

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON.  
R.G. MENZIES AT ORANGE ON MONDAY, THE 24TH  
OCTOBER, 1960

Mr. Chairman, Parliamentary colleagues, present and to come, ladies and gentlemen:

One always has rather mixed feelings about a by-election. I know that some of you think they are fun: they're not really. They leave you with mixed feelings.

I'm sorry that we are having a by-election, because it will seem very odd to me, and I think to you, no longer to have a House in the Federal Parliament, because that is a name of very great honour and distinction, not only here, but in Australia. (Applause)

But it will also, of course, give you the opportunity of putting into Parliament, if you are disposed to elect my supporter, Mr. Wallace Meares.

Now I want to confess to you that I have a certain faint responsibility for his presence on the platform, because I cajoled him a little on the subject of this by-election and was delighted when I heard that he was submitting his name for your choice.

As a matter of fact he referred to his wife. I might as well tell you, because these secrets are bound to come out (Laughter) that his wife's father was in politics with me. Well make the best of that, or the worst of it, as the case may be. He represented a country electorate. My father sat in the Parliament of Victoria with him, and he represented a country electorate. I had an uncle who sat at that time in the Federal Parliament, and he represented a country electorate.

In reality, Mrs Meares is bound to back her husband in this campaign, because it means bringing him back into this neat fold of politicians - members of parliament, people who, at any rate, have done something to serve their country in public affairs.

Now I noticed that he seemed to be a little modest tonight about the fact that among his many qualifications is that he is a very well-known, and favourably known, farmer of great experience. That's a pretty good thing to be, if you're going to be elected to represent a country constituency.

But as he drove me in this afternoon from the airport he was telling me the kind of thing that a new candidate for Parliament can tell a battered old veteran like myself with considerable interest, because I can remember standing for Parliament for the first time and all the arguments that went on, all the rumours that were promoted. They are fascinating things. The only trouble about them is, that although I go back for 30 years, they've never changed in the whole of that time. (Laughter)

He said to me that somebody had said to him, "You know the trouble about you is that you won a competition of some kind and therefore you will be suspected of being an 'intellectual'" and I said "Well don't let that worry you because I have a great number of critics, some of them very highly paid (Laughter) And they've never made up their minds yet! Because they change the record about every fortnight as to whether I'm a weak-minded character who can never make up his mind, which is one of the stories, or whether I'm a tyrant and a bully, putting the whole Cabinet under my thumb, like a tyrant".

Well I can't be both, I can't be both. And, of course, as I can assure him, it's neither. He really won't be accused of being an intellectual, whatever that word means. He will be profoundly respected as a man who knows his business, has lived in a community and served it in many, many ways and has served this State in many, many ways.

Now, Sir, somebody reminded me today that this is the first public speech that I will have made since I returned from New York. And perhaps I ought to say a little to you about one or two of the issues that are provoked in my mind by that fact.

I want to say in the first place that I hope nobody here has any ambition, from the point of view of personal comfort, to engage in these jet flights to Khrushchev, and back again. (Laughter) Because I can assure you they are very, very exhausting.

I went to bed immediately after dinner on Friday night and I got up for dinner on Saturday night, and got up for dinner on Sunday night and apart from that I've been in a state of coma (Laughter) from which I have emerged, happily, in order to come on to this platform where I have spoken before and addressed this magnificent audience in Orange.

Orange always has a soft spot in my affections because it has always been kind to me; whether it has agreed with me or not it has always come out and listened. And that is a good thing, for me if not for you.

But, Sir, without rehearsing matters that are by now familiar to you I do want to say something about the issues, or one or two of them which arose in New York; because they are issues which don't just concern a few diplomats sitting in a large Assembly Hall, but which concern us very very closely. Because they are the great issues of peace and war and international understanding.

I had never attended a meeting of the General Assembly at the United Nations before and believe me it's an astonishing experience.

There are the representatives of 98 countries, about 15 or 16 new members this year, some of them countries, the very names of which you probably have no more heard of than I had before they were declared and admitted - 98 nations represented in what has sometimes been described as "the Parliament of the World".

It isn't a Parliament of the World in reality; but it is a great debating forum for the world. And this year to that Assembly there went a very high percentage of the heads of government in the world. I confess to you I wasn't very keen on that. I think that that puts the Assembly a little out of proportion.

But at any rate Khrushchev decided to go and then began, by various means, to persuade other people to go and, in the long run, I arrived quietly (Laughter) as the last and the least of all of them. And it was an astonishing performance.

Khrushchev is not a negligible man, I don't need to say that to you: he is physically strong, rough, mentally rough and shrewd. He has a rather nice sense of what I hope I might be allowed to call "farm-yard humour" (Laughter, applause) And he very soon disclosed his hand.

I am referring to this matter because there are still people in Australia, I regret to say, who regard all these

fulminations of his as something remote from our lives, people who haven't realised that his men in this country, his servants and advocates in this country are the Australian Communists. A lot of people haven't quite wakened up to that fact.

But he went along to this Assembly with certain things in his mind.

First of all he was going to attack the Secretary-General of the United Nations. And he made some plastering attacks on Mr. Hammarskjold who, after all, is the Chief Executive Officer of the United Nations and ought not to be involved in answering personal attacks. But he made them. He played hard for a vote against the Secretary-General. He failed miserably to secure it. He had no support on that issue, except such support as he could get from his satellites. I wish you all could have been there to see how it works.

Australia, by some grave injustice, no doubt, sat in the back row. I know it very well because it's an awful long way from the back row to the rostrum. It's a real route march to go down there, to open your mouth. But if somebody wants to take a point of order he has to walk so far, from where I was sitting, that by the time he reaches the rostrum he's forgotten what the point of order was. (Laughter) It's quite a place this.

But, over on that side sat the Soviet Union, with their battered desks in front of them. (Laughter) Every time Khrushchev wanted to create a demonstration against some speaker, whose views didn't suit him, he would raise his fist like this, and then proceed to hammer on the desk. And the moment he raised his fists all the members of his delegation hammered, all the people from the satellite countries, like Roumania and Poland, all round, they're all looking, they took their cue and they hammered their desks.

You've never seen such a complete admission, and it's a very important one, that there are satellite countries in Europe, owned and controlled, body and soul, by the Soviet Union.

Mark that point. We will be told as we have been told before that the Government of Poland, the Government of East Germany, the Government of Roumania, the Government of wherever it may be, Czechoslovakia, that these are all local, independent, democratic bodies. All I can say is that when the hand went up they all applauded, they all beat on their desk. They took their orders instantly from the master of the Soviet Union.

I made some point about this when, on your behalf, I spoke in that Assembly, by saying that I had never listened to such hypocritical nonsense in my life as the talk that Khrushchev had made about "colonialism" when he was, himself, the head of the greatest colonial power in the world. (Applause)

And that when, on another occasion in one of his speeches, he had said that freedom must be given to colonial people, I said I ventured to hope that that went for Poland and Roumania and Czechoslovakia and Latvia and all these other European countries. Because if it did, it would be the greatest contribution to freedom that the world had seen since the war. But of course it doesn't mean that. They are his servants.

Now that is one thing that I beg of all of you to have in mind.

Then, in the next place he began to make a play for the support of the new nations. Now, if we go back five years and have a look at the map of Africa, a vastly important country to us - never forget where we are living (here we are with Indonesia above us, Asia there and Africa there, Africa with over 200 million people) - five years ago not one part of Africa, except South Africa, was completely free, independent, self-governing. And in the last five years, principally owing to the humane policies of the United Kingdom, country after country has come to its freedom. (Applause) Ghana, Upper Volta, Nigeria. All these remarkable places are now free self-governing communities. And because there are now a dozen of them the Soviet leader decided that this was the time, either to cajole them, or to threaten them into supporting the Communist scheme.

Now it's all right for us, we're only ten million people. But we have a magnificent tradition of freedom. (Applause) We are not to be frightened, as I pointed out to him, by threats or by cajolery. We're in the tradition of freedom. We stand on our own feet.

But countries with rather less of that tradition, entering tentatively upon their new experiment in life - their new power to rule themselves - may easily be affected by threats, or by a somewhat violent form of persuasion.

All I want to say to you is that I am sure that in those tactics he completely failed. Because these new nations at any rate understand this: that if they are to exercise their powers as new nations, they must exercise those powers with dignity and with self-respect. And there was neither dignity nor self-respect in the way in which the Communist case was thundered at them.

And therefore I believe, and my colleague, the Attorney-General who was there also, was telling me only this morning that he was strongly of the same opinion, I believe, that Khrushchev's tactics with these people failed, that he overdid it and that in fact he left them with a rather low opinion, not only of his manners, which are, of course, deplorable, but are not so important as all that, but with a very low opinion of his genuine respect for them.

Because if I come before an audience which I respect I don't behave like a buffoon; I don't go on putting on an act and thumping things and knocking the table and pushing everything over as if I were wanting to direct attention to myself. If I did that here, you would all go home and say, "It was good fun; what a fool!" And that, after all, Wallace, wouldn't be quite the object of the exercise. (Laughter)

And so in that respect I think that he failed.

But there was one respect in which I felt disturbed about what went on. And I want you all to think about this because this concerns us so intimately.

Time after time, speech after speech, he and his satellites kept talking about colonialism, stirring up bitterness, bitterness in the minds of people who, as Harold Macmillan pointed out, were present only because they were no longer colonials, who were present only because they had become free independent people.

And yet he went on and these other people went on and I'll quote a phrase that I used in my own speech "in order to create in their minds a spirit of retrospective bitterness", to concentrate their minds on their disabilities of the past. And

by so doing to try to induce them to hate Great Britain, to hate the nations who had been the colonial authority.

And of course this is intelligible for the Communist, because the Communist has no religion of love. He thrives on hatred.

And here were these men, trying to blow up in the minds of these people hatred, hatred of the people who had been, true, their colonial masters and who had helped them to a state of freedom and assisted them in the establishment of their own Government.

Sir, that is a vastly dangerous state of mind; something to be discouraged, I believe, at all costs.

I took whatever opportunity presented itself to me to remind some of the leaders of these Governments, some of whom are close personal friends of mine, how bad a thing this was.

But you know there is a certain "mob psychology" about the Khrushchevs in the world, a certain feeling, shared by Hitler and Goebbels, that if you keep on saying it, and saying it, and saying it long enough, somebody will be affected by it, somebody will believe it.

Now, Sir, I don't want to elaborate those matters, but I do just want to say this to you: that I came away from this Assembly feeling, on the whole, rather disturbed, feeling that these enormous efforts that were being put forward, not to pacify the world, but to embitter it, to increase hostilities, presented a rather grim outlook.

And as I believe that the cure for most of these things is an enlightened and sensible public opinion, I'm taking the trouble to speak to you about it. Because, for this purpose you are public opinion. We must be clear. And, above all things, we must be firm in defence of the matters that we stand for.

Now, Sir, there are two things that follow upon that. We stand for a freedom of the mind that is, again, in our tradition. We are the inheritors of British liberty. And among its greatest defenders in the world! (Applause) This is a splendid thing. And a threat, of course, is always present to the mind.

But above that, or rather, beyond that in one sense, beyond that, is the constant threat to the very integrity of our country. I hope nobody supposes that by some mysterious act of divine providence we are destined always to be independent and free, ten millions of us, eleven, twelve, whatever the numbers may be. Because that is not true.

We will retain our right to live here, our right to develop industries, our right to cultivate our soil, our right to breed our flocks and herds, only so long as we have in this world not only the will to resist aggression ourselves, but great and powerful friends who will stand by us in that task. (Applause)

There is a bit of a disposition in some quarters, and in some muddled minds, to believe that it's all right so long as we speak everybody fair; as long as we are quiet and agreeable, nobody will touch us.

There is one newspaper in Sydney, you may have heard of it, I don't need to name it, which is not, you might say, entirely devoted to me. (Laughter) Do you follow me? It's

done its best to get rid of me for twenty solid years without success.

But I didn't think the day would ever come when a newspaper that would describe itself, I suppose, as conservative perhaps, I don't know, would attack the Prime Minister of Australia because he thought it was of prime importance to retain the friendship and co-operation of Great Britain and the United States.

Yet the other day, after I had made a somewhat long-winded statement, I fear, to Parliament about my expedition, this very newspaper referred to my activities as "currying favour" with the United States and Britain. Currying favour! According to them my prime duty was to "curry favour" with neutral countries.

I wonder what would happen, you think about it, I wonder what would happen if this country of ours became involved in war and I had to say I was so busy currying favour with neutral countries, who by definition couldn't come to our help, that I forgot all about keeping our bridges up with our mother country and with the United States of America who are the great fighting defenders of freedom in the world. (Applause) And our greatest friends. (Applause)

Sir, these things need only to be stated to explain themselves. There is too much woolly thinking on these matters. I will go through my life, I hope, believing that I know who our friends are and that we ought to be close to them.

Do you remember how all this arose? It's a tedious narrative by now, but you might like to hear it, at first hand.

I arrived at this Assembly and found that five nations were putting down a resolution. Who were the five? The five were Yugoslavia (Tito), United Arab Republic (Nasser), Ghana (Nkrumah), Indonesia (Soekarno), and India (Mr. Nehru). A resolution? What was the resolution? This is why they don't like me: they say I behaved scandalously. I should have supported it.

The resolution was that President Eisenhower and Mr. Khrushchev should meet: not that the United States and the Soviet Union should meet, but that the President of the United States, who is Mr. Eisenhower, and Mr. Khrushchev should meet, each of them having made it perfectly plain that he wasn't going to meet the other. Eisenhower, because he had said categorically, "You release these people from the aircraft, the RB47, or submit their case to proper international trial, otherwise I won't see you". Answer, "Nothing doing". And in his turn, Khrushchev saying "I won't meet Eisenhower until I have an apology for the U2". And in this state of affairs five nations, two of whom, it is true, belong to the Commonwealth, the other three of whom most certainly don't, five nations put down a resolution which was bound to be completely futile.

And in the second place they are having an election in the United States, a Presidential election. Candidates are having television debates and all sorts of other horrors. (Laughter) And on November 8th, three days after Wallace Meares is elected the member for Calare (Applause) on November 8th, only three days later while Wallace is looking at his dirty shoes and hoping (Laughter) that the campaign rules still obtain, they are going to elect a new President of the United States.

Now could you imagine anything sillier than to be calling on President Eisenhower to have a personal meeting, a personal meeting, when in a few weeks' time his successor is going to be elected.

But that wasn't the whole of it. That was a minor point. It's a strong one, but it's a minor point.

I took great exception to this resolution. I know I'm a very bad fellow for having done it: I didn't interpret Australian opinion. I'll take your opinion on it, and there are pretty good Australians here. (Applause)

I said, "Look, the time when the negotiations were broken off was in Paris, when there was to be a Summit Meeting of four-powers".

And of course they are the obvious four powers, because they are the only powers in the world with atomic weapons, they are the only powers in the world who, jointly or severally, could hurl the whole of mankind into destruction. These are the four great powers with atomic resources; they are the people who ought to meet.

Go back to Paris, so to speak. Get on with the Summit Meeting which was broken off by Khrushchev himself.

Therefore we ought not to be going through the foolish exercise of telling two people, who won't meet, that we would like them to - leading horses to the water, when we know they won't drink.

We ought to be realistic on this matter. Let's face up to the fact that the only hope for the world is that the four great atomic powers should get together and try to hammer out something that will reduce the burden of armaments, that will get rid, as far as possible, of nuclear weapons testing, that will, to use my own phrase there, "open a door into, perhaps, a more spacious chamber in the life of men and of women".

Wasn't this right? Wasn't this good sense? To move an amendment which said, "Go back to the Summit". Don't talk about impracticable things. Let the four representatives, when the new President of the United States has been elected, let them meet together and let them mean business, and let them see whether they can't take the first step, or two steps, or three steps to relieving the great and terrible tension that exists in the world.

I proposed this, not at somebody else's request - just at my own. I felt I knew that I was expressing the commonsense of my own people. (Applause)

And the interesting thing is that although there are all sorts of rather silly remarks being made by this rather silly paper about it, the fact is, first - I'm not taking them in order of time - the five power resolution by midnight, or a little after, was withdrawn, so that it was not put to a vote and was not carried.

And in the second place my resolution was voted for by three out of the four atomic powers - Great Britain, America, France and not voted against by the Soviet Union. They abstained.

And when, a few days later I had something well over an hour's private discussion with Mr. Khrushchev himself, he made it quite clear that he was in favour of a Summit Conference. (Applause)

It seems to me to be rather odd when we remember that Australians are practical people - there may be some who don't understand them yet, but practical people we are in Australia -

and it seems a little odd that because the Prime Minister of Australia puts up a practical proposal, a proposal which I venture to prophesy will find itself supported by the actual fact of a Summit Meeting before we're a year older, it seems quite surprising to me that that should be a subject for attack.

But there is another aspect of this matter that I want to say something to you about.

This resolution said "two people". I'll just use them by name - Eisenhower, Khrushchev. What about Macmillan, and De Gaulle? Why should they be out of this picture? Don't they count? Has Great Britain suddenly become neutral? It's just as well for us that she hasn't. Has France suddenly become neutral? Just as well for us that she hasn't. Why should they be out of this?

And my answer to it is this, and I put it quite plainly; There is too much of this miserable propaganda going on, and it goes on through the Communist journals and Communist agitators in our own country - that the one great issue in the world is between American capitalism and Communism, as represented by the Soviet Union. And that all the rest of us are innocent bystanders with no interest, except to see how these two big people get on with each other.

Ladies and gentlemen, if that were the truth, and I denounce it as a monstrous falsehood, but if that were the truth, then presumably Great Britain, Canada, France, Western Germany, Italy, the Benelux powers, Australia, New Zealand, we could all go neutral, because we don't count, we don't count. The argument is between America and the Soviet Union. I beg of you beware of false prophets; beware of that kind of propaganda. There are no people in the world who have a greater vested interest in free democracy and a greater vested opposition in us to Communism, than the people of Australia. (Applause)

Now, Sir, perhaps I've said enough about those matters, because I've been told, unsuccessfully for a long time now, that we're not very interested in foreign affairs in Australia. Well I've never believed it. And I believe it less every year that goes by. Because no country has been more affected by foreign affairs than we have. (Applause) And no country has, man for man, population for population, a better right to have a view and express a view in the councils of the world in order to solve, or help to solve, the problems of peace and war.

And therefore, I have been talking to you about something that is every bit as important to the resident of Orange or of this area, as it is to any other free independent person in the whole of the Commonwealth or, for that matter, in the whole of the world.

Sir, it's a satisfaction to me to know two things. One is that I believe that our ties with Great Britain and the Commonwealth countries and our ties with the United States of America were never stronger than they are now. (Applause) In the case of the United States they are immeasurably stronger than they were when my Government came into office at the end of 1949 (Applause)

And all I need to say to you is that, along the lines that I have been discussing with you, you may rely on us to stand firm in our loyalties, in our friendships, and in our detestation of everything that Communism stands for.

Now, Sir, before I finish perhaps I ought to say a



word or two about the local scene. I haven't yet had a chance of discovering what all the argument is about on the local scene - they tell me it's quite a quiet election. But there is one thing I want to say to you about it.

We have a Liberal candidate. Here he is. (Applause) There is no need to tell you he is my man. I would be grievously disturbed if he didn't become the member for Calare.

But, Sir, there is also a Country Party candidate. And every time you have a candidate from each of the two parties making up the Government, there is a temptation for supporters of one candidate or another to be raising issues of discord. Now I want to say to you, I hope you won't fall into that. I hope everybody will realise that, just as I want nothing half so much as to see you put No. 1 against Wallace Meares' name, so I want to see you put No. 2 against the Country Party candidate's name. And if you're Country Party supporters, then I want to see that your second preference doesn't go astray, but that it goes to the Liberal candidate.

You will get all sorts of people who make all sorts of funny little claims and funny little arguments. I've presided over the longest Government, in point of time, that has ever existed in Australia. And from the first day until the last it has been composed of Liberal Ministers and Country Party Ministers. Most of them are Liberal ministers because of the balance of numbers in the House. But for eleven years we have worked together, thought together. I have the most profound respect for my Country Party colleagues.

My Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. McEwen, I think, Sir, one of the great men of this country. (Applause) But if he were here with me he would say at once, with me - I've heard him say it elsewhere - that in the whole time that we have sat together, eleven years, there has never been a matter decided in the Cabinet on Party lines, never once.

We exchange our views. People make proposals; they are thrashed out. We end up by getting the common sense of the Cabinet.

Anybody who wants to make mischief between the Liberal Party candidate and the Country Party candidate or between the Liberal Party and the Country Party in this by-election is opposed, primarily, to the Government. Because a composite Government lives on harmony, and falls to pieces with discord. We've had eleven years of supreme harmony and I beg of all of you: don't have that disturbed. Nobody can secure any benefit from discords other than those who want to bring the Government down.

You've got candidates here and, as I've said, in the case of Mr. Meares, I find it hard to believe that you could find a man more qualified to express the practical view of the man on the land, and indeed, when he comes to Parliament in Canberra, he will find himself sitting, in my own Party, in company with something over 20 people who represent similar constituencies.

And so at this by-election, No. 1, give us the benefit of your backing. I don't know what the Labour Party has been saying about these things that have happened overseas. I know that poor Mr. Calwell is now embarrassed by riches. He's got a daily column in a newspaper, and a weekly broadcast somewhere else, and a Meet the Press here, or there. He never stops, except to take his foot out of his mouth. (Laughter, applause)

I don't know what his views are, or what the views of his party may be. But I have done my best to tell you what our views are, and what we stand for, and I'll be the most surprised man in Australia if you don't give us your enthusiastic support. (Applause)

---

Interview at Bathurst Airport after Meeting

Interviewer: Mr. K. McIntosh:

Now, Sir, would you like to tell our listeners your impressions of the meeting tonight, and any other relevant information that you think might be of interest to the electors in this area?

Prime Minister: Well this is not the first time that I have spoken in Orange, by a long chalk, and I've had some very good meetings here in my time. But tonight is the greatest meeting I've ever had there, most enthusiastic. I was delighted with it.

I thought that Mr. Meares made a very, very good impression on a large Orange audience, and I came away from the meeting feeling extremely confident about the result of the election.

Because, after all, Orange is a very, very important centre, and the votes there are a very considerable factor in the Calare electorate. I thought the whole atmosphere of the meeting couldn't have been better.

It seemed from the speech that you made, Sir, which we had on the air at 9 o'clock incidentally, before you finished speaking, that you were very impressed with the area as a whole and you did make the comments about having been in Orange before. We were quite impressed with the speech that you did make; the heckling was non-existent.

Prime Minister: That's right, non-existent. It's the only time in my life when I haven't minded the absence of interjectors because the audience was quick, it was alert, it took every point and I found a note of enthusiasm in it which I think is very good.

And it is, of course, very proper because I've never seen the country looking better. And if the country were looking bad, no doubt the Government would be blamed for it. And so I am always quite willing to take a little bit of the credit for the fact that the rain has been falling and the pastures are green. I'm looking forward very much to seeing Mr. Meares at Canberra.

---