

EXTRACT FROM SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES, AT THE 32ND  
ANNUAL DINNER OF THE SOLDIERS' CLUB, BONDI  
ON 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1960

Sir and gentlemen:

This year I had two experiences, in a very intensive journey really, that are worth mentioning here to you gentlemen.

The first was at the Prime Ministers' Conference in London where we could easily have got into almost irreparable trouble if we hadn't been able to fall back, consciously, upon the inner sense of unity and understanding which characterises the British Commonwealth. This is the great thing about the British Commonwealth: that we may disagree violently; we may have people who go into the newspapers and offer all kinds of views - I am a little cagey about them myself - but there are those people. And when you meet and you have some problem before you which might easily divide you, and therefore might easily break up the Commonwealth Association it is a good thing to be able to sit there and say, "But, you know, the Commonwealth means something". And if the Commonwealth is not united, it doesn't mean very much. Unity is strength - one of the few true proverbs in the language. And in the long run, because we constantly kept coming back to the idea that unity was strength, the Conference which might have been a disaster, turned out, in my opinion, to be the most remarkable success. Now that's one thing.

I went over to Washington where we had a meeting of SEATO - the South-East Asian Treaty Organization - a ministerial meeting. Well I haven't been a Minister for External Affairs before, so I was in a sense a new boy. This was very interesting to me. I have taken an interest in External Affairs quite a lot, as some of your newspaper friends will tell you. But on this occasion I was there qua Minister for External Affairs. And there we were sitting there - very important to Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, the United States of America, France, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand. This is this semi-circle of power, semi-circle of community of interest which, after all, stands between us and the most aggressive power and movement in Asia. This is of tremendous importance to us. And the more we discussed things with each other, the more it became clear that there are individual points of difference between South-East Asian countries which are quite avoidable, some of which are quite trifling, but all of which get blown up and irritated, exacerbated, by people who want to capitalise on them. And once more the whole lesson of the matter was: Are we to be united? Or are we to be divided and conquered? Unity, unity: this is the business.

And there are no people more than the people who are sitting in this room tonight who know what unity means, who know how to regard unimportant things as unimportant, who know how to take the prime things of life on which we agree and concentrate on them, and never yield.

We are living in a pretty difficult period in the world's history. And the potential opponent is all the time looking for ways and means of dividing us from our friends, of weakening somebody's resolution, of making us, for example, criticise the Americans; or to make the Americans criticise the people of Great Britain. All this is nonsense. In the twentieth century there has never been a time in which all these great free communities have been united, that they have been defeated. It is only when they have succeeded in disagreeing with each other, as in the case of the Suez, that

a species of disaster has occurred.

And so, Sir, unity is the thing. And I am here with great pleasure, because I know that tonight there are people of every conceivable kind of political belief. But you are all united, not only in the good fellowship of the evening, but united in your sense of service to this country and of concentration on the good future, not only for Australia, but for all those countries and peoples in the world who are our friends.

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