



OPENING OF THE U.S. NAVAL COMMUNICATION
STATION AT NORTH-WEST CAPE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

16th SEPTEMBER, 1967

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt

Mr. Premier; Your Excellencies; Admiral Johnson and other distinguished United States Naval servicemen; the distinguished servicemen of Australian Forces present here; my Ministerial and Parliamentary colleagues and the representative of the Opposition in the Federal and State Parliaments; and the very many distinguished guests, much too numerous for me to single out although no doubt the contribution which so many of you have made would justify that; and you, Ladies and Gentlemen and Boys and Girls:

This is a notable and indeed a historic day in the history of our young nation. The station itself is located in an area which has already made some contribution to Australian history because not only do we stand at the most north-westerly point of our continent but Learmonth in the Second World War saw a happy comradeship of Australian and United States servicemen as our aircraft moved in and out into action from the Learmonth airport.

And we recall here in Australia still with gratitude - indeed we commemorate that notable occasion annually - the critical Battle of the Coral Sea which virtually spared our country from a hostile invasion, thanks to the assistance and the might of the forces of the United States. And from the comradeship and partnership of that World War, particularly in this area of the world, although of course there had been a comradeship cemented in the First World War, but it was in the Second World War that we came so close to each other as nations. And we learned to value the more fully the friendship and the help that one could bring to the other. Flowing from this came the ANZUS treaty that alliance between the United States, Australia and New Zealand which, in my judgment, ranks as the greatest single contributing factor to the long-term security of this nation in the history of the Australian Federation. I welcomed Admiral Johnson the comment you made - your first comment when you came here - showing your own realisation of the need for us to keep closely together in matters of security through the future history of this region of the world.

And that happy community partnership which we now find here in Exmouth itself flowing from this project is not of course a surprising thing because we have in both our countries a common heritage of British freedom and of British democratic institutions. These have influenced our own national growth although the composition of our countries in time becomes affected, and affected richly to our advantage we have discovered, by the influx into our respective country - yours in very much greater numbers than ours in the United States - but we in turn with 40 nationalities now making their contribution to Australian growth and Australian strength. But we are finding that in this richer community we still have a basic reliance upon the principles of freedom and the democratic institutions which were part of our common heritage.

Now, Sir, this Centre is, I may clearly say, a sensible, practical, logical extension of the ANZUS spirit, an application of the ANZUS spirit to a particular project. In a sense it made history, because for the first time we found here on Australian soil a project in which there were established on a continuing basis the forces of another country. But we do not think in terms of a foreign country

with the United States. We have a basis of friendship, a closeness of co-operation, an interdependence of interest which has drawn both our countries very closely together.

Earlier this week - and I say this in particular to you, Mr. Premier - I have been visiting some of the more notable development projects in your State. It makes a rather striking contrast to contemplate that here we have been seeing great economic developments arising from our extraction and processing of minerals which have stood undisturbed through the aeons of time and to come, as I did only yesterday, to this project which is the modern, technical expression in its most recent form, a matter for wonderment to laymen like myself.

Now Australians, although small in number and remote geographically from other parts of the world, or those parts where scientific development has proceeded most extensively, have - perhaps it may appear rather curiously to some - shown a very real interest in matters of radio physics, in astronomy, in outer space research and items of that kind. There may be some who think that because so many of us have experience of vast lonely spaces and clear blue skies and more opportunity of contemplating the constellations, the Milky Way than other nationalities, that this has some bearing on it. There may be a feeling that the very fact that we incorporate the Southern Cross in our national flag is an expression of our interest in these matters astronomical. Another cause, of course, which has a very real bearing on this is that, geographically placed as we are, Australia is able to make a contribution to space research and to the study of the heavens which supplements what is done in the Northern Hemisphere.

But be that as it may, we have developed our own expertise in the tracking stations, in such places as Parkes with a radio-telescope there and at Woomera, where at the present time we have a joint project with the United States, the Sparta Project which is adding to our knowledge of matters in which we have a mutual interest. And whether there is some special significance in this or not, well I leave to others to fathom. The fact is that it does exist and this, I think it will be agreed, makes us worthy partners in this enterprise. Perhaps it also would be not inappropriate to use in this context the term "wavelengths" because Australians and Americans do seem to find it possible to get on a wavelength with each other with far less crackling static than is usually found in relations between one country and another.

Now the purpose of this station is to improve the efficiency of our efforts to maintain security and peace not only in this area of the world but as a contribution to peace throughout the world as a whole. And I wonder how many people pause to realise just what is the magnitude of the American contribution to the peace of the world at this time. Certainly those of us who live in South-East Asia or the Asian region have very good cause to know the magnitude of that contribution. I wonder how many of my fellow countrymen know that if you take the periphery of Asia running round from South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, South Vietnam itself, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand, just to mention those in particular, there has virtually been underwritten by this mighty power the security of free peoples in those countries. We realise it in relation to ANZUS but I wonder how many of us recognise that this is the order of dimension of the American undertaking and the American contribution to the peace of the area. And we honour you, Admiral Johnson, and all associated with you in the contribution that you and your servicemen are making to underwrite this guarantee of freedom.

Now, here in this centre we are able by our joint efforts to make a contribution. Frankly, I had not even through all that I had read been led to prepare my mind for the vastness of the enterprise. To think that there are those 13 towers out there, all higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris, all constructed to withstand the cyclonic gales which occasionally assail this part of the coast, and even the sight of them leaves one unprepared for what one sees when you come close and get inside the structures. It's almost bewildering and dazzling to see the complexity and scale of equipment that goes into the task that this centre will serve.

And so we express today as Australians, and I as Head of an Australian Government, our appreciation to the contribution this enterprise will bring to our security and the security of other free peoples. We also know - and we will be saying perhaps something more on this at the ceremony which follows later in the township itself - what this has meant to this particular relatively isolated part of Australia in terms of community development, and the happy partnership which has been revealed under the stress of war is again exemplified in the happy community spirit which you have developed in this township.

I spoke earlier of the power of the United States and we do well to reflect that this power is used for the purposes of peace. I know of no action or policy decision of a Government of the United States which is directed to its own aggrandisement or the acquisition of additional territory under its own control. It is there as a force for freedom and peace in the world, and we in our day and generation have cause, as we go about our own task of developing our nation and building up our security, to be grateful for the security which is underwritten virtually for us by this great power which has used its strength with so much restraint and with such a high principle as its purpose.

This, the first United States' station on Australian soil will, I hope, long continue as a symbol of the continuing partnership between our two countries and all that this partnership stands for in terms of happiness, security and interdependence of free peoples in the life of the world as it develops ahead of us. And so to me it is a particular pleasure, as the Head of the Australian Government and people, to be personally associated here today with a ceremony which is both historic in itself and important in its symbolism.
