

Mr Hooper  
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I'm to open Swedish Technical Week, but that's not what is worrying me - it is this phone call which I have to take immediately I have opened the Week.

I sometimes have the feeling, I suppose all of you do, that when you are making phone calls, somebody may be listening in. Well, on this occasion, I know they are - hundreds of you! Of course, this means that the phone call will have to be exceptionally discreet and formal. I hope you will pardon me because really on the telephone, I'm quite relaxed ordinarily, quite forthcoming, quite natural. This is not the real me that you will hear on the phone.

It gives me very great pleasure to open Swedish Technical Week, because there is no country in the world, whose model my Government has sought to emulate in so many respects. I suppose I must confess to being a little ideologically prejudiced. The Swedish Government is formed by a fraternal party of my own. It's been in office for over 40 years, yet Sweden is one of the most complete democracies in the world - a vigorous contest between political parties and we've won for over 40 years. Of course, naturally, I want to emulate the Swedish example.

But let me be completely dispassionate in this matter. Let me just look at the facts and the statistics. When the Swedish Social Democrats came to office in the early 1930's, Sweden statistically was the poorest country in Europe. It would be invidious to mention the countries which are now regarded as the poorest in Europe, but which at that time, had a higher average per capita income than did the Swedes. Now, by any tests, Sweden has the highest per capita income in Europe. It is probably the richest country in the world. I believe the conclusion to be drawn is obvious. The society is fair, the economy has been transformed. And it has come about, I believe, because the Swedes have concentrated on their strengths. They are naturally an educated, healthy people, a real democracy, complete freedom of parliamentary and media exchanges. At the same time, they have concentrated on those natural resources where they are strongest. They are very rich in minerals, and one only has to look not only at the income that the Swedes derive from the export of minerals, but also look at the income they derive, the employment they secure, from the processing of minerals and not least, the whole of the metal skills upon which so much of their reputation in the world is based. In every respect, the raw materials, the basic industries, the crafts and designs, the Swedes excell.

Inevitably, in these circumstances, they have built up a very healthy trade with Australia. So often when people visit Australia, they say the trade balance is very much in Australia's favour. I have to point out that the trade between Australia and Sweden, the trade balance, is immensely in Sweden's favour - much more in Sweden's favour than the trade balance is in Australia's favour with any country in the world. But I don't resent that, I don't object to it.

Minister Bengtsson has pointed out the close ties which have developed between our two countries in the last two years. I suppose you could say the last two years and five months to be precise.

Nobody would say that I haven't tried to visit Sweden! It was about six years since I made my first visit there and try as I might, I couldn't extend my mission to Europe over last Christmas and January, to include Sweden. But I couldn't restrain my Ministers from visiting it. I think more of my Ministers have visited Sweden than have visited any other country - quite a record I can assure you. In so many international gatherings, we confer with the Swedes, whether it is in economic, or social, or diplomatic issues, we study in every case, what the Swedes are doing, or what they have done and they have been very good colleagues indeed. It's a delight to have Minister Bengtsson here again. We appreciate any visits from him. The Swedes have an extraordinarily fine Public Service, an extraordinarily fine diplomatic service and we have the Ambassador and a distinguished Minister here with us today. Moreover, there are a very great number of Swedish businessmen and Australian businessmen visiting Australia in this Swedish Technical Week.

I don't know when the phone call is coming through, but I suppose to make it available and to take this call, to be formal and discreet, I had better get this informal part over, and I now declare Swedish Technical Week 1975 in Melbourne, Australia, open.

TELEPHONE LINK-UP DISCUSSION

Mr. Whitlam: The trade balance between our two countries is very much in your favour.

Mr. Palme: Yes, but the important thing is that it will expand both ways, I hope.

Mr. Whitlam: I'm sure it will.

Mr. Palme: Really, our contacts have developed in a very capable way in all spheres during the last few years.

Mr. Whitlam: They have indeed.

Mr. Palme: We are very happy for that.

Mr. Whitlam: I must say that I was sorry that I couldn't extend my European visit, 5 months ago, to Sweden, but I want to express my appreciation to you and your Ministers for your hospitality to so many of my Ministers, who, whenever they're within a thousand miles of Sweden, make sure that they visit Sweden.

Mr. Palme: In the first place, we are looking forward to seeing you in the future. I remember we met at a restaurant here in Stockholm.

Mr. Whitlam: Yes

Mr. Palme: Six or seven years ago.

Mr. Whitlam: When you were the heir apparent to Erlander.

Mr. Palme: I just returned from Vienna a couple of hours ago, where I met two friends of yours, Willy Brandt and H. Schmidt, and they both extend their best wishes to you. I understand that Willy Brandt has also talked to you over the phone once, to Australia.

Mr. Whitlam: Yes he did, last year. But it was not so refined a technique as this where we are speaking on telephones. In that case we were on television. We were picked up by television sets, but here, of course, we are on Ericsson telephones.

Mr. Palme: So the technical development proceeds from year to year.

Mr. Whitlam: I was happy to be able to see Willy Brandt last January in Bonn and, of course, found him in excellent spirits and we have some hope that he may be visiting Australia next year.

Mr. Palme: He mentioned that. He was looking forward to it. We were discussing particularly, the present situation in the world and in Europe. Naturally the fact that the unemployment is so large, the OECD area is causing us very great concern, but we are hoping that there will come some up-turn later in the year, which would be very beneficial.

Mr. Whitlam: We hope so, because all the countries at this stage of development that the OECD countries are, big ones and medium sized ones like Sweden and Australia, have these terrible twin problems of unemployment and inflation. But it looks as if the position is improving steadily, although slowly, in all our countries.

Mr. Palme: I believe so. The important thing is to tie it to the development of the United States. As long as they lag behind, it will be difficult, but there is a hope that there will be a change this year.

Mr. Whitlam: They seem to have changed their policies in order to relieve the unemployment.

I would like to assert to you, face to face, how much my Government has appreciated working with your Government and its representatives in international bodies in the last two and a half years. We find ourselves on the same wavelength in so many social and economic and diplomatic issues, and whenever we are deciding a course of action we shall take as Australians in any of these bodies, we ascertain what the attitude of the Swedish Government will be.

Mr. Palme: May I immediately reciprocate, because whatever the field is, whether it be the environment, or in disarmament questions or in the General Assembly or in the Security Council in the United Nations, we always have the same experience that our representatives can work very much on the same lines. And I feel that it is important that countries of our size try to both take an active part to show solidarity in all the international affairs.

Mr. Whitlam: We are not so large that other countries suspect our political motives or fear our economic power. They can believe that what we are trying to do is, in fact, good international relations, fraternal relations.

Mr. Palme: In my contacts around the world, I see more and more that this type of cooperation of the medium sized and smaller countries is wanted, not least in the many countries

of the Third World that now are finding their rightful places.

Mr. Whitlam: Well, of course, Australia is surrounded by developing countries, countries of the Third World, countries which in the last generation, or in the case of Indo-China, within the last couple of months, have achieved independence, and, accordingly, we are very much aware of the needs of developing countries for trade as well as aid, and that they need to have international self-respect. We applaud the efforts that Sweden has taken under your Government and Mr. Erlander's Government in this respect - in Indo-China, the attitude you expressed politically and also the assistance that you have given with aid and rehabilitation. It's been a noble precedent and we try to emulate it.

Mr. Palme: Your position is very important. Just because you are in the region where there are many countries of the Third World, where you have much more first-hand contact than many other countries have. In this international cooperation, I think what we are doing right now is important because there is in many places, a reaction against technical development and against the advances of industrial society. This can be understandable when technology leads to undesirable social results, but on the other hand, one must never forget that it is the technical development that has allowed our countries to come up from poverty and misery and to create welfare for our peoples. Therefore, we had to control technology, and also give it the possibility to develop for the benefit of all countries and for mankind, and I think it is important to stress this in the modern world.

Mr. Whitlam: In our area it is true that in many of our neighbour countries, there is some revulsion against advanced technologies because they have often increased the distance between the people in office or in power, through whose hands the new techniques pass, and the rest of the population. It would be a tragic result if higher techniques increased the disparities, the inequalities in the developing societies. Nevertheless, as I was saying to this gathering at this function in Melbourne, it is by concentrating on its strengths, that a country like Sweden in the course of just over 40 years, has come from the poorest country in Europe to the richest country in the world - the smallest per capita income to the largest. You have concentrated on your strengths and it is something that we aim to copy in Australia. You have preserved democracy, you have a welfare state and you have a thriving mixed economy.

Mr. Palme: I don't think you need to copy anything because really, you are following the same path with a very developed industrial economy on a mixed economy basis and the extended welfare for the people. We can thus, because we are on the same level of development, learn a lot from each other, in the social fields and the labour market field, and many others.

So we are really learning much from you and I see my colleagues are very eager to come over there and discuss with your people.

Mr. Whitlam: We have Mr. Bengtsson, of course, with us today.

Mr. Palme: I hope he behaves!

Mr. Whitlam: We haven't got these two-way Ericsson telephones on him the whole time, but I believe so. Both as Environment and as Labor Minister, he is a very good colleague. My colleagues in these fields have shared experiences with him to our advantage and he seems to enjoy it too.

Mr. Palme: Last year we had Mr. Cameron. I had a long discussion with him. I suppose you see him often. Would you give him my regards.

Mr. Whitlam: I see him constantly. He is constantly on radio talk-back programmes. If he were on a programme like this, there would be no holding him! I will tell him that you remember him and that you speak so kindly of him. Thank you very much for your reference to him.

Mr. Palme: I hope that this Technical Week will be of some interest to you and show you what we are trying to develop in this very small country. We try to specialise in certain things.

Mr. Whitlam: I'm most glad that Swedish technology has brought us face to face again. I hope that it will not be too long before you, in my country, or I, in your country, can speak face to face without scores or hundreds of people watching us. It's very good for my Government to be working so closely with your Government in so many fields and I have very much appreciated the opportunity of speaking to you face to face again through the Swedish technology and the opening of Swedish Technical Week in Australia.

Mr. Palme: I really look forward to seeing you again in person in my country and I'm glad that technology gave us this chance of a preview of our future meeting.

Mr. Whitlam: Thank you very much, Prime Minister.

Mr. Palme: Thank you, goodbye.

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