

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G.  
MENZIES, AT THE OPENING OF LEGACY WEEK ON MONDAY,  
5TH SEPTEMBER, 1960

Mr. President:

I think it is a very remarkable honour to be invited by you to open "Legacy Week" - a great honour. But in one sense a very easy thing to do because I think most people now in Australia - I would have hoped all people in Australia - regard Legacy as one of the finest things in our modern history in Australia. It seems almost fantastic to me to look at the Notice Paper and to see that it was founded only in 1923 by your old friend and my old friend, Stan Savige - one of the finest Australians of our time - and in 37 years it has established itself as something, I think, quite unique.

We are all pretty good when we are in the right mood at explaining to other people what our rights are, what would be done for us if only justice were done. I must not make an exception of myself in that connection, because if justice were done to me, I probably wouldn't be here, at any rate in my present capacity; but it is true that most people who give service to their country create in their country very properly, a sense of obligation, and occasionally may be disposed to emphasise the nature of that obligation. That is inevitable, quite understandable, and indeed, in a great number of cases, most proper. But this organisation is unique - an organisation of people who have, on the basis of their service to their country, accepted and performed additional obligations which they regard as arising out of that service. That is a very remarkable thing, and all of us who have watched the work of Legacy through all these years never cease to be thankful that such a spirit should have found embodiment in so many people.

A legacy. When one talks of a legacy a little hopefully occasionally, it indicates an idea that we are going to get something in cash or in kind. We are going to be at the receiving end. Most people think of a legacy in that sense. There are not too many people who think of a legacy in another sense. It is a cant phrase to talk about certain evil things in the world being a legacy of war. It has been left to this body, almost alone in the world as far as I know, to regard this legacy of war as something which imposes upon it a great trust for other people, and an obligation to do things for other people. This is a brilliant use of this word, and it is a very fine thing for thousands and thousands of people that you should have thought of it in that way.

We live in a time when people look to Governments more and more for almost everything and because people elect Members of Parliament, Members of Parliament are under an obligation to give effect broadly to what the people want; and more and more over the course of recent years in Australia - the last 20 years in Australia - the position has been that Governments are expected to perform more things, and do, in fact, perform more.

I was reminding another audience yesterday that when I was first Prime Minister, which, believe it or not, is over 20 years ago now, the total Social Services bill of the Commonwealth was £17m. and this year it is £330m. Now this, of course, indicates how more and more Governments are to make provision for people in the country who need it. But the thing to remember is that Governments can act only in the broad. They, so to speak, deal with human problems by wholesale; they establish a rate of pension; they establish statutory conditions for a man or a woman getting that pension. These rules have to be hard rules, precise rules, because you can't

have Social Services paid out by the Government according to the whim of individuals at any point of distribution and, therefore, you have the broad sweep of the law. Injustices must happen in individual cases, but that is unavoidable if you are going to have a body of rules laid down which will, in the broad, do the highest common measure of justice that Parliament thinks appropriate.

You are not in the wholesale business. You are doing something which no Government could do if it had all the goodwill in the world and all the money in the world. You are dealing with people, not as members of a group, not as one person out of a million who must be dealt with according to the rules that apply to the rest of the million: you are dealing with individual cases with humanity, with knowledge, with a capacity to select, with a capacity to understand how to deal with this individual widow or this individual child: how to do something which will help this particular boy or this particular girl to be educated, to be trained for something. This is a tremendously human task, and it can be dealt with only by looking at individuals and dealing with them on their merits so that you don't have to say, and you have no desire to say, "Well, there is a broad rule here and it doesn't fit this case, but it is just too bad. We have the broad rule and it is unalterable."

The great essence of Legacy, to my mind, as a man watching its work, has been its capacity for selecting the individual for individual treatment, and this is something that no Government department can do.

I am not among those who criticise Civil Servants. There are an awful lot of them about, and no doubt a fair number of you here today are, or have been, Civil Servants. The Civil Service in this country consists of an honourable body of men, of a level of capacity not inferior to the level of capacity in other undertakings. Let us not be too quick on the draw when we are dealing with the Civil Service; but the Civil Service can't do what you are doing. It must act under the rule. It must act according to the book, and if it didn't act according to the book we would be in strife. But you are able to do the things that the Civil Service can't do.

We have many departments, if you will allow me to repeat something that I have said before today. There is no "Department of Loving Kindness", and there cannot be "Minister for Loving Kindness". "Permanent Secretary to the Department of Loving Kindness". Dear me! The first thing that would happen would be that someone down the line would say: "But look, I must have the book of the words. What are the rules of loving kindness?" and you let us get to work defining the rules of loving kindness: we'll have a magnificent body of rules, but there won't be any loving kindness. This is something that no Government can provide for you. As individuals we're really quite a soft-hearted lot. You'd be surprised. But we cannot dispense loving kindness as you dispense a pension or a benefit under some Act of Parliament. And therefore, Sir, I am a great believer in Legacy. I think it is quite unique. I hope that in this Appeal that is going out this week, you will raise at least twice as much as in your wildest dreams you hope to. And, indeed, if it becomes adequately known in Australia that this Appeal is on, I want to tell you that I believe there will be a response in the hearts and minds of people that will astonish you. I wouldn't be too modest in what you are looking for; wouldn't be too modest in what you tell people about what your work is, because this is the greatest humane operation conducted by individual private citizens, most of whom might say quite well: "Well, I've done my share. I've done my tour of duty. Let somebody else look after this.

after this. Let the Government look after this." This is a magnificent heart-warming thing.

Now, the only other thing I want to say to you, though it may take a little time, is this: Australia is one country. It is in its way a sort of microcosm of the world. What happens here is happening in one form or another in most other countries. What you are doing here - the matter that I have been talking about - provides, in my opinion, a key to some of the great problems now current in the world. I'll tell you one, because we discussed it a great deal when I was in London at the Prime Ministers' Conference.

I can go back to a time when we sat there - five of us - Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia. We didn't disagree about very much; we had an agreeable series of talks with each other. All that now, numerically, is changed. We have new nations, formerly colonies, becoming members of the Commonwealth every year. Ghana appeared for the first time three years back. West Indies well on the way. Nigeria will certainly be at the next Prime Ministers' Conference. There are discussions going on about Malta. You know all the discussion that's going on about the Central African Republic of Rhodesia and Nyasaland on which the Monckton Commission has just been sitting? We have Kenya; Tanganyika. We have the vexed problem of the future of South Africa, should South Africa become a Republic. You can hardly set a limit to the development that is going on in the world - a pell-mell development. It's something that nobody visualised even five years ago, the speed with which new nations are coming into existence.

There might very well be 20 or 24 seeking membership of the Commonwealth or holding membership of the Commonwealth inside five years from now. Now this means that we are living more and more in a different world. The time has gone by when we can just look at South Africa - at Africa, rather, to use the entire continent - when we could talk about Africa and say: "Oh, yes," - a few clichés you know - "Darkest Africa", or "I wonder what is going on in the Congo", or "How is the diamond industry?" - and all this kind of thing. The fact is that in these years, and it will continue, country after country, some of the very names of which we will not have heard before, are coming into existence and, of course, one of the facts of life is that when an agitation begins in any country for self-government and it is powerfully led, led with fire and imagination by some leaders, it grows. It grows on itself. It accelerates its speed and all the chances are that the country might find itself with political independence when economically it cannot survive off its own resources or its own efforts. This is a great problem of our time internationally - how we are to act so that political independence with all its implications for friendship and alliance around the world can be matched with economic independence, with a genuine capacity to survive out of local resources. Well, some time ago we had a shot at this.

It ought to be remembered here with some pride that just as Australia was the country that created Legacy, so Australia was the country that promoted the Colombo Plan, and we have at all times been active contributors to the Colombo Plan - not just to make good fellows of ourselves. You don't do your work in Legacy to make good fellows of yourselves: you do it with both eyes on the end result, the end result being the helping of somebody to live a fuller and freer and better life. And similarly, when we give aid internationally we must be vastly careful to see we are not doing it to be just "good fellows", not doing it just to advertise some goods, but that we are doing it because we realise that a rise in the economic standards, a rise in the standard of living of these new

countries that have come to political independence, is the one thing that will not only do justice to their people, but enable them to maintain their independence and to resist the onset of the strange, mad doctrines of Communism. The best defence for them against Communism, against any other form of what I will call disorder, is that they should develop their own strength, that their people should look forward to a rising standard of living, generation by generation.

Now that imposes a tremendous obligation on the nations of the free world, just as you said, and this is all in parallel. It isn't sufficient to have won a war or helped to win one: It is now our obligation to help others who have suffered in consequence of that; so it isn't sufficient for the nations of the free world to say: "Well, we won this war. We may now attend to our own business. Just too bad if you people down there or out there are not doing too well, but charity begins at home: we're going to build up our own strength: we're going to go around telling each other how high our standard of living is." It is very nice to be able to do that, but there will be no peace for the world if more than half the people of the world are living under circumstances in which the glories of political independence have become completely Dead Sea fruit- have proved to be nothing but a misleading circumstance because in their own homes and in their own lives freedom is not accompanied by a rise in the standards of life.

Now, the United States of America has, I think, faced up to this responsibility magnificently - not to get thanks, because she hasn't had many thanks; not to buy some smile from somebody, because you can't buy that kind of thing - but because I genuinely believe that the people of the United States who pay the piper for these enormous grants in aid, have realised that the power which is theirs after emerging victoriously from two wars must be accompanied by a sense of responsibility. They, themselves, have accepted that particular legacy of war in the sense in which I used it in relation to you earlier; but it doesn't end there.

We must all do more and more: won't always be very popular. There's always somebody who's able to say: "Well, look at the money you spend on Colombo Aid. Look at the money you spend in relation to the other powers of South-east Asian Treaty Organisation. Look at the money that you lay out on the various Agencies of the United Nations. Why, if we didn't spend that abroad, think of the houses we could put up in our own country: think of all the slum clearances that could be facilitated. Let us look after ourselves." If every nation in the world, which is now a free nation, decided that from now on it would look after itself - each for itself and the devil take the hindmost - the world would be tumbling into the most frightful catastrophe of history before we're 20 years older. The whole condition of survival is that the new nations should be made to feel that they have our sympathetic, individual interest, our desire to help, our desire to build them up. There's one aspect of that which I have mentioned once before publicly, but which I propose to mention wherever I have the opportunity, and it's this: It was pointed out rather graphically at the last Prime Ministers' Conference by Mr. Nehru himself in a very thoughtful speech. After all, if there's one man in the world who can speak about countries achieving independence and about their problems, it is Nehru himself, with this enormous country of his own full of economic problems, and, of course, now with international problems of a rather unforeseen kind; but he pointed this out, and it bit itself into my mind.

We talk about this country being one of the "haves" and that country being one of the "have nots". You remember that before this last war there used to be great discussions

going on about the attitude of Germany because we had colonies and Germany didn't have them to the same extent - the "haves" and the "have nots" - and there must be a conflict between them, just as it's said there must always be a conflict between the rich and the poor: this gives rise to bitterness and to hostilities. Well, there's a lot of truth in it, but the ironical position today is that since this last war we have seen a most tremendous upsurge of technical improvement. Whoever thought when this last war ended that people would be knocking the moon about with rockets? Whoever would have thought that there would be vast competition for putting satellites into orbit around the world, and that no doubt in a few years time - or perhaps earlier - human beings will be taking observations from these missiles?

The wonders of physical science have been unveiled to the world more in the last ten years in terms of application than in any other period of human history and the great industrial powers - United States of America, Great Britain, Australia, because we are, man to man, a considerable industrial power with considerable resources of scientific skill and of technology - these nations will progress as the result of these things at an enormously rapid rate. We're only at the beginning of it, but you take the United States of America: you can't have 180,000,000 people with their resources of trained scientists, with their genius for production, for engineering production - you can't have a nation like that without seeing that its productivity, its wealth, its standards of living are not going just to keep increasing at 2 per cent a year by some arithmetical progression. They'll begin to increase by geometrical progression before we know where we are because of the enormous impact of technological resources and improvement. If you go to Nigeria or Ghana, or Kenya, or Tanganyika, if they come along into independence, they don't have these technical resources - a mere handful of trained men scientifically or technically, the most rudimentary forms of equipment as compared with the great technological countries - and the result is that they will advance - even left to themselves they will advance - but they will advance only a little bit at a time: at the best by arithmetical progression; certainly not by geometrical progression. And the result of that is that unless the rest of the world does something about it, the gap between those countries and the advanced countries will grow every year. I think it is a very striking consideration, but if our rate of improvement in the free world is like that and theirs is like that, it stands to reason that the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" will become wider and wider, and as a result of that a lot of these countries will be tempted to adopt alien ideas and to put themselves into orbit around the wrong ideological planet.

This is a matter of grave consideration for the world and, consequently, I believe that we're not just to go along saying: "Well, we're doing something. It is a reasonable minimum. Charity begins at home. We could spend this money with great advantage inside our own country."

You gentlemen don't honour the name of Legacy by doing as little as you can. You honour it by doing as much as you can. The whole of the Legacy movement is based upon doing something without technical obligation at all, doing something voluntarily, doing something because you realise the tremendous individual purposes to be served. And in the same way we, the nations of the free world who enjoy prosperity, who can see in front of us a long vista of dramatically improving standards - must turn aside from time to time and have a look at our neighbour, though the neighbour may be five thousand miles away, and say: "What about him? Is he coming along too?"

Couldn't we take just a little less of the surplus of our own comparative wealth in order to enable him to develop those technical matters in particular in his own country, which will enable him to live in a country that is free, but not only self-governing, but self-supporting and proud and independent?"

Now, Sir, that sounds suspiciously like a sermon, but if you invite me to come to Legacy you provide me with a text of the highest magnificence, and no Presbyterian can be presented with a text without instinctively getting up to preach a sermon."

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