

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO U.S.A. AND U.K.

Reply to Mayor Lindsay by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt,
at Dinner at Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

5th July, 1966



Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Well, Mr. Mayor, before we let you go away, would you come back so that people can see me getting rid of this thing to begin with. This isn't our principal gift, Ladies and Gentlemen, but I thought it had better get out of the way in case there was any confusion... (Inaudible exchange with Mayor Lindsay). This is not a very big cigarette case, but it holds a few cigarettes and it has got - in opals at each point around the map of Australia - the capital cities. You won't find Alice Springs - that's an extra opal, which we, in this difficult year, felt we couldn't afford - we've had a drought as you mentioned. But it's got all the regular capitals and it comes to you as a small but sincere memento of a warmth of feeling between Australia and your country and in particular the special place which New York has in the minds of people in my own country who recognise it as one of the great romantic and historic cities of the world. But I'm going to say something about that so I won't spoil the speech. Here you are ...

Well, now, Ladies and Gentlemen, that was really only a little bit of trackwork. We now settle down to the serious running. Mrs. Holt and I, who have been honoured in so many different ways in this visit we have had to the United States, and who have memorable thoughts to take away with us of the kindness, the graciousness of the American people, add another chapter tonight to that story of our friendship with your country and of the unique features which have made the United States one of the exciting countries in the history of the human race. This city, New York, has its own special place of course. We take a magazine called the New Yorker each week just so that we'll know what is going on around the place. We never seem to get to a lot of the well-commended and well advertised establishments - I thought I might have got to one of the livelier places of entertainment, but at least we have had a topless show here tonight as I gaze around the room. My wife brought me here to this wonderful gallery and museum of yours in order to see a mobile of the sun. I didn't know what she was talking about. It seemed an unnecessary invasion into the very limited time we have had. But we came to see the mobile of the sun. I think we have been back a few times since, and she is threatening to return before we catch the plane tomorrow morning. But we couldn't have had a more delightful setting for this dinner which you have brought to us by way of honour, and we couldn't have had a nicer group of people, which, by succession of visits, seems to include a great many of the friends, respectable and otherwise, I have formed in this city of New York.

But you and I have quite a few things in common. You are in the first six months of your Mayoralty. I'm in the first six months of my Prime Ministership. I don't think you have to stand for re-election as quickly as I do - on the other hand I doubt whether we will have any tough fiscal measure in my Budget which would endanger my position. It's a remarkable thing that you seem to avoid these problems as you get close to your election. The following year fiscal necessities build up but I don't want any trepidation to develop in my own country on that account. I had the privilege of introducing seven Budgets. It says much for the toughness, the durability, the tolerance of the Australian people, that I was able to succeed Sir Robert Menzies by unanimous election after a punishment on my fellow countrymen of that kind and over that duration.

Tonight we have been honoured by an assembly here of people whose names are household words throughout the world and whose generosity or whose contribution to industry, science, to knowledge and in a variety of other directions in which human experience have come together in this amazing city of New York. I think, Mr. Mayor, you have a population very close to that of my own country and we have a country the size of the United States if Alaska can be left out of it. It's always a difficulty for me about this Alaska business. I've got nothing against the people of Alaska. I've no doubt that they are very fine people, but it spoils my whole comparison if I have to bring Alaska into the comparison. But leave them out, and there we are with the same dimension of country to look after. I understand you have some 27,000 policemen - well we have only 18,000 policemen, and I don't know whether that means that we're just short of policemen, or that you need more policemen than we need policemen. But it's a fact. But the thing which really makes me warm to this city is that, through your gate and with the symbolic Statue of Liberty was built the greatest democracy in the history of mankind. The strongest power, the richest civilisation and most affluent society. This all came largely through the people that flowed into this country through this city of New York.

I happen to have been Minister of Immigration in my own country for nine years and made quite a study of how you did it because in this day and age it couldn't be repeated. People would want, if you brought them here, the schools, the hospitals, all the other amenities of the community life - the stress and added burden of the community would seem almost insupportable. I wonder if you would know that if you have the same growth rate in the United States today in population that we have in my country you would have to build another half million homes a year to accommodate that rate of population growth. Yet, through the 19th century, people poured in - the numbers were not accommodated in the organised way that they are at this time - but somehow the nation adapted itself to the growth of population, new industries sprang up, employment grew as the demands and needs of one supplied the opportunities for the other.

I have speculated more than once in a lifetime that if, in that period of human history, the critics had succeeded in discouraging the men in leadership in the United States at that time - if all the things that could be said against the pressures that arise from building up a population too rapidly had carried the day, then would we have had brought into the cause of freedom at a critical stage in two world wars the power, might and resources of this great American democracy? I leave that thought in your minds because it is something I have often thought about and when the doubt has attacked me at times, when the pressures on our resources seem greater than we could comfortably bear, I was heartened by the recollection of what had been accomplished in your great country and I felt if America could be made great through people of quality, and exploiting the resources of a pioneering country, then Australia could follow in that example and itself

contribute a great democracy to the cause of freedom throughout the world. We have been together in the cause of freedom four times already in the course of this century and I suspect that over the long years ahead of us there will be many times when America and Australia will go in comradeship together, whether in war, but, more hopefully, in the conditions of peace, to build a better world for free people. I have been proud to acknowledge in this visit the contribution that you have made to the security for us all. I happen to come from an area of world where, as I was just saying to Miss Douglas, our hopes are highest but our dangers are greatest. It's an area of the world where, over the next 10, 20, 50 or 100 years, I believe a great new chapter of human history will unfold. If it develops in the way in which we would hope to see it develop, then that will be because of the resolution, the generosity, of the people which made the Marshall Plan a turning point of history. And you, Mr. Mayor, through this city which has given so much in leadership and inspiration to the American people as a whole, can feel that you have been a great inheritor of the democratic tradition of a courageous leadership and that you, in your high office, are now launched on the endless adventure of the public man who has to give that leadership and see the issues through.

We have in your President such a leader and his resolution is rallying the people in the area from which I come. Through him and through you we give thanks to the American people for what they mean and tonight you have added a colourful, gracious, and attractive memory to that feeling we have of comradeship together in the great responsibilities, the great enjoyments which the modern world has opened to us. Thank you very much.