

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES
AT THE ALL NATIONS CLUB ON FRIDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER, 1960.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen:

I want to compliment my old friend, the President, on his obviously continuing studies in ambiguity. (Laughter) I've never heard a more masterly exhibition of ambiguity than the one he gave us tonight, since the last time I read one of his judgments. (Laughter)

I also want to say at once, a propos of the last remark, about Sir Richard Boyer's rock-and-roll session, that on one occasion - this may seem to some of you to be remarkable - I was up at the A.B.C. Studios doing a television recording - this is a remarkable event - and on the way out it turned out that the Rock-and-Roll Session was on.

For some reason that is concealed from the wise and prudent and revealed only unto babes, the gentleman in charge of the Rock-and-Roll Session, who was a young Australian, spoke in a rich Texas accent. (Laughter) This apparently is de rigueur.

Here were all these young gentlemen, and these young women, curiously garbed, they were flourishing around there. I was fascinated to see this because I'm an old fellow. I wanted to know what these frightful performances that excite people's minds might be. I've never seen a collection of people so utterly bored! (Laughter) So miserably unhappy! But at any rate, as one of the people with me said, it's good exercise. (Laughter)

Now, that is all I know about Rock-and-Roll; that is the only time I ever saw it. I never want to see it again until the final shadows are gathering around me, when I might feel that it induced the necessary atmosphere. Now that is all I have to say about that.

I'm not allowed to be political; I'm not allowed to have an argument with the Chairman of the Broadcasting Commission - I have plenty, but we conduct them in private, with a smile on our faces and clenched teeth. (Laughter)

Nor, Sir, am I surprised to be told that this is a non-political occasion. If it hadn't been I don't think I would have been here - I have enough of that as it is, in other places. But I well remember Sir Robert Garran talking to me about the idea of this Club; and I well remember telling him that I thought it was a magnificent idea. I think it is.

I'm very glad to realise, looking around, seeing what goes on, seeing what we are given to eat, seeing what we are given to drink, that you have been able to enlist the aid of a few tycoons like Dave Blacklock (Laughter). This is a very, very useful thing, Dave.

But of course it is non-political. The whole of this matter as it was put to me originally by the grand old man himself was that some place ought to be established - and Sydney was the obvious place in which to commence it, since Sydney is always in need of civilizing influences. (Laughter)

When a man says publicly, in effect, that he is no longer in need of civilising influences, then he is beyond redemption. That is all I want to say to you. (Laughter)

Anyhow that was the idea. I felt at once that this was a splendid idea because in some way or other we had become

accustomed, and perhaps we still are, in Australia, to talking about "new" Australians and "old" Australians.

I suppose the phrase "new Australian" was a handy, compendious sort of thing; though I do remember reading an advertisement one day in one of the newspapers by two native-born Australians who in some mysterious fashion were about to have a child - the wife was anyhow. (Laughter) And they advertised to see whether they could have an apartment and they said, "Two Australians, old, together with one Australian, new, would like to rent an apartment or flat", or something.

But these distinctions, though they come trippingly to the tongue, these broad descriptions, have in them the seed of something unsound. This Club, I believe, was established so that all of the people who came here might come here and feel that whatever their derivation might be, they were all Australians - citizens of one place, of one country, people whose common interests far outweighed any differences of background or of circumstances.

And that is the whole justification for a Club of this kind. We are neither new nor old, but we hope to be good; we hope to be useful; we hope to be powerful contributors in our own fashion to this country.

All I want to do is to elaborate that idea just a little because there are a few aspects of it - they're commonplace, they're platitudinous, but they, as everybody knows who reads about me, I'm a master of the platitudes. (Laughter) They are commonplace. But like most commonplace truths, they are occasionally neglected.

Now first of all, politically. Let me make a non-political remark, a non-Party remark about the broad political problem.

One of the important things about Australia is that - and this is a matter to which my friend, Mr. Calwell, who began it, and my own Government which continued it, can share some credit: I never regard this as a Party matter - this country has for years and years now, since the war, had a great volume of immigration.

I can assure you, speaking as one who long before the war was engaged in political affairs, that the migration we have seen into Australia, the movement of populations into Australia, in the last fifteen years, would have been utterly impossible between 1925 and 1939. Utterly impossible!

There would have been objections of all kinds. There would have been grumbles. It would have been said that there are people coming in here to take the bread out of our mouths. You know, all these orthodox, rather silly, arguments were current and they were prevalent in the fifteen years before the war.

In the fifteen years since the war, with a remarkable degree of what might almost be regarded as unanimity, the people of Australia, employers, employees, great companies, great unions, ordinary citizens like you and me, have all said, "This is the thing".

The result is that we have had an increase in the population of Australia in the last fifteen years, apart altogether from natural increase of the population, which is developing this country so fast, in terms of human beings, that I doubt whether there is any other country in the world that can claim, pro rata, a similar history in that field. (Applause)

I remember on one occasion speaking to Congress in Washington, and pointing out that we had a good deal in common, altering the historic period a little. Because when I was a small boy at the turn of the century everybody talked about the vast movements of people into the United States. Superior people said, "Oh, it's only a melting pot". As if there was something wrong with a melting pot? You wouldn't get too far without it.

But there was the idea; that was the phrase. And the picture was of immense hords of people moving into the United States, from some time after the Civil War until a little after the turn of the century.

Our rate of intake compared to our base of population has been greater than the rate of intake of the United States over that period.

Therefore the first thing to remember is that this is a very remarkable thing: that by common consent of what I will call the "indigenous inhabitants" of the country, there has been this great movement of people from European countries, from Great Britain.

There is a danger in all that, only one. It is a danger that we have to avoid; and a danger which this Club partly exists to counteract: And that is that we should become - or you should become, those of you who derived from other Nations - members of a colony with some "separatists" element about it. So that politicians, whoever they may be, will be coming along at election time and saying, "Now we must play for the Italian vote; we must play for the Belgian vote; we must play for the French vote; we must play for the German vote".

That kind of thing would be terrible. It would be terrible because it would indicate that people, having come here, had not become members of this community, but were separate bodies, floating around, or even fixed, but not coalesced in any way with the community.

I deplore the possibility of that kind of thing. I don't want, myself, as a politician, to have to talk to people and say to myself "Well these are .. (Italian, German, whatever they may be) I must remember that; I must speak to them in that sense".

I'm the Prime Minister of Australia and I want, whenever I talk, to talk to Australians.

And if they have come from other countries, then I must say that they bear a striking resemblance to my own ancestors. It's always worth remembering that: the only indigenous inhabitants of this country were the aborigines.

People like myself - you take myself - my grandparents on my father's side were Scots and came out from Scotland - a very honorable exercise, and, of course, a great enrichment of the country. (Laughter) - I speak with all the modesty and absence of bigotry of a Scotsman. (Laughter) And my mother's family came from Cornwall. And there you are: the free booters of the north, and the smugglers of Cornwall. (Laughter) (No wonder they regard me as a harsh task master).

When I married my wife I thought she was of practically pure Scots derivation. I discovered too late that she is practically Irish to the back teeth! (Laughter)

Well, there we are, you see. These things are all a mixture. And when you talk about an Englishman - (Interjection:

"That's the best of the part.) Would yer mind saying that with a bit of a brogue? (Laughter)

Then if you go back a little futher: who are the English? You know, you have to go back and back - the Angles, and the Saxons and the Picts and the Scots and the Normans who conquered them. Oh, dear me. The Danes, who half-civilised them. (Laughter) Are you a Dane, Dick? Oh!

The truth of the matter is that all the great races and great nations in the world have been built up upon aggregating a variety of people, and acquiring from each variety a quality which matters. This has been a great, great thing in the history of Australia.

I hope that we will all resist - as this Club exists to resist - any idea that we should be put out into separate fractions and pretend that we are just fractions, and that we are not really parts of the whole.

Now that is the only political observation I make to you.

Industrially I want you to remember what has happened in Australia. We've had the most enormous industrial development - that is elementary. Everybody knows about it. Without it we could not have sustained an immigration programme; and without the immigration programme we could not have sustained the industrial development.

I go around a good deal, as you might suppose. And every now and then I find that I have to visit some big factory or establishment conducting some operation which I know to be of enormous importance to my country. Each time I say to the manager, "How many " - to use this phrase that I don't much care for - "how many new Australians do you have in this factory?" The answer is always 40%, 50%, 60%. So that at the end of a year you are increasingly saying to yourself: "How would we go for these great industries, if we hadn't had this movement of population into the country?"

I want you to remember that. This is an occasion of great pride. I would like all of you to say to anybody who has come to Australia recently, and who works in these great enterprises, how much it has meant to this country. Even in the most basic industries we have, expansion would have stopped like that, but for the increase in population. Therefore, industrially, this has been a magnificent thing.

Then, of course, socially I think the impact is going to be remarkable. I don't want to descend to the sordid details of the kitchen but really, what has been done to us in the last ten years has, I think, been quite magnificent. The good old simple ideas have been varied. Many thousands of Australians have begun to understand that there is more in life, more at the table, than roast mutton and potatoes.

When I was a small boy, and even when I was a young man, if I could remember back as far as this, there were two kinds of cheese available in Australia - one was old cheddar, and one was young cheddar. (Laughter) And now we live in the greatest variety in the world.

But these are mere gastronomic affairs. The fact is that in art, in music, in writing, in all the things that touch the human spirit, and furnish the human mind, I believe that the contribution of riches to the Australian community in the last ten years, is not yet, can't yet, be fully understood, but will ultimately tend to transform the continent.

These are marvellous things, and they will be all the more marvellous if we can constantly say to ourselves in the old song on which so many of us were brought up: "the more we are together, the happier we'll be".

The less we dwell on our differences, the better. But if we must dwell on them, let us understand them, let us understand why they exist, and let us, perhaps transmute them ultimately into occasions not of difference, but of unity, the new amalgamation of ideas, a new fusing of literature, of background, of - to use a word that I don't care for very much - culture in all its forms.

Now, Sir, all those rather wandering remarks presented themselves to my mind as I thought about the origin of this Club, about Sir Robert Garran, who was, himself, a great scholar, and a thinker, and a statesman.

I just add one thing to them before I conclude.

The world grows closer together. You may take the "wings" in the morning and fly into the uttermost parts of the sea in an hour or two today. You can, thanks to the international dateline - and I've experienced this quite a lot - arrive in San Francisco before you leave Sydney. I know; I've proved it! It's no use the scientists confounding me. The last time I went I left at 5 o'clock from Sydney on Thursday afternoon and arrived in San Francisco at twentyfive to five on Thursday.

In one sense all this has been astonishing. In another sense it becomes almost frightening; we become so close to other countries that we feel, occasionally, that we are vulnerable to them.

But in spite of this tremendous acceleration of physical neighbourhood in point of time and place in the world, more and more one sees tendencies to have a sort of isolationism, a nationalism carried too far, a feeling that, "Well, let the rest of the world look after itself; we'll look after ourselves".

One of the great beauties of what has been happening in Australia is that the thousands, and now becoming hundreds of thousands, and growing into millions, of people who have come here from overseas, they are not isolationists, they are not - I'm not talking about it in a military sense - isolationists in the sense that they are not interested in the rest of the world.

On the contrary, they come here, knowing by all their background and experience, that we become more and more part of the world, part of the world of thought, part of the world of literature, part of the world of music, part of the world of painting and of sculpture. And all this will tend, in Australia, to make us a more internationally minded community.

Sir, all these things I believe are good. And it is because I believe them to be good, because I know them to be good, and because I want them to continue, that I availed myself of your invitation to come here tonight and just say a few words about them. (Applause)

Question:

Does the Prime Minister consider that the United Nations has a greater chance of survival than the League of Nations?

Prime Minister:

Well, if you all heard that question, did you?, 'Do I believe that the United Nations has a greater chance of survival than the League of Nations?' I think my answer to that is "Yes, I do". Because I think that the world has learned a good deal from the errors that occurred in relation to the League of Nations.

There was a great disposition between the two wars to think that the covenant of the Peace Treaty, the covenant of the League of Nations, the existence of the League of Nations, in itself provided protection for peace-loving people against aggression. And that just wasn't true because it was a somewhat vague body: it had no strength - it was a debating authority - it had no particular strength.

And I believe myself that people leaned on it so much, particularly between 1934 and 1939 that they misled themselves into thinking that they were safe, when they were not. I saw that very clearly in Great Britain in 1936 and in 1938.

I think we have learned something from this. It is a slow and painful process; but at any rate on two or three occasions now the United Nations has actually taken some step in relation to a matter which has had some significant effect - up in Korea; across in the Congo - a very unsolved problem yet, but a very much less difficult problem than it would have been if the United Nations had stood by.

And then of course in the second place, never forget that the League of Nations always tried to fly on one wing because the United States of America didn't belong to it. But the United Nations has, apart from the position of China, an almost universal membership. And it certainly contains the United States, which the League of Nations didn't.

Therefore I think, on the whole, while one mustn't be over optimistic because there is much to be done yet, I would give the United Nations a greater chance of success, than I would have given the League of Nations. (Applause)

Question:

What is the Prime Minister's view as to the establishment of a Pacific Common Market?

Prime Minister:

Well, Sir, if I knew what a Pacific Common Market was I might have a better idea of answering it.

If this is something that is designed to balance the European Common Market then I think I ought to say to you that the European Common Market scheme was based on the idea of the Western European powers that if they could get together and establish some kind of economic union with, ultimately, an even Customs barrier which was the same all around them, and with internal free trade between them, then they might develop their economic strength.

And I have always thought that was right. Because it leads to flexibility, to movement of expert people from one country in Europe to another, to access to raw materials from

France, for example, which could be effectively used in Germany, and from raw materials in Germany which might be effectively used in France. I think that this thing is well calculated to reduce costs of production, to improve the overall economic strength of Western Europe. And that, I think, is a very good thing for the world.

We have a few aspects of it ourselves that attract our interest. But I needn't discuss those tonight. But by and large the European Common Market was a good conception. And the Messina Powers are to be congratulated on it.

But you can't take a scheme like that and transfer it to the Pacific. I find it very difficult to understand how you could have Australia and New Zealand and Malaya and India and East Pakistan and the Philippines, all with one Customs barrier around them, one covering the lot, and internal free trade. Because quite frankly, if you will allow me to make a thoroughly selfish remark, if I were to propound a scheme of that kind, I wouldn't be beaten at the next election - I'd be beaten before it ever arrived. (Applause, laughter)

Question:

Does the Prime Minister think that mankind will survive the rapid growth of world population?

Prime Minister:

Well, Sir, I think that that is a most ambiguous question.

I suppose it is quite true in theory, that we can eat ourselves out of house and home in the world, but I think that the pessimists on this matter overlook two things.

One is that the rate of increase in the population by natural increase doesn't necessarily maintain itself as standards of living rise. On the contrary! The rate of reproduction rather tends to fall as the standard of living rises. That I believe is what is now called one of the great "demographic truths".

But in the second place - and this is the other side of the picture - how do we know how much food the world can produce? There are too many people in the world who pronounce themselves on certain matters without having considered other factors in the world picture, which are rapidly changing.

We could go to a place six or seven hundred miles from here where, only relatively few years ago sheep couldn't flourish: they would dwindle, peak and pine, to use Shakespeare's expression. At the end of a couple of years, 'No, the pasture was no good; they couldn't flourish on it; they couldn't fatten; they just died off'. And there were hundreds of thousands of acres of it.

Then the metallurgists - one doesn't think of metallurgists as agriculturalists, but they are - went into it and they discovered that there were certain trace elements in the soil, or that were not in the soil, that were lacking. And whatever it was on that occasion - copper or cobalt, or something - they said "That's the deficiency", the land is put into cultivation, a certain amount of this deficient mineral drilled in and now they carry two or three sheep to the acre.

Now that is just a trifling example. I don't believe we yet know how much food the world will produce; or how many animals the world will nourish. We don't know yet - because science is only at the beginning of solving these problems.

Does anybody know, in the case of Australia, whether from the Great Salt Lakes of the interior we won't some day on a proper and efficient basis derive fresh water and irrigate the country? I don't know. But I believe it will be done.

And so before one becomes pessimistic and envisages a future world with doubling and re-doubling populations, with so many of them dying of starvation, one should be very thankful to realise that while the Almighty gave us problems to solve, He also gave us human minds with an almost infinite capacity for solving them. (Applause)

Question:

Can the Prime Minister foresee the election of a "new" Australian, other than British, as a member of Federal Parliament, and possibly, as a Minister?

Prime Minister:

In the good homely Australian phrase, Sir, my answer to that is "Too right". (Laughter, applause)

Question:

Could world peace be improved by better understanding and friendly atmosphere between the world leaders at Summit meetings by each speaking the other's language?

Prime Minister:

Did you hear that? The suggestion is that we would all get on very well together if we spoke each other's language.

I'm not at all sure that I agree with it. I'm sorry to disappoint those who are advocates of some form of international language, but I'm not at all sure that I agree with it.

I have known a few people and I have had a few responsible tasks in my life; I've had a few fellows that I think I might have got to an understanding with if I hadn't understood what they were saying. (Laughter)

And as a corollary to that, let me tell you that there is a great virtue in talking, if I may select an example at random, to a Russian. And I have no Russian. There is some advantage in being able to meditate about the matter while the interpreter gives you the translation. There is a good deal to be said for that.

I don't belong to the yak-a-t, yak-a-ty yak school of negotiation - you know what I mean? You see a lot of these people: one has hardly shut his mouth when they are talking the same language, before the other fellow is saying, "Yes, yes, but look, so and so and so and so". And then the second cuts the first off in mid-air. No! No! When I speak I like to be understood. But when the other fellow speaks I'm not too sure that I do. (Laughter, applause)

Question:

What impact will the election of Senator Kennedy to the Presidency of the United States have upon world affairs?

Prime Minister:

There is a very honest answer to be made to that - "I don't know".

I don't know because I have met Senator Kennedy and that is all. I know Nixon pretty well. Therefore everything I would have would be mere hearsay.

But I think that we want to act on this assumption which I think is well-founded, that the incoming President, Senator Kennedy, is a man of parts. He has, though he is young, a pretty active experience. I have every reason to believe that he is a man of courage, of resolution and of breadth of mind. And that is not a bad equipment with which to start in discharging the greatest office in the free world. (Applause)

Question:

What is considered by the Prime Minister as the best contribution Australia can make to world stability?

Prime Minister:

Well if I may say this, I think that the first contribution that any country can make to stability is to be stable itself. No unstable country can make a true contribution to stability in the world.

And if we are to be stable in Australia, then I don't mean that we are to be stagnant in Australia. Of course we won't be. But as we go along, if we can be stable, sensible, sane, developing, never be afraid to express our own views to the other nations of the world - but never fall into the error of thinking that we are one of the greatest powers in the world - an error that people occasionally do fall into - that is our contribution. Good sense, wisdom, a spirit of adventure. But a sense of balance underneath it all.

And one of the great tasks, internationally, of any Australian leader, whether it is myself or my successor, or whoever it may be, is on that basis of soundness - to talk with modesty, but with firmness, and with friendliness in the Councils of the world.

And it is surprising how, in spite of our numbers, almost, or relatively insignificant numbers, we are listened to in the Councils of the world. I think that is a good thing. We want to go on. (Interjection: "Don't you think that is because of you rather than of Australia?") Certainly not! It's in spite of me. (Laughter)

Question:

Speaking of cricket, in the Prime Minister's opinion do Meckiff and Rourke really "chuck" and would batsmen do better if they refrained from doing so?

Prime Minister:

Sir, I don't know. The umpires have a habit of deciding those matters and they are in the best position to judge.

But I just want to remind you - I saw this story attributed the other day to my friend Jack Hobbs but it originally began in relation to Victor Trumper. He was in batting many years ago with a distinguished colleague of his, a famous cricketer, and they were 'doing very nicely, thank you' and Vic's partner came down the pitch for one of those mid-wicket consultations - like going behind the Speaker's chair at Canberra - (Laughter) and he said "Vic, this fellow's throwing". And Vic said, "Shut up; they might take him off!" (Laughter)

Question:

Would the Prime Minister care to say what he thinks of Mr. Khrushchev?

Prime Minister:

Now there is a time limit on these things and therefore I can't really profess to answer this question without talking for half an hour. (Laughter) And I am not going to do that.

But I had a most interesting, and quite long, personal discussion with him. He of course is an exhibitionist, beating the shoe on the desk - I was there; I saw all this - and slapping with the hand. All this is a form of showmanship. He is an earthy character. He is not without humour. I found that rather disturbing. (Laughter) I ventured to describe it on some occasion after I got back home as what might be called "farm yard" humour, if you follow me.

And there he is. I don't think that he wants a global war, a nuclear war. I think he means to make all the advance he can in the world short of waging nuclear war. I don't think that he is very sensitive to what I will call the "western mind"; I don't think he really understands it.

I think he still believes that we are perhaps more easily frightened by bluster than we are. Because we are not really a bit frightened by bluster. But he hopes that some of the new countries, particularly in Africa, may take him 'au pied de la lettre' and say, "This is it. We must behave. We can't quarrel with that man; he's formidable; he's strong; he's threatening".

That was his object. I don't think it succeeded. In some ways I think that he is a man with a rough, robust intelligence that is not to be overlooked at all, that is formidable. But whether he clearly sees the ultimate direction in which he is travelling, or whether he clearly understands the nature of the people that he is dealing with, that is an entirely different matter.

A lot of these people who are dictators are accustomed to believe that people are numbers, they're statistics, they are people to be moved around. In our kind of world we believe that the most indestructible element is the spirit of man - that is the indestructible thing. And it is because we look at men and women as individual human beings who have a spirit which is indestructible, that we never regard them as mere statistics, or people to be ordered around. That is the great distinction.

I think I can understand his point of view; I would doubt very much whether he understands mine. (Applause)