

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

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED  
AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA AT A  
LUNCHEON IN THE WHITE HOUSE

14th July, 1966.

Mr. Prime Minister and my friends:

A house twice visited by a good friend is a house twice blessed. So, Mr. Prime Minister, we welcome you back here to the White House and we are very grateful that you were able to arrange your very busy schedule so as to return and pay us a visit.

While you were away, I spoke to my countrymen, and I hope to yours also, about the Pacific area that we share with many of our Asian friends. I said the other night, and I should like to re-emphasize it now, that I believe that the Pacific is the great testing ground of man's yearning for independence, order, and for a peaceful and productive life. Mr. Prime Minister, if we can win that test in the Pacific we may very well have won the fruits of peace for all of our fellow men in the world we would hope, perhaps, for all time. But if we lose it in the Pacific, we will have lost achievement and hope, perhaps, for all time too. But we shall not lose the test, because Americans and Australians and Vietnamese, New Zealanders and Koreans, and our other allies shall prove in the Pacific that aggression cannot succeed on any continent, in any country, against any people in the world in the 20th century. The Pacific is not an ocean. It is not a region. It is a crucible in which the free, proud, and peaceful world of tomorrow is today moulding and taking its shape. So, as we meet here this afternoon, the winds of hope are blowing fresh and strong off the Pacific and they are blowing throughout free Asia. We are partners in stirring that excitement. Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, we the partners in creating the billion dollar Asian Development Bank. We are partners in developing the Mekong River Delta, in denying those who would destroy the promise of stability and growth, and in encouraging those who would make that promise a reality. And that is the great and urgent work that, after your extremely important meetings in London and here, you will return to Australia to advance, Mr. Prime Minister. So today you leave us, not only as our trusted partner and our cherished friend, but as a man who has left much behind while the bravery and the nobility of the Australian people, a new generation of Americans, are living the lessons that their fathers learned.

I see in front of me Captain Stevens, a teacher at West Point. It was 25 years ago that I got out of bed in Townsville one morning about 3 o'clock with Colonel Stevens, with whom I had roomed. He died that day over Lae and Salamaua. He left a little five year old boy, who is now this teacher at West Point, to carry on for him. But we learned that quarter of a century ago, Mr. Prime Minister, that one can never ask for finer comrades on the battlefield, or more willing colleagues in the works of peace than our Pacific brothers, our Australian allies. And so it is our prayer today that God grant that your young men and ours will soon return from conflict to enjoy the peace that we seek so fervently together. And, until they do return, we will stand shoulder to shoulder supporting them all the way.

So, gentlemen, I should like to ask you to toast that bright hope and its living symbol, the very able, courageous, and distinguished Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, Mr. Holt.

Mr. President and gentlemen:

Any man who had been honoured by a luncheon given to him by the President of this great democracy would treasure that as a memory for a lifetime. To be so honoured twice in so short a space of time is not merely a great honour to me and my country, but it has been tremendously gratifying to my colleagues as they notified me by cable from Australia. What you have done by your warm gesture, Mr. President, is a further strand strengthening these close bonds which have developed between us.

Since I was last with you I have been across the Atlantic to London. As you know, my main purposes in coming abroad were to see you and to develop a warmer and closer, more intimate relationship with you. You had kindly suggested that, and so, in his place, had the Prime Minister of Great Britain. I have gone through this process with Harold Wilson in London. Last Sunday night at Chequers, that historic establishment of British Prime Ministers, after his wife and mine had left us for the evening, he kicked his shoes off and lay down on a couch and for three hours we settled the problems of the world. I told him, Mr. President, that you had been so generous to me that I felt that if I had asked you for the Statue of Liberty you would have gladly given it to me. He said "Why didn't you ask him for Fort Knox?" Well, he may have felt that it would have been handy. But earlier in that evening he had taken me on a conducted tour - which you were kind enough to do this for me last night at the White House - of Chequers. At one point of the establishment there is a picture by Rembrandt illustrating the fable of "The Lion and the Mouse". It is a wonderful picture, of course, greatly celebrated and beautifully painted. But when Chequers was occupied by Winston Churchill, Winston used to study this. He was, as you know, an amateur painter. In fact I think he was almost a professional painter by the fees he got toward the end. But he studied the picture. Perhaps it was failing eyesight, or Rembrandt had left something to the imagination, but he said "I cannot see the mouse". So he painted in the mouse on the picture, and there it is. And so you have Rembrandt and Churchill on this particular picture. But there was a moral in it, of course, for me. My countrymen won't like me describing them as mice. Indeed we produce the largest rat in the world. It stumps itself along and calls itself a kangaroo. But I remember the moral of the fable was that little friends may prove great friends. In a sense, my country is a little friend, because there are less than 12 million of us. But I think of the men that this country produced when there were 2½ million of you and you signed the Declaration of Independence. I have often marvelled at the greatness of the men you produced from that small community at that time. I think it was Smuts who said that the great countries are the countries which produce great men, and you produced great men as early as the period in which you had something less than 2½ million. Washington, himself, Jefferson, Franklin, Alexander Hamilton. You know the list of them so much better than I. But these are men whose names stand in the common heritage of democracy and freedom around the world.

I talked about myself. Perhaps I could return to that for a moment, because we have so many distinguished press representatives and columnists and people of that sort here. I had a recent example in London of how important correct reporting can be. My wife was interviewed by the press while she was there and was asked what she had been doing. Naturally, being the wife of a politician, she was quite cautious about this. So they asked her if she had been doing any shopping. You know nothing can embarrass a politician

any more than to have it reported that his wife had been doing a lot of expensive shopping. So she said that she had bought a couple of white mice. This was solemnly reported back in Australia. Then the cables started to flow in the most intriguing jargon of the Public Service of the Commonwealth, pointing out that the import of white mice into Australia was prohibited under our quarantine arrangements; that these white mice would have to be exterminated if they arrived. It would be very embarrassing for all concerned if the wife of the Prime Minister had to be subjected to this treatment. Now if the press had only added what was the fact, that these white mice were made of china and were designed for our grandchildren, then everybody would have been happy.

But I have had, Mr. President, on this journey, memorable unforgettable, and very stirring experiences. And you, Sir, have contributed notably to these in ways which my country will not forget and certainly I shall not. And then in England, of course, I have these memories also.

But one would expect to find some disappointments along the way, and I found one here. I found one when I went to England. Perhaps there were others, but these are the ones I mention. The disappointment I found here was to discover how little of the total story of what is going on in the Pacific area was reaching you through the columns of the press. There was a vivid, dramatic, day-to-day reporting of the military operations in South Vietnam and this, I suppose, is the first war which has been fought on a television screen for most people, and, therefore, not necessarily the most objectively understood by most people. And so I was disappointed that, while I knew of the feeling and appreciation that your own Administration has for this area and its problems, and you have given eloquent testimony to that in the words you have given to us this lunchtime, it was to me, I repeat, a disappointment that we didn't hear more of what was going on in this area of the world which contains half the human race, which, by the end of the century, will contain rather more than half the human race, because the rate of increase there is significantly greater than in the area of Western Europe or even in these United States. But you and your colleagues have shown your own awareness of the problems of that area and your determination to play a significant part in seeing those of us who live there through the challenges and through the opportunities which lie ahead for us. In England I found some disappointment in the fact that Great Britain, and even more so the other countries of Western Europe, seem to be almost oblivious to the existence of that area of the world, almost as if they had quite deliberately turned their backs upon a large part of life, history, and experience in these modern times, because so much that is stirring and exciting in these modern times is occurring in this area of the world. To bring out the best in the people of a country you need a cause that will stir the pulse. We have, I am glad to say, several such causes moving in my own country at this time. The problem of developing a large continent, of bringing people in from so many different countries, the challenge of great projects which have to be opened up, the comparatively recent discovery .. Perhaps I should, in saying this, mollify what one has said in a critical vein of these other countries, because it is only in comparatively recent times that we, in Australia, have become conscious and sensitive to the fact that we, by force of geography and circumstances and the history of the future, have a significant place in Asia and, in particular, in the Asia of tomorrow. These were the disappointments.

On the other hand, Mr. President, I was to find in the United Kingdom an expression, by the Prime Minister, of determination to support your presence in Vietnam, of recognition of the need for the two great democracies of the United States and the United Kingdom to maintain a close comradeship in the affairs of the world. And you will shortly be visited by the Prime Minister, again keeping close and warm the link between these two democracies whose leadership means so much to the well-being of mankind. But the primary responsibility of that leadership falls upon you as the head of the mighty nation which these days leads the free world. It is an awesome responsibility and it is fortunate for all of us who value freedom, the opportunities, and liberties of free men that we should have, as the leader of this great democracy in turn leading the free world, a man of your own courage, character and resolution. And the lesson that we shall carry out to the rest of the world and, indeed, I know this is the judgment of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, is that here we have a man of resolution determined to see the issues in Vietnam through to the end, however difficult or long that task may be. But you and I, as men who have this stirring of the pulse for the things that can be done and perhaps because we come from great open spaces and can draw a big fresh breath from the country in which we live and breathe, that we tend to take the long view, perhaps the visionary view. But the visions help to provide the causes and the causes help to evoke the qualities that are the best that lie within us. And we share this great cause in the Asia of the future. This, to me, has been one of the really heartening experiences of my journey to the Northern Hemisphere from down under. Here in this country is the resolution to see the job through where the difficulties lie and eager determination to take up the opportunities in comradeship and collaboration with those of us who live in the area to make something of Asia which will mark a new and hopeful phase in the history of mankind.

Mr. President, this is the sort of hope you leave with me and which I take back to my country. And it is a stirring thing. It is a comforting thing. It is a heartening thing to be able to feel that we can go on through the many difficulties which face a small people in a large continent with hundreds of millions of people of different race, different history, different tradition, different religion, different outlook, immediately about us, but confidently facing that future, because we believe that in our own friendship, our own enterprise, our own willingness to join in the task of Asia, we will build ourselves new friendships that will see us through the difficulties that we face. And underlying it all will be the knowledge that we have a friend, a very powerful friend, whom you symbolize on this occasion. Thank you for meaning that strength and that inspiration that is heartening to us all.

In that spirit, from Australia, I salute the President of the United States.

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