

The Netherlands

Speech by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mr Joop den Uyl, at a dinner given in honour of the Prime Minister of Australia in The Hague on 4 January 1975

The honour and the pleasure of receiving you in the Netherlands, Mr Prime Minister, Mrs Whitlam and our other distinguished Australian guests, is due, no doubt, to the close relations between our countries and co-operation in various international fields. May I add that the pleasure of receiving you at this very moment has perhaps also something to do with the fact that there are similarities in the situation of your Government, Mr Prime Minister, and that of mine.

I am not referring to the fact that some people have written to you in the past few months that we had a crisis every week. And I will not suggest that you are having the same experience. But there are some resemblances in the situation of your government and that of mine and I will point those out later on.

Well, the relationship between our countries goes back much further than the recent past. I need not remind you of this. You all know the Dutch discovered Tasmania, and well we know you had at least discovered this country before your present visit, and I am very happy about that. Well, turning to the Australia of today, we know that about 150,000 Netherlands nationals have settled there since 1950, and have forged even closer ties between us than in the past. These Dutch immigrants face with you the tremendous challenges of terrain, climate and distance in the development of national resources. If I am not mistaken we were the first non-Commonwealth country to conclude an immigration agreement with you. And to be frank, I feel a little proud that most of my fellow countrymen have successfully adapted themselves to their new surroundings. In fact—I think—the greater part have adopted Australian

citizenship. And, well, some people think that a Dutchman begins to be a very noble man if he stops being a Dutchman, so there must be every hope for you, having so many Dutch people naturalised as Australians today. I hope and trust these people continue to be an asset to both our countries. Important as this may be, there is more to link our countries in the present-day world, in spite of the physical distance that separates us.

With the advent of regular air communications shortly after the end of the second World War, there have been numerous contacts during the period when both our countries were undergoing a fundamental economic, political and social transformation. For all the gaps and misconceptions that inevitably remain, we do know in this country that Australia is no longer primarily an exporter of agricultural produce and wool. And, even, not only the country of kangaroos. We know that, in addition to strengthening its position as a supplier of raw materials, Australia has developed a powerful and sophisticated industrial base, able to hold its own with other leading industrial nations.

Dutch enterprise and capital have had a part in this development. We realise it has been a modest part. Perhaps too modest. We would welcome a greater participation in your economy and this morning we have already discussed ways to achieve that goal. Both our countries have had to meet serious challenges.

Australia's outlook and interests were conditioned by its ties with the British Commonwealth, its vast geographical area and the tremendous hardships encountered and overcome in its initial development. The

Netherlands outlook was conditioned by its position as a geographically small but densely populated country in Europe with extensive overseas dominions. The very fact that we are such a densely populated country may explain for example why conservation policies, environmental pollution, our concern about scarcity of national resources, our conviction that new ways should be opened up in that field are so much stressed in this country and in its policies today.

Looking to the future from our present position, we find ever increasing commercial and political links within the European Community, of which the Netherlands forms an intrinsic part. Yet mental attitudes and world-wide economic interests inherited from our recent past make us pay special attention to the relations of Europe to the outside world. We—I venture to say—we can always be counted upon to oppose trends that would make Europe into a closed entity, turning a blind eye to the problems of others.

Hence our special concern for developing countries, but also for countries like Australia, which feel that their interests are bound up with those of the world community.

Both our countries are seeking today a new social order in our domestic policies and in international policies. The Government you lead, Mr Prime Minister, came to power as a result of the elections of—I believe it was—2 December 1972. Well, that is something to be jealous of. You took over on 5 December. The Government I represent in the Netherlands was a somewhat delayed result of the elections of 29 November 1972, three days before yours, but it took nearly six months, it was 11 May, before I could say: I have achieved the same results as you did after three days. Well, what we might have in common is a desire to reform and remould society, but perhaps also a sense of instability. You had to face the electorate again in May of last year. I only had to face criticism in Parliament and in the press but I watched you, you

The Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mr den Uyl, presiding over talks in The Hague.



are accustomed to peril like me. You have brought about quite a few changes in the foreign policy of Australia. You have embarked on the work for a wider and genuinely representative regional association. In the United Nations you have adopted an attitude on 'apartheid' in South Africa broadly in line with that of Third World countries. You have speeded up the process of national independence for Papua New Guinea. The Australian Labor Government has committed itself to an aid target of 0.7 per cent of Australia's GNP in the coming decade. Australia has joined with India, Sri Lanka and other countries of the region in pressing for the Indian Ocean to be declared a Nuclear Free Zone. You have emphasised to the world that there are Nations of the Pacific and that as such they have a direct interest in the purpose for which the ocean is used. You have recognised the Chinese People's Republic and the North Viet-Nam government.

In summing up all this, all these changes you were striving for in foreign policy, I recognise much of what the Government I represent is striving for. And it is in many ways surprising to discover that your Government—acting as it did from December 72—and my Government acting from May 73, have been striving to achieve the same goals in international development. The Dutch Government has committed itself to a development aid target of 1.2 per cent of GNP to be reached in 1976. We are conscious that it is a very hard road, it is a very ambitious target, but we think it is necessary to reach it, in our position in Western Europe and in the world. We seek to create a critical solidarity in crossing the bridge between industrial and developing countries. We want to be a critical member of NATO, accepting our fundamental partnership in the Western world and pressing at the same time for common goals in co-operation with non-aligned and Third World countries. We know that there are limits to change. Limits to change in foreign policy, too, and in the possibilities of international co-operation. You, Mr Prime Minister, have been working in political life for more than a quarter of a century. You were a Member of Parliament for twenty years and people experienced in parliamentary life know that policies of change can only be realised within small margins. And for my part, I think that that is political reality and we have to

be aware of it. We in this country often speak about the controversy between North and South in the world, as being of no less importance than the controversy between East and West. It is a good thing (for us) to know that in the South there are Western countries—Australia, New Zealand—which might contribute substantially to overcoming that controversy between North and South.

I might add a few words about what that might mean in our present situation. Today a very serious challenge faces us both. I am referring to the energy crisis and the problems connected with it. Both your country and mine are in a relatively favourable position as regards energy resources. But we do not propose to make use of this position in a grasping, selfish way. It is our conviction that no country can be permanently prosperous in a world where the great majority live in poverty and even in acute hardship. The same principle of fair shares for all which guides us within our national boundaries will guide us in our efforts to lessen the gap in prosperity between us and the developing countries. That is why, whatever the difficulties facing us, we shall not relax our efforts to contribute to the development of the Third World.

Mr Prime Minister, we have worked closely together as nations on numerous issues, in the United Nations and in other international organisations, with a view to creating conditions for a better world for all humanity to live in. When you return to your own country I should like you to take back this message: There is a country in Europe, far away across oceans and continents, which looks upon the world much as you do, which has stood by at the birth of your nation and which values numerous precious ties with it. A country, in short, which is and wants to remain a friend: the Netherlands.

Speech by the Prime Minister of Australia at a dinner given in his honour by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands in The Hague on 4 January 1975

I have had frequent occasion on my visit to Europe to stress the traditional friendship that Australia enjoys with the countries of Europe. In few countries are such sentiments more appropriate or more soundly based than here in The Netherlands. I greet you, Prime Minister, not only as a fellow Head of Government and as the head of a fraternal party, but as the leader of a nation with an exemplary record of generosity and goodwill in her dealings with the world. In few countries is there a keener and more practical conception of the responsibilities of a small or medium power towards the maintenance of a stable world order.

The Netherlands has made a contribution to the less fortunate peoples of the world and to the welfare and progress of the international community out of all proportion to her size. An Australian Prime Minister comes to your country, seeking not merely a reaffirmation of our bonds of friendship, but a good example—indeed a measure of inspiration—to guide us in our own search for a wise and constructive role as an independent nation in an increasingly troubled world.

In the history and traditions, and in the contemporary circumstances of our countries, there is much to provide a basis for greater co-operation and understanding. Dutch navigators discovered the Australian continent in the early 17th century—more than a century before the British. True it was they found little to interest them in those days. It was another 300 years before the Dutch came to Australia in significant numbers. Since World War II—a conflict in which Dutch and Australian soldiers fought side by side—more than 160,000 Dutch migrants have settled in my country. Their contribution to the development and enrichment of Australian society has been immense and irreplaceable. No migrants are more valued or respected by the Australian people. Today, the populations of our two countries and our national incomes are almost identical. We are both great trading

nations. With our common western traditions of law, social justice and Parliamentary democracy, we share similar ethical and cultural values. Each of us aspires to a robust national independence, to a distinctive voice in world affairs, yet each of us acknowledges an important role, and important responsibilities, in international and regional communities.

I mention these things, not just to illustrate the strength of our own relationship, which is long-standing and secure, but to show how two nations, geographically remote and with widely different regional interests, can demonstrate the growing interdependence of all nations. I believe this interdependence to be the cardinal reality of modern international relations. Only by recognising their interdependence will nations overcome the complex and daunting problems confronting us all. Interdependence implies much more than co-existence, more even than co-operation: it requires us to acknowledge that no nation can live to itself, that the world's problems are global in their nature and origin, and that solutions will never be found—they will indeed be made much more difficult—if nations pursue narrow, inward-looking policies, whether in trade or in economic matters, in military or defensive postures or in their attitudes to the developing nations. There has never been a greater need for international discussion, for the exchange of views, for the strengthening and enlargement of the world's agencies for co-operation and consultation. The survival of the western world—with its free institutions and its manifold material blessings—may well depend on the ability of nations to talk and work together.

I believe this spirit of co-operation must be sought through a new respect for international law. It is appropriate that I mention these thoughts in The Hague, for it is here in your city that one of the paramount instruments for world order and international law is based. Australia has given her warm support to the principles

and objectives of the International Court of Justice. We believe we must continue to promote the development of international law. We must promote its acceptance, not merely as a means of ending disputes, but as a standard for international conduct, as a positive embodiment of the principles of international justice and human brotherhood. The re-ordering of political and economic relations which is occurring throughout the world will inevitably give rise to strains between states. The challenge facing us at present is to rise above self-interest and accept with generosity, with grace and with responsibility the need to resolve our differences by peaceful means. It is for these reasons that I spoke last year in the United Nations General Assembly of the need to give greater attention to the role of the International Court. I urged that the Court's jurisdiction should be widened and that jurisdiction should become compulsory and universal. In helping the Court to enhance its role, our countries share much common ground. Our delegations at the United Nations have worked closely together to this end.

In international affairs, there have been many other areas of fruitful co-operation between Australia and the Netherlands. We both give high priority to the United Nations. We have effectively co-operated in the General Assembly on such questions as non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament: Korea and South-East Asia: the strengthening of the International Atomic Energy Agency: the Law of the Sea and the Environment. We have rejected apartheid and worked for the elimination of racism and colonialism, of anarchy and terrorism. We share a similar outlook on the problems of the under-

The Prime Minister makes an address in The Hague.



developed world. We are dedicated to the independence and development of those countries which history once made our colonies.

Australia's new emphasis in her foreign policy on a more outward-looking and independent role, our greater involvement in Asia and our region, in no way represents any break with our history or with our traditional friends and allies in the Commonwealth, in Western Europe or the United States. Nor has our vital interest in their well-being diminished. Western Europe, for example, is more important than ever in our vision of the world. The nations of the European Economic Community now constitute Australia's second most important trading partner. We believe a united Europe will strengthen the democratic forces in the world, and that Europe's continuing prosperity is essential to the welfare and progress of all nations.

The Netherlands, as one of the founding states of the European community, has an essential and continuing role in the new Europe and in Australia's relations with Europe. Your great ports are the essential gateways for our trade with the whole of this continent. Your businessmen and investors are deeply involved in Australia's economic development. Dutch people have risen to the highest positions of eminence in Australian commerce, industry and public life. I think of G. D. Delprat, a former manager of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company, Australia's largest corporation, a man who established our first steel works in Newcastle. I think of G. J. Dusseldorp, founder of the Lend Lease Corporation, one of the greatest development companies in Australia. In this context I mention a recent initiative to establish an Australian-Netherlands Association in Australia which will complement the successful Netherlands' Australia Institute already established in this country. I pay tribute to the efforts to establish the new association and offer my full support. It will symbolise and strengthen the long-standing and cordial friendship between our two countries. That friendship, Mr Prime Minister, has been deepened and enriched by my visit to your historic capital and by our talks together. Australians attach the highest importance to our good relations, and honour your nation and its people for their contribution to a saner, more civilised, more just and peaceful world.



The Prime Minister speaks at his official welcome to Paris at the Hotel de Ville.