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"ADDRESS TO THE NATION"

BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR WILLIAM McMAHON
OVER THE NATIONAL RADIO AND TV NETWORK

26 NOVEMBER 1971

Good Evening:

I want to report to you tonight about my recent mission to the United States and to the United Kingdom.

About the middle of October, I received a personal invitation from President Nixon to visit the United States. Now I did so in extraordinary circumstances because momentous events were occurring in world affairs which intimately affected us as well as the rest of the world.

There was a growing change in the balance of power amongst the great countries. No longer did the United States and Soviet Russia dominate the scene. Communist China was becoming increasingly important, and so, too, was Japan and the European Community, including Britain. As well, the President of the United States was about to visit both Peking and Moscow. And Dr Kissinger, on his behalf, had been to Peking on two occasions. There was an international monetary crisis. Britain had just decided to enter the European Community and, of course, in the countries that I was to visit, queries were made about problems that we might have to face at home.

So I went to the United States first, that is, to New York and to Washington. And I had interviews with most of the important members of the United States Administration, from President Nixon down.

In my discussions with him, he first of all raised the question of the American presence in South Vietnam. And he explained to me in detail what the Americans intended to do and the rate at which their forces would be withdrawn. He also gave me - and I regard this as of vital importance to us - but he gave me an assurance that the ANZUS Treaty was as valid today as it was on the day on which it was signed.

Now this Treaty is important to us for this reason: That, as you will probably know, the ANZUS Treaty provides that in the event of an armed attack on Australia, the United States and New Zealand would act to meet the common danger. There could not have been a better assurance than he has given, and it virtually guarantees our freedom from attack.

I also had discussions on such matters as trade - of meat particularly - and a visit of Mr Stans to Australia, their Secretary of Commerce, relating to the problems associated with wool. It was also suggested to me in discussions with their Treasury officials that the United States, Japan, and ourselves, should co-operate in order to try and get better terms of access to the new European Economic Community.

Of course, I had other discussions, but I haven't the time to be able to go through them tonight. But I did have discussions on the environment and pollution. And the Americans assured me that our officials would be able to go there, and they would make available all the information they had so that we would avoid the errors of other countries.

So I can assure you of this. The visit was timely - it was successful - and it was to your advantage.

I then went to the United Kingdom, and had discussions with Mr Heath, the Prime Minister, and most of his senior Ministers.

The big problem we faced there was that Britain was shortly to enter the European Economic Community. And that consequently the historic trade ties between Australia and the United Kingdom would cease.

So I sought guarantees that our interests would be protected. And I am glad to be able to say that from Mr Heath down to his Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister responsible for Economic Affairs in the European Community, Mr Rippon, that they would do their best to protect our interests now. And they gave me three guarantees.

The first one was that if we did have some difficulties with particular agricultural industries, we could make representations, or the British would make representations for us, to the Community to try and get corrections made. They also agreed that if we had a threat of serious injury, we could take it up with the European Community.

And above all, they stressed the need for industries themselves to become involved in these problems, and not leave the sole responsibility to the Government.

In the case of Papua-New Guinea, they said that if the Community could be prevailed upon to accept their ideas, they would give special privileges to the export of goods from Papua-New Guinea into the United Kingdom. Yesterday I received a message which I'm glad to say I was able to relay to the House, that they had lived up to their promise and special advantages would be given to Papua/New Guinea, a dependency country that is really for the time being dependent on us.

So, too, did I have pretty important discussions on other economic matters. It was pointed out to me that Australia and England are both great trading powers. And consequently in the case of the United Kingdom, the greater the trade and the greater the degree of flexibility, the better it would be.

For my part, I asked them - in fact I impressed upon them - that they must not be isolationist and inward-looking, but Britain should exert its influence to ensure that the European Community was outward-looking and international.

Now I am sure that the arrangements, or the arrangements that we made, will be of advantage to Britain, to the Common Market, to the world, and above all to ourselves.

I then had discussions with the Minister for Defence, Lord Carrington, well known to most Australians. And again we discussed problems of great importance to us, the first being the recent signature of what is called the Five Power arrangements relating to Malaysia and Singapore.

Now, as you know, Malaysia and Singapore, together with Indonesia, are vital to us.

We want the British to maintain a presence East of Suez, and particularly in Malaysia and Singapore, just as long as they can. And I received assurances of this kind from the Government.

They are willing to participate in the security, and to engender a feeling of confidence in this part of the world, and they are certainly willing to participate in training arrangements for the Malaysians and Singaporeans. And so it went on.

I had discussions on many other subjects of great importance to us: Consultations with very nearly every senior Minister there was in the United Kingdom.

And this brings me to the story that I want to tell to you as Australian people.

The first one was that on each occasion the consultations were full, frank and with candour. Nothing was held back. They told us what they knew and we told them what we knew.

For example, I was told of what was about to happen in Rhodesia. Mr Nixon told me of his hopes in the visits that he intended to make to Moscow and to Peking.

And I can assure you, and I want you to realise this fact, that they trust us, I believe, more than they trust most other countries, and are willing to confide in us and are willing to co-operate with us too.

The second point was this: Wherever I went I found that we were regarded, not as one of the super or the great powers, but we were regarded as one of the medium powers - one that was playing an increasingly important part, and having an increasingly important influence: Not only in South-East Asia, but in the United Kingdom and the United States as well.

The next point that came home to me - and I want to repeat it to you - is that now that we are accepted as a completely independent country, that our foreign affairs reflect the interests of the Australian people, we must also recognise the fact that we have to take primary responsibility for our own defence. And we have to take complete responsibility for our own economic affairs, although the others will assist us when the occasion is needed.

But let me look at the problem of our economy first. We have a great economy - and I'll say a little more about this later - but in our economic affairs overseas, we have to fight the battles, and industry has to join with the Government in achieving success and not let the Government do all the fighting for it.

And on defence, too, the primary responsibility depends upon us. Now it's true that we have the ANZUS Treaty, and we have the Five Power Arrangement with Malaysia and Singapore. But that doesn't mean that we can just lay back and let the others take the responsibility.

In fact, what it does mean, and this is certain - and something that has to be conveyed to you over and over again - that the more we do, the more they'll be inclined to do with us.

But when we get into a position as we got into at the middle and the latter parts of World War II, then we will know we have reliable friends and allies, and that is why the ANZUS Treaty will be so valuable to us, and that is why for the moment, and while the British presence is maintained, their presence in Malaysia and Singapore will be valuable too.

And the third point that I had to make - and I want to make - is this: There were some misgivings in both the United States and the United Kingdom as to where we were going. They had heard of the problems of inflation, industrial disputes - they knew of the problems associated with the sale of wool.

I was able to give them this assurance, and I think they recognise it now because they admit there is no country that is more suitable for investment or more attractive to investment than Australia is.

This, I believe, is the test of how a country is going and how great its prospects for the future are.

But I did point out to them that our population is now thirteen million and growing, that our production is growing at the rate of somewhere about five per cent per annum, and that our industry has now become much more diversified and stable than ever before.

So we - you and I - have got every reason for confidence, and I believe they have confidence in us too. In short, I think I was able to point out to them that we know where we're going and we know how to get there. They understand our problems and they understand the outlook for the future. It is a future in which we should have absolute confidence, and I want to express to you tonight my personal confidence too.

So as I said, we pointed out to them - we know where we're going. I hope the Australian people will accept the fact we know where we're going and we will get there and I am sure in a way that will be satisfactory to you.

Good evening and thank you.
