

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. R. E. Smith, President of Chamber

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister of Australia, Your Worship the Mayor, Your Excellencies, our Distinguished Guests, and Ladies and Gentlemen:

Eight years ago the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce celebrated its 100th Birthday. Over the history of our existence we have entertained many distinguished guests, and amongst us this evening are a number whom we would be happy to receive as guests in their own right - our own Prime Minister, Mr. D. W. McNicol, Australian High Commissioner in New Zealand, Mr. J. L. Hazlett, New Zealand's High Commissioner in Australia, Sir Mark Oliphant, a very distinguished Australian scientist, Mr. R. Maddres, President of the New Zealand Manufacturers Federation, and we have five Presidents of Chambers of Commerce from other parts of the South Island. To these and our other Distinguished Guests might I offer a very sincere welcome. We are glad to have you with us. But never before throughout our history have we had the honour and privilege which we have this evening of welcoming as our guest the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia. On behalf of our members and our Distinguished Guests, may I, Sir, offer to you and to Mrs. Holt our greeting, our respect, and our warm good fellowship.

Australia had a birthday recently. It was its 179th Birthday, and never before today has a Prime Minister of Australia visited the South Island of New Zealand. Consequently I have been authorised to officially welcome the Prime Minister and Mrs. Holt on behalf of the independent peoples of the South Island. Perhaps I should explain that I use the word "independent" in its descriptive and not its political sense. To mark the occasion I have been requested to present you with a Certificate given under the Claw of the Great Moa which says: "Whereas Harold Holt, having been born in all innocence beyond these southern shores, is nevertheless now, recognising that he is geographically underprivileged, granted full status as an Honorary South Islander, with all the rights and pertinences that go with it." Perhaps I could extend our welcome a little further. I could welcome you as the Chief Minister of a member of a family of nations, the family of nations we belong to, and, like any other family, it has its varied personalities. One of our Scottish cousins was reported recently as saying that New Zealand should realise it is a big boy now and someone should prise its hands from its mother's apron strings. Well, it is true that families' interests vary as time progresses, but we also have to admit that mother, to use this description, has her own problems at the moment. Within this family I think it is generally and correctly acknowledged that Australia and New Zealand are brothers, and it is a fact that brothers, particularly if one is bigger than another, tend to have separate and competing interests, but eventually I think they realise that there is a great deal to be gained by joint co-operation. Sometimes it takes a family crisis to bring this about. It's true, too, that brothers sometimes even speak different languages, like Strine and New Zealand.

The Canterbury Chamber of Commerce is keenly aware of the part that it must play in this changing world, and as evidence of

this I would like to present to you, Sir, a survey of Christchurch and its farming environs, which was initiated by this Chamber, financed and published with the joint co-operation of four organisations representing the businessmen, including farmers, of this Province, and prepared, you will be interested to note, Sir, by a leading firm of Consultants from Australia. We believe, Sir, that survey demonstrates the potentials and the advantages of this area that we know exist. We are cognisant, too, Sir, that as outposts in the South Pacific, Australia and New Zealand must have a closer association with their relations in the Pacific area, and particularly in South East Asia, or, as I prefer to call it, the near North. We are glad, Sir, that you and our own Prime Minister are aware, in the words of one of our local churchmen, the Reverend Allan Brash, that our children have a western heritage: and this is their good fortune: they also have an Asian future: this is their challenge. This is a time of change and challenge, and we know that you have very great responsibilities. We congratulate you, Sir, on the qualities of leadership which you have amply displayed. We believe that you have earned this period of rest amongst the peace and the beauty of our mountains and lakes, but we are confident that you will return. Gentlemen and Ladies, would you please demonstrate the warmth of your welcome.
(Acclamation.)
