

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

This is a proud day for me. To one who has had a great deal to do with the recent expansion of Universities in Australia, and who is himself an Australian Graduate, an honour accorded by this famous foundation means more than can be readily expressed.

To the political leader of the Australian nation it means even more. For on this day the most powerful country in the world offers a courtesy, so to speak, to another country, weak in numbers but strong in will, whose future is bound up with yours, the body of whose intellectual and spiritual character is part of a common inheritance.

You have honoured me by asking me to speak. I would not wish to acknowledge that honour by offering you the commonplaces of that escapist piety of sentiment which characterises most after-dinner oratory. I shall not say that "we are cousins" because, for the most part, we most certainly are not; we get on much too well. I shall not 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 own constitutional processes.

But of course 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. To preserve this friendship, we are to face up to our tasks, accept our responsibilities with some favour or affection, no doubt, but without fear.

Today, fear is our greatest enemy. So far, a century of the most brilliant scientific achievement, of growing political consciousness, and 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 of its problems, so that 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 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 with such 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 did not purchase popularity. Power exacts its own reactions. Friendship cannot be bought, and great power, however benevolently exercised, will always produce puzzling resentments. "Why should this rich nation have more than we have?"

We are frequently invited to fear the potential enemy. In destructive technology, we find him so clever, and forget that in the constructive sciences the contribution of the free world is so much greater than his.

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 labours, and to let the rest of the world go by.

This brings me to the point I wish to make today.



Tennyson, no so demode among the young, once wrote a few lines which have been much misunderstood -

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

This was no imperialist tub-thumping. It was brilliantly perceptive. It saw clearly that greatness imposes responsibilities: that power which is merely enjoyed is a menace, but that power with responsibility can 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 responsibilities 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.

A desire for power seems natural in mankind. Among politicians it is thought to be endemic. 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 it brings.

The twentieth century, which might so well have been the golden century of civilisation, has been bedevilled by the lovers of power without responsibility. We do not 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 as the controllers of the destiny 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 seeing the search for power without responsibility.

The answer to power without responsibility is not power simpliciter, though some people are prepared to rest there. "Get tough" has an appeal, particularly if the slogan-makers can stigmatise those who would 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.

It is not sufficient to say that this is the truth. As usual, it is necessary to say what it means.

It is a matter of famous record that in this place 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 upon an understanding of international facts and the true foundations of peace.



Here we have 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 did not mean freedom for those who already enjoyed it; for Americans and British and Frenchmen and Australians. 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, tax yourselves and ourselves to help new nations, we are not just being 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 is not philanthropy, but wisdom, to accept the task of guiding and helping other nations and people, 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 SEATO we enter into military engagements and make military preparations. But 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? Is there not a wise-self-interest to serve, not a narrow selfishness for self-protection, but a self-interest based upon the understanding that our own freedom is dependent upon the freedom of others: that we cannot have peace and prosperity for ourselves alone?

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 is not true inside of our boundaries, where social responsibilities, expressed in terms of schemes of 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 grumbling, accepted. More and more, in our own place, we 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 an almost geometrical fashion. 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". But what of the new nations, the relatively poor nations, with sketchy or primitive industries, with little technical skill and with, as yet, small facilities 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.

This consideration, quite clear as it seems to me, must give us all furiously to think. In face of it, we cannot 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" is a cynical proverb, and, in this world, a false one.

I never come into the United States without feeling something of the pulse and drama of your strength and 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, live to 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 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 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, look to you with gratitude, but also with hope. It is an honour to be enrolled in your brotherhood, and a rare privilege to speak, not so much for myself, as for Australia, your young but determined friend.
