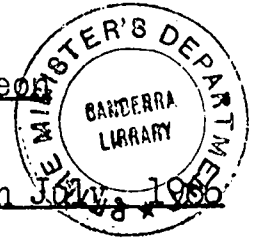


PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO U.S. AND U.K.

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt,  
at Commonwealth Correspondents' Association Luncheon  
at Waldorf Hotel, London



I have always been a Commonwealth man as long as I have been in the Parliament of the Commonwealth, but using the first reference to Commonwealth in that very much broader sense which embraces the many Parliaments of our Commonwealth of nations, and indeed I have seen that number grow very considerably from my first Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference here in London in 1948, when the only three new Commonwealth countries admitted to the old club were India, Pakistan and Ceylon, to the time today when those of us who belonged to the old Commonwealth find ourselves historically at any rate in a very small minority among the newer countries which have secured their independence and Commonwealth status since that time. These are days in which we ask ourselves what does the Commonwealth stand for at the present time. Some of the unifying factors seem either to have disappeared or faded in strength. We can't claim as we look around the Commonwealth today that the thing that is holding us together is a common devotion to Parliamentary democracy, because in some of the countries of the Commonwealth we haven't got Parliamentary democracy and in some where Parliaments function they do not function along the lines of the Mother of Parliaments at Westminster. They may have the standing orders and Mr. Speaker and the rest of it, but sometimes there is only one Party, or at least only one which is allowed to operate effectively. In other cases the Parliament is non-existent for some significant periods of time. Again there is no longer, and this was established at the time when India decided to ask for Commonwealth status while seeking to be a Republic, there isn't the same common allegiance to the Crown which had marked the Commonwealth of earlier years. There are many countries representing many different circumstances of life, conditions of people, races, creeds and habits of life, tending to present us as different people among the quarter of the population of the globe included in our company. But, having said all that, there are still things we cherish as part of the Commonwealth relationship and I felt this as I sat with you today that one of the things which still remains true about the Commonwealth and I hope will persist is that there's a rather different feeling when we sit down together, even as people who have never met each other before and I have met only a few of you in this room today, one sits down feeling immediately relaxed and at home with members of the family, perhaps remote relatives some of those here, but there is that feeling of warmth and companionship, co-operation together which still remain essential features of our Commonwealth relationship. I have been pleased to see how proudly new Commonwealth members have adopted their relationship. There is a disposition these days for groupings, either of a regional kind and perhaps, even less satisfactorily, of a racial kind.

I've been troubled myself by what have been known as the Afro-Asian alignments which have seemed to rest not so much on policy associations or attitudes, but rather on attitudes of race which tend to create differences and antagonisms with other sections of the community and one of the most commendable features of the Commonwealth association has been the way a multi-racial community of Parliaments and countries have been able to come together for a friendly, frank and quite forthright exchange of views and out of the many Parliamentary conferences of the Commonwealth Parliamentary organisation, which I personally attended and some of which I presided over, there came a better knowledge of viewpoints in the Commonwealth and a warmer feeling towards its people. I used to make it a practice myself whenever I travelled or visiting a new part of the Commonwealth and I think now with interest and a good deal of warmth about the

countries which one visited in earlier years and am able to follow with a sympathetic interest the way they have gone about handling the difficulties of development which faced many of them. We are not these days a strong Commonwealth financially or militarily. There is tremendous potential, of course, an aggregation of peoples occupying so vast an area of the globe, much of that area relatively underdeveloped at this time but potential, while comforting, is no substitute for the actualities of need at a given point of time.

I had a former colleague in the Treasurer's job in Canberra who, when people used to tell him about the long term benefits which would come to him from some particular programme, used to reply by saying that it's a case of "Live horse until you get grass!"

While some of our Commonwealth countries, while they have the potential for development, are going through difficult periods as they look for foodstuffs, the opportunities for education, housing, the medical services and all the other factors which go in a civilian community towards raising the standards of the people, we can't expect it to lean indefinitely on the United Kingdom in the way that perhaps at an earlier point of development of the Commonwealth was found possible. Quite obviously we can't expect the United Kingdom to provide the military strength to keep the Commonwealth as a whole secure. We each have to do more for ourselves and, in some cases, for each other. But given time, association and the co-operation which is within our grasp, this can be a very much stronger Commonwealth, and even in the intervening years it can be a very influential Commonwealth because there are many of us who are to be found in most places where policies are discussed. We have our influences, some in one group, some in another, some with one country, some with another, and provided that we maintain towards each other a goodwill, a determination to make a multi-racial association work, then the Commonwealth can still contribute greatly to the welfare of mankind. We should always hold before us, I believe, the goal that we must first make this association work if there is to be any hope of that larger association functioning effectively in the United Nations. If the Commonwealth can't work, then how can the United Nations. On the other hand we can, by the force of our own example, by the Commonwealth functioning co-operatively and leading to the strengthening of its membership, show to the rest of the world that, given goodwill and a spirit of co-operation, this can be accomplished. That is the kind of vision we can cherish together and do individually what we can to keep the Commonwealth spirit alive and make it in its practical application a function for the benefit of our community of nations and through those for the rest of the world.

Now, that's enough from me by way of opening the session, and if I can deal with specific questions you might like to ask me.

Q. What association would you like Britain to have with your own country and New Zealand in your part of the world and how strong should Britain's contribution be?

MR. HOLT: Do you mean do we need any formal association? I don't think we do need any formal association. We know each other well enough, and we have complete faith and confidence in each other and all I think we need to do is to resolve among ourselves what courses should be followed. I, as you know, have urged strongly that the United Kingdom maintain a presence east of Suez. I have pointed out that here are to be found more than half of the population of the world and on population projection that half will tend to grow rather more rapidly than the other half, that the potential for change, development and economic growth is greater there in my judgment than in any other part of

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the world. To me it seems unthinkable that the United Kingdom which, over the centuries of history, has had so large a part to play in the world and its historical development should not be associated actively in a number of the projects which will develop in the area. This does not mean necessarily large military forces or large expenditure, but I think the people of this country in these days sometimes tend to underrate their own influence around the world. The respect that is still held for British character, skills of government, the British capacity for organisation and management, and, in areas of the world which are sorely lacking in these things, guidance and aid from such a source can be critically valuable at times.

Q. Will the Australian Government set an example in racial harmony to the rest of the Commonwealth by abolishing its White Australia policy?

MR. HOLT: Well, of course, it hasn't got a White Australia Policy so styled. It has a policy of restricted immigration, as does every country of Asia - in fact some of the countries of Asia are a good deal more restrictive than is Australia. Ceylon, for example, would have a restrictive programme, India would, certainly Malaysia has, and so far as I am aware every country of Asia has a programme of immigration restriction and that programme is based on the need to preserve certain national standards, to protect employment opportunities for its people and to avoid disharmony developing in the country. For our part we have maintained a restrictive policy, I hope with humanity and good sense. It's been liberalised in a number of situations which seemed to call for that. I remember as a former Minister for Immigration myself having adopted a policy in relation to the Japanese wives of our servicemen who were then admitted on a basis of full citizenship which has now become standard policy in Australia. Any Australian who marries a non-European has the husband or wife admitted on a basis of full citizenship and the children of the marriage, of course, are Australian citizens from the outset. Recently we amended the previous administrative arrangements so that those non-Europeans, and there are quite a body of them in Australia who have come there for the purposes prescribed under the policy, can apply for naturalisation after five years of residence with us. It's not generally known that there are some 13,000 Asian students in Australian schools and universities at this present time. I am sure those who like to attribute some racist aspect to our thinking would be rather surprised to know that the leader of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra is an American negro, Dean Dixon. You will find in various ways we have tried to apply the policy in a practical way, but we would not be serving Asia or the rest of the world effectively if the country were to be torn by racial division. It would not be a case of admitting one nationality or another, there are scores of countries outside Australia in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, if we were trying to admit a certain number from each of these countries and at the same time go through a satisfactory process of integration into the community life at this stage of our national development, I think it would tend to reduce our effectiveness to help others, to build our defences and to build our national aid rather than help that. The best answer for those who have doubts and some scepticism or criticism in respect of the Australian attitude is to come to Australia for themselves. They will find great friendliness, no discrimination, and most of them in my experience have come to the conclusion that the way things are working out this is just about the soundest policy Australia can adopt at this point of its history.

Q. Can you say at what stage are your discussions with the British Government on a base in Australia, and will it be a S.E.A.T.O. base and how much will it cost?

MR. HOLT: I can't answer those questions specifically at all because they have not yet been resolved. I can say that following our talks with Mr. Denis Healey earlier this year, when he put in train at the Service level for discussion between representatives of our two countries a number of proposals in relation to the three Services. Those talks have gone some considerable distance. There may be actual estimates of cost, but so far the talks have been at the Service level. I have known as Prime Minister that they have been going on, I have known particular locations which it is thought could be suitable for such a purpose, but our own view has been, for the reasons I mentioned a little earlier, the desirability of the Asian people themselves feeling that Great Britain is making a contribution by its presence and its assistance to the strengthening and development of the area, it is preferable to maintain the establishments we have. They are good establishments - the Singapore naval base and the barracks at Terendak and Butterworth in Malaysia. These have been developed at considerable expense. They are very habitable as I saw for myself when I visited them recently, and it seems unnecessary to duplicate them when the governments of the countries concerned seem very contented to have our forces remain on there.

Q. A figure of 30,000,000 has been mentioned. Could this be accurate?

MR. HOLT: It could only be speculative at this point, but it would obviously be more costly to set up new bases which would be providing anything like the same scale of accommodation that we already have. They were costly enough.

Q. Is there any possibility of growing difficulties with the British Government? Was it in relation to the question of Britain's position east of Suez or Vietnam, and, if so, could you throw any light on your talks with Mr. Wilson on Vietnam?

MR. HOLT: There are several points when one considers the whole range of policies as between the two governments when you will tend to get a rather different view from a small population in a large developing country from that of a country with a small size and large population, very conscious of its proximity to Europe and the problems of Europe. It's understandable that Great Britain should tend to concentrate its attention rather more on Europe and its problems. On the other hand, our gaze tends to wander more frequently these days around the countries in the general area in which we live. But if you ask about Vietnam in particular, Australia formed a very strong view and I emphasise this because otherwise there might be a disposition to think that we are in Vietnam because the Americans happen to be there. We are in South Vietnam because to us it seems no less important than it does to the United States that the aggression there should be resisted and I believe Australia to be more directly involved in the dangers of failure to resist this aggression than would be the United States itself, but if the attitude of the Peking Government, which has declared that wars of national liberation - oh that was the North Vietnamese Government, but it flowed from the philosophy of the Peking Government. It was Peking said that power grows out of the barrel of a gun, and if this philosophy that so called wars of national liberation successfully tried in one country can then be employed in the

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next were to be successfully adopted, then nobody in South-East Asia, or for that matter in Asia, could feel secure and I am sure that our friends in the room today from India are very conscious of the shock which came from the evidence that China was disposing its troops in a menacing way in relation to a country which had been so friendly to it as India had proved itself to be. We are, therefore, strongly in support of the American intervention. We feel that if aggression can be halted, that on the pattern of what has happened in South Korea and Taiwan, Thailand, in Malaysia, where we fought a long emergency campaign to beat the Communist activities there, that on these patterns there can be restored to South Vietnam a situation in which it can go ahead with its own economic and social progress. I used the word restored advisedly because from 1954 onwards, after the Geneva accord, South Vietnam did make this kind of progress. It was not until 1960, when it had become apparent to North Vietnam that while there were slipping back in their production, South Vietnam was moving steadily ahead that the campaign of aggression against South Viet Nam became actively pressed.

Q. Does it appear to you, as it does to many here, that the British Government believes that Australia's frontline should be at Darwin and not 1,000 miles to the North?

MR. HOLT: I don't know that this represents the viewpoint of the British Government accurately. The fact that you stage your forces in a particular area as a base doesn't necessarily mean that you regard that point as the front line. It would be a base from which you would operate. I think the British Government would still regard a point further to the North of Australia as the more favourable point from which to conduct military operations. But of course one can't answer a question of that sort with any authority or precision unless you know the situation you are coping with. Is it some trouble that has arisen in Indonesia? Is it a march down the Malaysian Peninsula by Communist or other hostile forces? The military action and strategy necessary to cope with this will be affected by what it is you are dealing with.

Q. Do you think Britain should be in the Anzus Pact? Has there been any move to bring Britain into ANZUS and, if so, what has been the reaction from both Britain and America?

MR. HOLT: I wouldn't like to comment on that. We have other arrangements with the United Kingdom, but I'm not pressing for anything to be done in that direction. My own belief is that if Australia were seriously under threat that regardless of treaty commitments the people of this country would want to come to our assistance. After all, nearly half a million Australian casualties were sustained in two world wars, fought a long way from home when this island was threatened. I have no reason to believe that British people wouldn't feel that they had not an obligation but a call on them if we were vitally threatened. We can all take comfort in the fact that the United States, which remains the mightiest military power in the history of mankind, has stated quite emphatically as recently as the last few days, through its spokesman Dean Rusk, that there is no question so far as America is concerned that if Australia is under attack they move in to cover that attack.

Q. You said that unless the Commonwealth can agree then there is no hope for the United Nations agreeing. Perhaps I read too much into that, but would you explain please. It seemed to imply that unless the Commonwealth acts together as one unit the United Nations can hardly succeed.

MR. HOLT: I think you did read a little more into it, and this might have been my own fault of inadequate explanation. What I was saying was that we do at least have the advantage within the Commonwealth of warmer co-operative feeling towards one another and, therefore, to the extent that some multi-racial organisation can be made to function effectively it ought to be possible to do this rather more readily inside the Commonwealth than in a more amorphous and more diverse, and at times more powerfully hostile, body such as you find in the United Nations. Fortunately we have nothing in the way of an ideological conflict within the Commonwealth of the magnitude which exists inside the United Nations.

Q. Many people are a little puzzled by that fact that, although Australia supports the United States policy in Vietnam, we do continue to trade in increasing amounts in wheat and wool with Red China. Did you find in America sympathy and understanding for the Australian policy?

MR. HOLT: I didn't feel the disposition to discuss it frankly. I feel, and I think Harold Wilson would share this view, that these are means whereby we can hope to build a better relationship between countries which are otherwise hostile to each other. Trade normally connotes a mutuality of benefit, a mutuality of interest, and if trade can build steadily between two countries and work to their mutual advantage they are less likely to take action hostile to each other. We don't see inconsistency with this, while at the same time sternly resisting policies of aggression. We are trying to tell the aggressor that this is not acceptable to us and will be combatted, but at the same time we don't want to put that aggressor, in the circumstances of the modern world anyhow, out of business, destroy the economy or destroy the lives of the people. I think that in trade, tourism, even in the visits of reporters on a more frequent basis, the cultural and social exchanges which can be an increasing feature of the life between those behind the curtains and those on this side of it, these and other ways have to be tested to see if we can make some improvement in relations. We can't allow ourselves to become bogged down indefinitely in rigidities of hostilities one to the other, and I joined in welcoming the initiative of the Prime Minister in making another attempt in Moscow to help to get some progress towards negotiations for peace. These initiatives may fail, but a time comes - and this in my experience has been a feature of negotiations with Communists - when their determination or stubbornness at some point of time is converted into a disposition to go on with a negotiation. Therefore we just keep trying as best we can, but in the meantime taking whatever action seems to be necessary to ensure the aggression does not succeed.

Q. You were reported in Washington as saying that Australia was prepared to go all the way with L.B.J. in Vietnam, and yet I gather you have your "ban the bomb" groups in Australia with distinctly anti-American sympathies. Can you estimate the degree of support in Australia for American policy in Vietnam and can you visualise at what point you yourself would wish to draw the line as the British Government has done in that support?



MR. HOLT: I don't want to deal with suppositious cases. The support of the Australian Government for the United States is based on a mutuality of interest in the policy being pursued. We consider ourselves even more directly involved than the United States and we are very conscious of the fact that the brunt of the effort there is being borne by the United States. We are very appreciative of what the South Vietnamese are doing too, and they paid a heavy price themselves in their determination to keep their country from this aggression. I find in the comment I made in relation to the United States an expression of our own determination, a recognition that the policy being followed there is in the Australian national interest. We, of course, have people in our country who are opposed to the policy, the official Opposition is opposed to our policy, it is opposed to national servicemen being used and has said it will bring them out of action as soon as it can after it takes office. But my Government is a coalition of two Parties and two Houses of Parliament. Up to the time I left Australia I was able to say that I had 100 per cent support from all Members in both Houses in both Parties on the Government side. One Government Senator has since notified some reservations he has about it - well in that case I have 100 per cent less one, or one out of 73, something to that order. On the public opinion polling of recent times there has been not only good support for a policy of participation in Vietnam, but the polling indications for the Government have been at the highest level known in our history.

Q. If the present talks between Rhodesia and Great Britain broke down, would your Government be prepared to support the tightening of the screw policy, imposition of more sanctions on Rhodesia, and if those failed would your Government be prepared to support the use of military force against Rhodesia?

MR. HOLT: I wouldn't speculate publicly on official policy. I'm not stating new policies here today. I'm merely trying to interpret policies which are already current. We have a policy current in respect of Rhodesia and I am not able to add to that at the present time.

Q. Do you feel any need for a closer relationship between Australia and New Zealand in view of their geographical proximity and joint policy agreement?

MR. HOLT: You mean some sort of organic relationship? Having just said I'm not stating new policy, I had better not violate that rule and certainly I would not want to indicate a new policy because frankly we don't have a new policy. I can say the current relations between the two countries are very good. I had personal talks with Mr. Holyoake before I left Canberra. He came over for the S.E.A.T.O. Conference. We've recently negotiated a Free Trade Agreement with New Zealand, which will increase the volume of trade between our two countries. We are together with our forces in South Viet Nam. I say together advisedly because when I saw the troops up there the New Zealand battery was actually in physical contact or proximity to our own Australian forces in military camp there. On most of the problems of the day, as they affect our part of the world, we think very much alike. As to what the future holds, there is a good deal of interesting speculation going on about that. I think this is happening increasingly so in New Zealand because there is a realisation there, I believe, that the domestic market cannot become large enough except in relation to particular items of manufacture to warrant a very extensive development of manufactures, and that, therefore, the Australian economy, with its much greater diversification, could integrate





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more closely with that of New Zealand. I don't mean by integration a merger of the two countries, but I mean that we believe in the future we could be drawn even closer in matters of trade and shall remain closely sympathetic to each other in matters of international policy.

Q. The British Government, through Mr. Healey, has indicated that it is imposing some restrictions on arms sales, and specially in relation to their use in Vietnam. Is this a matter of any embarrassment to the Australian Government?

MR. HOLT: This is opposition by the British Government to the sale of arms for Vietnam? It's not a matter which would be inclined to be in my mind. I would have thought the equipment already there was both large and adequate, but I'm not in a position to make a policy statement about that.

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