the rich get richer". You will remember the second line for yourselves.

But, Sir, what of the new nations, the relatively poor nations, with sketchy or primitive industries, with little technical skill and with, as yet, small facility for increasing it? At best, their rate of material improvement is arithmetical

not geometric. So far from catching up they are, in relative terms, falling behind.

Now, Sir, this consideration - quite clear as it seems to me - must give us all furiously to think. In face of it, we can't rationally decide to do less; we must do all that we can, even though it means we do a little less for ourselves. "Charity begins at home" they say. I've heard it many times in the course of my political life. It is a cynical proverb, and in this world it is a shockingly false one.

I never come into the United States without feeling something of the pulse and drama of your strength and your growth. Your resources are so boundless; your productive skill so boundless; your optimism (that great driving force) so all-pervasive. More than any other country in the world, you could, in an economic sense, go nearer to living to yourselves and by yourselves. And yet your high destiny is to use your strength to give light and leading and encouragement to the world. The measure of how you fulfil that destiny will, if you will permit me with all humility to say it, be the measure of your greatness. You have accepted the greatest responsibilities in human history. In this famous place, the father (or mother) of so many who have served in high places and have, in high or humble places, given leadership in the fields of the mind and the spirit, may I pray that year by year there will be more and more of your graduates who will persuade their fellow-citizens, not only here but right around the world, that just as rights are less significant than duties, so is strength admirable only for the responsibilities it accepts and discharges. The free world, and that great area of the world which longs to be free, looks to you with gratitude, but also with hope.

It is an honour, Sir, to be enrolled in your brotherhood, and a rare privilege to be allowed to speak to you, not so much for myself, as for Australia, your young but determined friend. (Applause)
