

NEW ZEALAND TOUR 1967

RECEPTION GIVEN BY THE CANTERBURY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN HONOUR OF
THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA,
MR. HAROLD HOLT

CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND

4TH FEBRUARY, 1967

Text of Speech by Mr. Holt

Mr. Smith, Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, Mr. Mayor, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I hope that Mr. Smith will not get too far away from me because I may need an interpreter from what he has been telling me. However, I found at Riccarton this afternoon that they understood the language of my money, and I have since suspected that this was a conspiracy cooked up by Keith Holyoake, who had been presented to me as a keen judge of equine form, with the Canterbury Jockey Club in order to redress to some modest degree at any rate, the gap in your balance of payments. I can assure you that since I arrived in this country the economic position of New Zealand has improved appreciably: in fact, I have a little problem to sort out of settlement of an obligation to the Chairman of the Club and my own High Commissioner as resources dwindled as the afternoon went on. But this very happy gathering is redressing the balance of the day for me. It began most auspiciously in that, having had the sort of weather that one expects in Wellington, I came hopefully to the South. I was not aware, frankly, Mr. Smith, that I was making a little history in doing so, and in coming with my charming wife, my decorative wife, who as you see is my own secret weapon as I was thus able to describe Madam Ky, but it is very gratifying to learn that I am the first Australian Prime Minister to have visited the South.

Right Hon. Keith Holyoake - (inaudible).

Right Hon. Harold Holt - Well, I was coming to that. You see, we have in Canberra a distinguished representative of your country. We also have a distinguished representative of the United States. You know your own representative very well - Luke Hazlett. The American, Ed Clark, may not be so well known to you, but Ed comes from Texas, and we have always argued that Ed was a Texan first, an American second, and an Australian third. Now, Luke, I think, is a mainlander of the South first, a New Zealander second, and an Australian third. If Keith Holyoake will only leave him with us a little longer I might be able to move him up in the placings.

It is for us a delightful prospect to have this time with you. It is a very long time ago, although in retrospect it does not seem so long - this is one of the penalties of the aging process, that the years seem to gallop as you get older - but it is 16 years since I was first in your country, and having carried out the duties for which I was sent here by my Government as the Head of the Australian Delegation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, I was given the opportunity by your Government to see something of the economy and the beauties of the North of New Zealand: and so, when the arrangements were being made for this visit, I said "Now, I have read a lot and heard a lot about the splendid grandeur and beauty of the South of New Zealand. Wellington is a 'must' - that's where we conduct the official business - but I must see something of the South", and so here we are, and the larger part of our journeyings through New Zealand

will be carried out in this very beautiful southern part of your country. We are looking forward to that very much and delighted to find that the weather is being kind to us.

Now, Mr. Smith, one of the agreeable surprises of the day - and I have referred already to some of the disagreeable surprises: I don't suppose there's a Form Guide attached to the back of the document you have presented to me - and as for the other gift, which I certainly appreciate and regard as an honour and a compliment: I don't quite know what the perquisites are attached to it, but my wife, being a realist as women generally are and naturally cautious, as most women proved to be, said "Does this mean that we have to get married again?" I would like elaboration on that point from you before this function concludes. But this gathering was, as I say, a very agreeable surprise. When I found I had been invited to come along and talk to the Chamber of Commerce, or meet the Chamber of Commerce, I had a picture in my mind of a sort of Board Room and a table in which a lot of rather stuffy characters, including myself, sat round together and discussed the state of the world and the Nation, and there it was - with suitable lubrication, of course, as befits these occasions, but I found that I came into what appeared, on the surface anyhow, to be a very convivial gathering, and if I can only stop myself in time we will all be able to be convivial again together. That is not easy, as some of my colleagues will tell you. But in my own country we have, I think, worked out a very satisfactory relationship with Organisations such as your own. As a Government - and it is part of our philosophy of Government - we believe that the good of the Nation will be best advanced if there is teamwork between those who have the responsibility of Government and those who conduct the Organisations representative of great sections of Industry - whether it is manufacturers -

Right Hon. Keith Holyoake - (inaudible).

Right Hon. Harold Holt - Now, Keith, you have enjoyed not only a very handsome election win, but I know how well you are regarded by Industry and Commerce in your own country. But in mind, we have worked this out happily together. It was not always a happy situation, but the machinery we have evolved developed out of some of the economic problems we had early in the 1960's, and we felt that in order to ensure that the Government was acting in the knowledge of the views held by Industry, we do arrange to meet representative groups of Industry on two set occasions in the year - before the first Session of the Parliament, and before the Budget Session of the Parliament, and Chambers of Manufacturers, Chambers of Commerce, representatives of the Banks, of the primary producer organisations, come along and get into discussion with us. We invite the trade unions, too, and they have preferred to meet us separately rather than with the others, and at least on those two periods in the year we are told quite frankly and in the presence of each other - and this, Keith, I assure you, has proved an advantage, because we had found that there was a disposition for the manufacturer to put his story quite vehemently to us and the representative of the primary industries to put his story quite vehemently to us, separately, not in the presence of each other, but it is amazing how the process of sitting around together and knowing that there was a critical voice ready to pick up anything that might seem an exaggerated view or an unreasonably presented view of economic circumstances or of tariff policies, and matters of that sort, has produced a much more useful concensus of thought inside the representative organisations, and I have been told that by some of their spokesmen that this was the greatest value, really, that they have got out of these gatherings - that they have heard the other fellow's point of view and they have been able to take that into account in their own planning. So I just say in passing that we value the Organisations representative of Industry, of Commerce, of Primary Production, of our financial institutions, and we confer regularly with them, and I am sure that out of this teamwork of a relatively informal kind we have had more realistic and more effective national policies.

But I wasn't here today just to speak on those matters. What strikes one again most forcibly coming to this country is that however much we may speak of how like each other we are, how many things we have in common, our joint membership of that great Anzac tradition which has meant so much to the people of both countries, with Anzac Day the most solemn day of commemoration in the national calendar, it is only when you get amongst the people of the other country that it comes home to you with full impact just how alike you are in your thinking, perhaps not entirely in your speech, although we do not detect these things - this may be more apparent to you - but really, an Australian coming to New Zealand, or a New Zealander coming to Australia, finds himself at home. I have been struck even in this gathering here this evening with the number of people who have come from Australia, and I have in Australia many friends who have come to settle and to work with us in our country. Some of our most distinguished men - Sir Frederick White, Sir Douglas Copland, and there are scores of them that if time permitted one could mention. And it is only when this impact hits you that you start thinking it out. You know, we are closer in Canberra to you than we are to our own people in Perth, and the people of Perth, although they are with us on the mainland, there is a great area of desert in patches between us and them: between us and you there is a great area of sea, but we are closer physically in point of time, in point of journeying. And now that I have discovered this, as I should have discovered it long ago, I am going to see to it that my own visits and those of my Ministers are more frequent. I hope those of your Prime Minister and of his colleagues will be more frequent. As I said at our luncheon yesterday, to give some evidence of our desire to bring our relations closer and to work more closely together on matters of mutual concern, we do provide that any of our Parliamentarians are free to go and visit New Zealand at our Government's expense, because we believe that this is of value to us, and we hope that it will be of value to you.

Now Mr. Smith, you spoke of the opportunities, the challenges, that we have together in relation to the regions to the north of our countries. I suppose in my own there are some parts of Australia, perhaps many Australians, who are more acutely conscious of this by the mere circumstance of geography: we are right close, within flying distance, minutes almost, of a people 100,000,000 strong in Indonesia - restless, with a revolutionary philosophy, but with great resources which in time we hope will be effectively developed. I can illustrate for you the feeling of some of our people when I say that it is literally closer from Darwin to Saigon than it is, say, from Brisbane to Perth, and we are very conscious, and become increasingly so as events move more dynamically in those parts of the world, of our involvement - geographically, economically, from the security point of view, and in a variety of other ways, and I know that your Prime Minister is very conscious of this. We were together at Manila. We subscribed together to the Declaration and the Goals of Freedom in Manila, and we believe that our two countries have the opportunity by virtue of our economic capacities, by the standards we have been able to build in our two countries, by the warmth of friendship which exists, radiating out to us from them to exercise an influence, to be of some help, and, small though we are, to have a significant place in the scheme of things not only in this area, but towards the peace and progress of the world. And because we have the stimulation and inspiration of those goals, there is a warmth and strength in our partnership which derives not merely from our close kinship, but a feeling that we have a destiny to share together in the years which lie ahead. I hope that my own visit here will help to promote those objectives and will be tangible evidence that there is a warmth of friendship and of good will in my own country for yours, that there is a resolve that our two countries shall work together in harmony and close co-operation for the objectives that we have in common.

Thank you very much from Mrs. Holt and myself for this very warm and friendly welcome you have given us here in Christchurch this evening.
