

LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF MR. HUBERT HUMPHREY,
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.
AT CANBERRA

19th FEBRUARY, 1966

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER - MR. HAROLD HOLT

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Vice-President, your Excellencies, Ministerial and Parliamentary Colleagues, Distinguished Visitors from the United States and any others of you that I may have omitted:

It's a very great pleasure and privilege for the Head of an Australian Government to welcome to this country a distinguished leader in the Administration such as we have here today in the person of Mr. Hubert Humphrey. It is, I think, more than ten years, Mr. Humphrey, since we had a visit from one of your Vice-Presidents. In fact, it was I think the only visit we had ever had at that point of time from a Vice-President of the United States. In a sense, therefore, it's been a long time between Vice-Presidents, but if today's talk is any indication I think we will be seeing each other much more frequently in future than perhaps we have in the past. Because, as is evident enough, your country and ours are finding each other increasingly involved in the problems of Asia and in particular of South-East Asia.

There is no occasion to dwell at length before an Australian audience or public on the close and warm relationship between our two countries. We have inherited a common tradition, a common democratic tradition from the Mother of Parliaments in the United Kingdom, you adapting in your own way the Parliamentary system to your own needs, we in Australia with a Parliamentary democracy serving ours. And we have in the space of the last fifty years fought together in the cause of freedom, twice together in two great world conflicts. We were the first country to declare ourselves with you in the crisis of Korea, and we are one of the few countries serving with you in a military capacity in Viet Nam at this time, and the warmth of our friendship has cemented the mutuality of interest which exists for us in this part of the world.

We across the other side of the Pacific Ocean have watched admiringly the growth over the years of the mightiest power that the world has ever known. It has been something of an inspiration to us. We have a great land mass to develop, roughly the size of the United States itself if you leave Alaska out of the picture; and we recall that it was only twelve years after your own Declaration of Independence that Australia had its first settlement. What is not always realised in this country is that you were only four million people when our first settlement occurred in Australia, but over the intervening years you have grown to something over 190 millions of people, establishing the most powerful nation that the world has ever seen. We believe that by the same principles, by the same encouragement of enterprise and initiative which has marked the American story, we too can grow to be a great sister nation in the Pacific and we are heartened by the example that we see in you and we are assisted very greatly by the encouragement, by the flow of American investment and citizens to this country from time to time. But more immediately, of course, we are caught up together in the problems of South-East Asia, and for our part, recognising the contribution you made to our own security in the darker days of the Second World War, we are grateful again for the firmness of purpose and the resolution which your President and the American

people are showing in relation to the issue in Viet Nam.

We, with you, view this as part of a great international conflict. We see this as one of the critical struggles in the history of the free peoples everywhere. This goes far deeper in our judgement than the preservation of the people in South Viet Nam against intrusion and aggression from those who would wish to destroy the integrity of that country; important though that is, we see this as part of the menace of Communist expansion throughout the world and what happens in South Viet Nam is in our eyes not merely of interest to the people of that country, not merely of interest to us in relation to our own security here in Australia although I believe that too to be involved, but we see it as of significance for the cause of free peoples everywhere, and I know that is how your President and your Administration see this struggle.

Now, Sir, we have watched with admiration, too, the way in which your President has looked upon this not merely as a matter of military achievement, not merely as a goal to be gained by military means and then the rest of the story forgotten. He has, from the outset, and you have devoted so much of your own energies to this aspect, seen the necessity for social and economic assistance which would bring to the peoples of this area and, in time with an improvement in standards throughout the area generally, victory also over those age-old enemies of mankind to which you referred on your arrival in Australia yesterday. We know that these great evils of hunger, of disease, of illiteracy, of lack of employment opportunities, that these things in an enlightened community can be met successfully and conquered. It has been an enlightened and imaginative attitude on the part of the President and members of his Administration like yourself that they have seen the totality of this problem, that they have seen its relationship to the world scene generally, and we would hope that as this becomes more clearly perceived around the rest of the free world that others will join with you, as we in our own small way have done, not merely to give moral support to your cause but to assist in a material way either in a military capacity or perhaps more generally in terms of economic assistance throughout this area.

You, Sir, come to us as a very welcome visitor and you bring with you the most distinguished and influential delegation from the United States, I think, that this country has ever known. We welcome with you an old friend in Ambassador Harriman. I would like you to know that he has given us great assistance from the information and advice he is able to bring so freshly from discussions himself in various parts of the world. Whenever any of us go to Washington, we know that we have a warm friend awaiting us there in the person of yourself, Mr. Ambassador.

And speaking of ambassadors, we would like you to report to your President that we are grateful to him for sending to us that splendid representative of your country, the Ambassador of the United States here in Australia, Mr. Ed Clark. He and I established a warm basis of friendship from the outset. I know this has been a general experience of any who have come in contact with him and America could not wish for a more effective representative in this country nor we for a warmer friend of Australia.

You in the various capacities you undertake, Mr. Vice-President have interest in space research and aeronautical matters and you will be aware that here in Australia there is another tangible link of our friendly associations with you through the tracking stations which have now been established at various points in Australia. But just as in this and in so many other ways we find it useful to maintain together the friendly and fruitful links of co-operation, we believe that it is in the years ahead perhaps that our greatest contribution together will be made to the welfare of a significant area of the world, and through this a contribution to the peace, the stability and the prosperity of the world as a whole.

We, for our part, in Australia would welcome early talks and discussions with you and with Great Britain and New Zealand on some of the problems of the area. I don't mention just those four countries in any excluding sense in trying to keep anybody else out of the discussion, but to face the matter realistically in the sort of problems that we have to meet here in the years ahead. Here are countries which can make a significant material contribution together and I believe it is of first importance that we should be able to co-ordinate efforts to discuss together problems which arise and to which, by mutual effort, we may be able to bring some assistance or some solution. This is particularly true in the economic and social field. We in Australia frequently can perform a useful service by the technical advice we can bring to countries that are themselves passing through a developmental phase, and in these and other ways, Australia, limited though its resources may be in a country of less than 12 million people, Australia can make its own valuable contribution.

Sir, you have come at a difficult time through a most arduous and exacting journey in key areas of South-East Asia and Asia generally, but I am quite certain that if the Australian people had been able to share our experience of this morning when we had the most stimulating and heartening and illuminating talk from you, they would have no hesitation in their mind as to the justice and good sense of our cause or the strength of the support they would bring to it. I believe, Sir, that you will find in this country support as strong as you will find anywhere in the world, even perhaps including your own country, for what you are doing. I can speak to you as not merely the Head of the Government, but as the Leader of one of the two Government Parties and tell you that there isn't one member of the Government Parties who does not subscribe wholeheartedly to the policy which the United States is adopting in relation to Viet Nam. I think, Sir, I can claim that that is a rather better scoring record even than the Congress can demonstrate for you.

Well, gentlemen, you are not here to have me speak at length and we are all anxious to hear from the Vice-President. We have established already, I would hope, in your minds, the warmth of the welcome here in Australia, and shortly I shall be asking all to join me in honouring the toast of our distinguished guest, but as evidence that that warmth of welcome is general throughout Australia, I am going to ask Mr. Calwell, the Leader of the Opposition, to join in supporting me in the toast which I shall shortly be submitting. Arthur, would you please speak.
