

AUCKLAND

Speech at Civic Reception
by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton



30 March 1966

Mr. Mayor, The Right Honourable the Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen:

You will not, I know, either expect or want me to speak to you for any length of time. This is rather an occasion on which I say thank you to the Mayor for having tendered to me this reception and thank you to you people in this room for having been good enough to come along to it.

I have not, Mr. Mayor, as you seem to fear, had to listen to a lot of long speeches since I have been in this country. On the contrary, I have had to listen to a number of short speeches which were warm and touching and welcoming, and if there were long and boring speeches given, then they were given by me, which is a far better thing to do than to have to listen to them being given by somebody else. Indeed, I was quite surprised because as one travels around my own country, (and I hope if there are any of my own pressmen here they won't report this too nastily), as one travels around my own country, it is common for, at even the smallest gathering, for there to be at least four, five, six, seven speeches. This is why we are known as a nation which has the smallest number of people to the square mile, and the greatest number of speeches to the square meal. (applause).

This is not, in fact, the first time either that I have been to Auckland, though it is the first time, of course, as Prime Minister. We called through before, my wife and I, on our way back from England to begin to raise that family of which you spoke. And later I remember calling in to Auckland on a trooper and picking up part of the Maori battalion who went with us then across to England. But those were days of long ago. It is my mission here and my hope here to try and see that those bonds which began in war are now used in the arts of peace for the real use of the opportunities the war has presented to us, the opportunities to act as a free people for the good of free peoples.

Sir, it is kind of you indeed to give this reception to me. It was kind of you to talk of the potentialities of my own nation, which are great, and which if we can overcome the shortage of water, which is the main shortage, we now have open up for us, - and I don't brag and please don't think I am bragging - open up for us an almost limitless possibility for the future. But that is speaking of one nation. This is not enough. There are also possibilities in this nation which are great and if the possibilities of this nation and of our nation can be wedded and welded together for the benefit of both of us, then as I have said today at the showground and previously at Wellington, we will be the stronger for what you can do, you may be the stronger for what we can do.

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And if it turns out that that is what does happen then all the peoples round us will be the stronger for what you and we together do, and this is what we seek - this is what I think the future holds for us. I don't know how quickly but I can see and I think that you can see and I think the people of my own country can see in their minds that vision before them at some stage in the future as something to build for. I am sure you can do the same. If we don't get there as quickly as we would like, what of it. Just like a man, a nation's reach must exceed its grasp, or what's the future for. The significant thing is to reach and to reach together as far as Australia and New Zealand are concerned. And that's what we are going to do, I believe. Tomorrow we must leave but I do hope that there will be an opportunity for me to come back and meet you all again. And I do hope that when I stop being Prime Minister - I don't hope that soon but politics is an uncertain business - that whoever is Prime Minister of Australia for the next 100 years will come to New Zealand as a matter of course. And whoever's Prime Minister of New Zealand will come to Australia as a matter of course. And this too is part of that joint effort which I see as something of a destiny for us both.

I thank you, Sir, indeed. I am sorry that I spoke longer than I meant to speak to you. These are things of some importance to all of us - to both nations - and forgive me if I spent too long in talking about them.

Thank you.
