

STATE VISIT BY THE EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA

LUNCHEON AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE,

CANBERRA, A. C. T.

14 MAY 1968

Speech by the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. J. G. Gorton, MP

Your Imperial Majesty, Your Excellencies, Ministers, Parliamentary Colleagues and Ladies and Gentlemen :

This, I think, as far as the history of our land is concerned, is a unique occasion, for it is the first time on which, although our land itself is age old and worn down with erosion of the centuries and the more than centuries, it is the first time on which a people with a history of something less than two hundred years has had the honour and the privilege of having had a visit, Sir, from the ruler of a nation whose history goes back into the mists of time and which was, with one foot in the Mediterranean basin from which Western civilisation sprang - how many thousand years ago? - a nation which affected that growth at that time.

That alone, Sir, is sufficient reason for us to extend to you, as we do, the warmest welcome which we could possibly extend to a visiting emperor.

There is something about the land of Ethiopia which I think all Australians, indeed all people of British descent. . . . my own father included. . . knew more about, had heard more about - not in detail - but had heard more about in general, the land of Ethiopia than of any other land in Africa, or indeed, most other lands in the world.

Our minds go back to that fabled Queen of Sheba, apparently, Sir, an extremely attractive woman, who had heard of the wisdom. . . (she was an Ethiopian) of the King Solomon, and being a woman - because they haven't changed over these thousands of years - decided to find out whether indeed the wisdom of that King was as great as it was reputed to be. So she set out - as chronicles tell us - to prove King Solomon with hard questions. . . something which women still continue to do and which is not indeed unknown, Sir, in the precincts of the House in which you find yourself.

I like to think - and again I go back to chronicles - that amongst the gifts taken by the Queen of Sheba were not only many shekels of gold, not only large measures of precious jewels, but something which chronicles describe as an al gum tree. Now, Sir, I am not quite sure what the prefix "al" means. I think it is an Arabic prefix which may be "el" or may be "al", but in either case means "the". So perhaps it was that the Queen of Sheba took to King Solomon "the gum tree", that perhaps because of erosion disappeared, and Sir if that is so, we like to think that because in your land this grows so prolifically that it came back so many thousands of years later from us.

But it is not only because of the storied land, it is not only because from this visit derived the title "Lion of Judah" which Menelek I, five or six thousand years ago assumed or was given, and which you Sir still bear in direct descent, it is not merely because of this and

policy, and indeed, they are responsible for carrying out policies decided by governments, governments being elected by the people of Australia because we are, as I think you have been told, a country which is wedded to democracy.

The theme of this conference is, as I understand it, how to make a machine work for the good of man, rather than to have men existing to serve machines, how to harness the industrial development and invention which takes place so that that industrial development and invention, causing as it nearly always does, disruption initially, will nevertheless eventually provide a better life than was possible before the invention took place.

This question is one which has bedevilled man for far back in history. In Great Britain, the country from which my father came, I remember reading of Luddite riots which took place when, for the first time, the cottage industries which had employed people in weaving and other methods of making their living were threatened by the incipient factories which at that time were brought in because it was found that things could be made cheaper, and in many cases better. But although things could be made cheaper, and in many cases better, nevertheless a pattern of life was disrupted and a pattern of home employment was put in jeopardy, and so there were riots.

Yet, the eventual results of the invention, of course, advanced immensely the material standard of living of those in that country. In the case of the industrial revolution which swept the world - I suppose, if I may oversimplify - beginning with the invention of steam, in that time also we had the same problem repeated, with great industrial capacity created, with infinitely more efficiency brought to bear on the production of the needs of individual people, but with individual people indiscriminately being herded into those "dark Satanic mills", about which words were written at the time.

Well, we have moved from those days. We have moved to understand, as this conference will discuss, how we can use the new inventions which come pouring in upon us, which must in many cases disrupt existing patterns of employment - how we can use them so that we avoid human distress, so that we avoid human displacement, so that we achieve the benefits that the new inventions will bring to us.

In order to do this, we need more than a mere understanding of the inventions themselves, than a mere understanding of the application of new principles, important though this may be, for these new scientific achievements, these new technological achievements are bringing to us as human beings a capacity for good which I think has not been known in the world before to the extent to which it is, and a capacity for evil, which I think has not been known in the world before to the extent to which it is. Just as the invention of fire was the invention of something which could be used on the hearth of a home to warm a family during a winter's night, or to provide a meal which was not raw and half-burnt, so the invention of fire could be used, and has been used, to destroy cities and irreplaceable libraries. Just as the understanding of the atom has enabled immense advantage in medical techniques and in industrial techniques, and I think and hope for the future, provided a chance for dry continents such as our own to take water from the sea and turn that water into the fresh water that we need, so the understanding of the atom has also given an opportunity for cities and regions to be laid waste.

Therefore, it is more than merely understanding the scientific changes, more than merely understanding the technological changes which are required. It is an understanding of human hearts. It is a call to educate human beings to see that these great powers now being released are used for good and are not used for evil.

Beyond that, and I think below that, but nevertheless of immense importance, is this requirement to understand what human needs are. I know they vary; of course they must from individual to individual. But there probably must be, I think, some common human requirement if an individual is to feel himself fulfilled, if he is to feel that he is living a not merely materially successful, but a satisfactory life.

These things, I think, we do not yet know, but because one of the by-products of the scientific revolution is that there is going to be more and more leisure, more and more capacity for an individual to move away from the hourly requirement to earn and leave him more time to develop - I did not say "enjoy", but to develop oneself must be regarded as enjoyment - we need to know more about what it is that people wish to do in this way, and to provide that along with the harnessing of the scientific and technical advances made.

That I think, Your Royal Highness, is one of the basic ideas underlying the whole of this conference, and indeed, the other conferences you have held. Because these are problems which are not confined to one country but problems which in varying degrees already encompass the countries of the world and will in the future encompass in greater degree more countries, it is time and more than time that people gathered, as you have gathered, to discuss these matters. And it may be that if from your discussions come some ideas which, as ideas are inclined to do, filter slowly, but filter through a community and then to a government, then it may be that you will be providing for your children or your grandchildren a world in which the great advances which have been made will be understood, will be used in a proper way in the world, and - what I think we all seek more than anything else - the individual can feel he is contributing to the community in which he lives, can get satisfaction from that, can feel that whatever it is inside him which is able to be developed, whether it be musical talent, artistic talent, literary talent, or any other talent, is being full opportunity to burgeon and develop. If this happens, then a great service will have been done to mankind.

And so I wish you well in your deliberations. I have great pleasure in welcoming you again, if I may, to the National Capital, and I hope when you disperse to the cities of this Commonwealth that you will see for yourselves the problems still remaining and perhaps suggest some solution. If in your discussions you disagree as to the precise solutions or even as to the precise problems, well, Sir, that will be not at all surprising because it is not unknown for us to disagree amongst ourselves.

I thank you.
