

PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA AT THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, WASHINGTON - 29 JULY 1976

Thank you for having me as your guest. I am pleased to celebrate with you a remarkable two centuries and what is perhaps the greatest venture in popular government the world has known.

Part of the reason why your nation has been so successful is because your Founding Fathers saw clearly the necessity for a balance of power and interest.

Your Constitution is the product of their recognition that liberty's best safeguard lay in distributing power as widely as possible and in achieving a balance between the different regions of the country, and between the different arms of government.

Today I would like to talk about balance in domestic and international affairs and as it relates to the domestic situation in Australia.

In both domestic and international arenas, in a pluralist and imperfect world, a stable balance of forces provides our best hope for stability and peace. In the international context such a balance implies not only an equality of physical and technical capability but also an equality of will. That is the only sure foundation on which to establish procedures which will stabilise relations and contain conflict.

Much depends on the people conducting international affairs. Their constant task must be to maintain balance and to strengthen the fabric of peace and stability. In this, their efforts to improve personal understanding are, I believe, of very great importance.

Balance in the international arena - stablised by realistic discussions and negotiations - works to prevent the dominance of one nation over others, and to create the conditions in which all nations can work out their future in the interests of their own people.

Our major foreign policy effort is naturally, directed to areas close to Australia.

In South East Asia our main concern is to support the ASEAN countries in their efforts to promote internal development in the region, and to ensure that great power competition in the region does not frustrate these goals or upset the existing equilibrium. We believe that the ASEAN countries are making significant progress to these ends, and that it is vital to maintain the conditions which will allow this progress to continue.

Australia stands at the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Crossing these oceans are trade routes which are of vital strategic and economic significance not only to Australia but also many other nations including Japan.

In the Pacific area there are many independent and soon to be independent countries. Australia wants to work and co-operate with them and believes that they should be enabled to pursue their own development free from outside interference.

The idea of the Indian Ocean as a 'Zone of Peace' is a noble idea. It is difficult to see the circumstances in which it can be achieved. Consequently my Government has supported the extension of facilities in Diego Garcia by your Government and offered to your Navy access to our naval facilities in Western Australia, which we are expanding for our own Australian purposes.

Here, as elsewhere, we believe that balance is a precondition for stability. We are also concerned that further efforts by the U.S.S.R. to enhance its strategic status in the Indian Ocean should be discouraged or adequately matched.

I have previously stated our attitude towards the growth of the military power of the Soviet Union. Recent NATO communiques have expressed a concern similar to ours in almost identifical terms. I only want to add here that if the concern we have expressed on the evidence before us is misplaced, it is within the means of the Soviet Union to make this clear. We fervently hope that it will do so.

Australia desires nothing more than friendly and co-operative relations with a Soviet Union whose basic purpose is world peace and stability. We already have important and extensive relations with the Soviet Union on which we place considerable value, and we would wish to extend these to our mutual advantage.

In our foreign relations we deal with other countries not on the basis of their ideology but on the basis of common interests. We believe that in the end, relations based on common interests are the only relations that can be depended upon.

We believe that there is considerable scope for more extensive discussions between nations. Such discussions are essential to secure a stable international balance.

Last month I visited Japan and China to further extend Australia's relationship with these two major Asian powers. Japan has a role of great importance and even greater potential in our quarter of the globe. She is Australia's major trading partner: we are the principal supplier to Japan of many vital raw materials: we both have defence treaties with the United States: trade between Australia, Japan and the U.S. is complementary. Japan's treaty with the U.S. is of great importance for stability in the North West Pacific as is the Australian and New Zealand treaty with the United States for the Pacific.

Both Japan and Australia are determined to do what we can - acting in our own ways - to advance the economic interests of the region.

It is only recently that Australia established diplomatic relations with China. For too long, China has not been adequately involved in discussions and communications with the wider international community. The fault, I suggest, was not solely China's. We are seeking to play our part in redressing that situation as a matter of greatest importance.

The purpose of my visit to China was to learn and to improve communication between our two countries. This might sound a very limited purpose but given the differences in our history and cultures and a long period of non-communication, it is a very necessary beginning.

We do not expect any dramatic results or any vital changes next week, next month, next year. We are prepared over decades if necessary to seek to build relations and consultations which develop a greater understanding between our two governments and our two peoples.

In our discussions the Chinese leaders made it plain that they regarded the broad international situation as being of greatest importance in their relations with the United States and other nations. This followed from the way they expressed their views on the Association of South East Asian Nations, the United States, on government to government and party to party relations and the nature of their support for the objective of an Indian Ocean Zone of Peace.

Whatever view one takes of China's ideology, it is clear that Chinese society manifests a sense of purpose and self-reliance. A stable equilibrium in international relations is not possible unless China is more fully involved in the international community. Agreements reached, for example, between the Soviet Union and the United States, which affect other major states, the European Economic Community, or China, will only be workable if these are seen as protecting the interests of these other states.

Our most important relationship with a great power is our relationship with the United States of America. America plays a vital, an irreplaceable role in maintaining the balance of power and in preserving world peace and stability. It is not only in politics that the U.S. has a major role - the U.S. produces about 40 per cent of the O.E.C.D. Gross National Product.

As free peoples with common philosophical commitments, the United States and Australia will often have a common view and co-operate in the pursuit of common goals. But we do not expect the American people to accept responsibilities which other nations disavow. You have just passed through your Congress a very large Defence Budget. We are supporting an expanded Five Year Defence Programme.

This relationship between a country of Australia's size and position with a super power like the United States may be misunderstood by some - at home and abroad - who believe that concurrence and common action means subordination to the larger nation.

Such problems have always existed in relations between the largest states and others - such relations must be treated with some sensitivity. Australia's policies are based on a fully independent assessment of Australia's national interests.

The problems of balance in international relations relates not only to politics - instability can arise also from lack of balance in economic relations.

There is such an imblance in the international economic system between the developed and the developing nations. The causes of this imbalance lie not so much in the economic system as such but in the policies pursued by some nations. Many developed countries seem more concerned with pursuing freer trade in the products in which they excel, than in opening their markets to the products of the developing countries.

An improvement in trade would make a major contribution to lifting standards of living in the developing countries. It would enable countries to concentrate on the things they can do best.

Equally there is a need to focus on policies aimed at the creation of wealth rather than its redistribution. Redistribution alone can provide no real solution to economic problems. There are no panaceas. Encouraging inappropriate policies and raising expectations which cannot be fulfilled only add to instability in economic relations.

This applies within countries as it does internationally. Sustained domestic economic growth requires a balance between public and private expenditure, between wages and profits.

We have recently experienced the effects of such imbalance in Australia. Between 1972 and 1975 government expenditure in Australia increased dramatically. The Australian economy, which incidentally was largely insulated from the oil crisis, was thrown out of balance. In one year federal government outlays increased from 24 per cent of G.D.P. to 30 per cent.

Excess expenditure was financed by deficits of an unprecedented magnitude. There was an inflationary growth in the money supply. These domestic problems were of course not helped by international economic developments. Most other countries were pursuing similar domestic policies. These led first to inflation and then, inevitably, to world recession.

Against this background, my Government found when it came to office that people had naturally tended to draw into themselves, to become cautious, to lose their initiative.

We have moved to reverse this. Government expenditures are now being firmly and substantially controlled. Our purposes is to bring down the Government's share of resources so as to make room for people, for individuals,

for businesses: to give the productive sector of the cconomy confidence and the room to breathe. The number on the Government's payroll has been substantially reduced for the first time in 24 years. In 1975 the money supply grew at a rate of 20 per cent. This year it has grown at less than half that rate - 9 per cent. This is higher than we would like but, in economic matters changes in direction cannot be too sudden or too swift. We have also taken action to restore profits. Without adequate profits there will not be enough investment. Without investment there won't be enough jobs. The dramatic fall in profits and in G.D.P. which followed the great rise in government expenditure and the rapid growth in wages, was a major factor in the rise in unemployment to the highest levels since the great depression.

There are now increasing signs in Australia that the inter-relationship between excessive wage increases, inflation and unemployment are being recognised. There are also encouraging signs of a downward trend in both wage and price increases. A year ago inflation was running at 14 per cent per annum. In the June quarter, inflation was down to an annual rate of 10 per cent.

Overcoming inflation is essential to the balance and health of the Australian economy. It is prerequisite for renewed growth and the development of our great natural resources. Both Australia and the rest of the world need that development.

We need overseas capital to develop our natural resources and that is why we welcome overseas investment in Australia. Our policy is to obtain joint ventures in partnership with Australian concerns. My Government's attitude to foreign capital differs substantially from that of our predecessors. We understand the benefits it can bring and take a more balanced view of its costs. Our foreign investment guidelines reflect this and they have been deliberately kept flexible so that we can take up proposals that will help us develop our resources.

But we know that it is not only our attitude to foreign investment that is important to foreign investors. I hope it will be clear that the whole thrust of the policies I have mentioned is directed at improving the investment climate in Australia, for foreign and domestic investors alike.

I know there has been considerable interest in our exchange rate policy. There has already been a downward trend in wage and cost increases. With recovery overseas

strengthening our external prospects are swinging back into balance. A downward movement in the exchange rate would have inflationary effects contrary to our primary domestic aim. I do not think I need say any more on that.

Our whole economic policies are directed to achieving stability and restoring balance between the private and public sectors. In domestic politics, in international politics and in economics our purpose is the pursuit of an appropriate balance.

The purpose your Founding Fathers sought to enshrine in their Constitution still states in the clearest possible terms the nature of the objectives which politicians in free societies should pursue. Without power there can be no balance, but a balance of power is not the only one necessary. There is a need for a balance between realism and aspiration. Means must be appropriate to objectives. Nations pursue their own interests, but they must always strive to give effect to their ideals.

Finally, in a world subject to accelerating change, there must be a balance between tradition and innovation. In a little more than a generation, the world's population will have doubled. There will be profound technological changes expanding the limits of the possible and creating new problems of control and co-ordination.

Your country's role in this world will be crucial. For your country, 1976 is not only the end of two centures but the beginning of a decisive quarter century, one in which your vision of a better world and determination to work for it will be more important than ever before.



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Q. You arrived here with the headlines describing you as one of the world's most outspoken anti-Russian leaders. Since arriving you have been careful to keep such views under your belt. Do your accurately-recorded anti-Soviet views still hold? Have you changed them as a result of your talks this week? Have you been silent out of deference to your host Government?

I dont think my views have changed - I think Α. maybe that reputation preceded me because the views expressed in Australia on the 1st June might have surprised Australians and Australian commentators who were not aware that the views I was expressing on behalf of the Australian Government were, virtually, identical to the views that had previously been expressed by the NATO powers, which, of course, as everyone knows, includes at least three socialist governments. But these reports, and no doubt communiques, had not been widely reported and not known when I was still in Australia, and the changed attitudes that I believe have come to be accepted in much of Europe, and given a voice to, and perfected in the communique between your President and myself was something that Australians maybe were not aware That I think is why that reputation of a particular kind of. preceded me - my views have not changed and I also believe they are in line, and expressed in almost identical terms, with those of the NATO powers.

Q. Would you agree that it was in Australia's interest to be friendlier with both China and the Soviet Union than either is with each other?

A. Well, we try to be as friendly as we can be with everyone. But with China, of course, there needed to be a shift because there had not been communication, so we wanted a closer relationship than there had been. But with the Soviet Union, we wanted to make quite sure that we understood each other and that there were no mis-apprehensions about each other's attitude.

I think that also works towards more realistic faces than pretending that certain realities of the world situation don't exist. It would not be very difficult to be more friendly with both, than either is at the moment with each other.

Q. How do you believe the Soviet Union can be discouraged from building up its forces in the Indian Ocean?

A. Probably only by the knowledge that it will not be allowed to dominate the area and therefore it is not worthwhile starting.

Q. Would Australia object to the US supplying India with additional nuclear fuel? Does Australia consider safe-guards adequate to prevent diversion to Indian military uses?

A. We are very much opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and would very firmly want to support all measures designed to reduce nuclear proliferation. There are considerable uranium resources in Australia, and, depending upon the results of an environmental enquiry, we would be taking the most rigid controls in accordance with international practice and guidelines, to make sure that exports from Australia do not add to the possibility of nuclear proliferation. But I must say that determination of future Government policy is dependent upon a Royal Commission and that Royal Commission's environmental report.

Q. Does Australia have diplomatic relations with Taiwan? Do you believe the United States should withdraw its Ambassador there?

A. The previous administration withdrew recognition of Taiwan and it was the considered judgement of my Government that the decisions, once taken, and in the necessity we believed for greater communication with China, and greater understanding between China and Australia, and for that matter China and many other countries, would not merit any attempt to alter the terms of that recognition that was earlier consummated. I dont really think that at this particular time it is appropriate for me to comment on what the United States ought, or ought not, to do.

Q. What effect will United States' recognition of Peking have on the security of Asia and the Pacific, if it is done at the cost of breaking the US defence treaty with Taiwan?

A. Again, I think that this is a question that is really seeking comment on United States' policy, or certain aspects of

United States' policy, and I really do believe that this is an inappropriate year in which a stranger should make comments on that sort of thing.

Q. From this perspective, a question arises - Australia and New Zealand seem to have so much in common politically, economically and strategically, is there a prospect of an Anzac Federation?

A. I think the first part of the question might also appropriately have been directed to the kind of relationship between Canada and the United States. I think the independence of New Zealand is assured and the independence of Australia is assured. We co-operate and work closely together but I think that's the way both countries want it to be. Of course, there is always room for closer consultation, closer cooperation. Both the New Zealand Prime Minister and myself are determined to try and achieve that.

Q. It is common knowledge that the Whitlam Government was opposed to the friendly association between Australia and the United States, Born during the Holt/Johnson years. Can you please give a reason for such opposition?

A. Well, I did give reasons for that during the election. Again I dont really want to export Australian politics to this forum any more than I want to comment on United States' policies in this particular year.

Q. What is the Australian Government's present position regarding immigration of Americans to Australia?

A. We would be delighted to see you.

Q. Do your immigration laws limit Japanese, Chinese, Blacks?

A. There is no discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, creed, or nationality of any kind and we recently, in relation to Japan, signed a special treaty of friendship and understanding which is designed to achieve greater co-operation and understanding of two peoples whose cultures and backgrounds are very different. There has been a close and strengthening commercial relationship, but both Jayan and Australia now believe that commercial relationship alone is not enough and that we ought to try and develop the circumstances in which there can be the same in-depth understanding as I believe there is between Australia and the United Kingdom or Australia and Canada, or Australia and the United States.

Q. What is Australia's position on the future of the control of the Fanama Canal as a vital trade link between the Atlantic and Pacific Nations?

A. Well, I havent swam through it, but again, I seem to detect that there is an element of United States' politics in this particular matter. I have heard the subject mentioned over the last few days, but I don't consider myself well enough informed to offer a view.

Q. Does Australia plan to increase its production of peanuts?

Applause.

A. Mr Adermann, the former Minister for Primary Industry, in an earlier coalition Government, was a member of that profession, Mr Petersen, Premier of Queensland, is also a member of that profession.

Q. When can we expect the Australian Government to announce their policy on export of uranium?

A. We have quite deliberately refained from taking any policy decisions in relation to this matter until we have the report of a Royal Commission in the hands of a most significant member of the judicial community of Australia - it's an environmental enquiry and its important to get his Honor's report before the Government makes decisions in these particular matters. We ought to have that report within a few weeks and it will enable us to make policy decisions. We recognise that there are many countries interested in Australia's longer term objectives and policies in these particular areas. We'll certainly lose no time in making decisions based on Mr Justice Fox' report.

Q. Is there an Australian counterpart to the US criticism of big Government and, if so, what is your Government doing about it?

Well, we're trying to abolish it. Α. The circumstances in Australia have been that about 80 per cent of all revenues came to be collected by the Federal Government. A fair bit of that is given back to the States but often with tags tied to it - you know, you've got to spend it this way, the way we believe is right. State Governments therefore were able to say in Australia, well they can't do this and they can't do that, the Commonwealth collects all the money, we've got no independence of our own. Local Governments were in a very similar position. We've looked very closely at what Canada has done in relation to the tax-sharing and we've already come to agreements with the states along similar lines to those that have applied in Canada for some time, designed to provide a greater financial basis for the states so that Governments with direct responsibility for providing services can also have a greater responsibility for raising the money to pay for those services. We strongly believe that politicians who spend money ought also, to the maximum extent, be responsible for raising that money, then they have to weigh the balance of both sides of the coin. The popular side of providing the service, the unpopular side of taxing to pay for it.

Q. Mr Prime Minister, does your Government plan to make the income tax rebate provisions of law applicable to nonresidents, as well as residents of Australia?

A. I'd have to defer to a Treasury adviser before I could give a proper answer in relation to that. I'm sorry.

Q. Do you have or contemplate any incomes, policy, or wage and price controls?

The industrial power of the Commonwealth Government Α. is one that enables us to establish a body to settle industrial disputes and then only disputes which are national or interstate in character. So it is a very limited power. Such a body has always been part of the Australian scene and the theory of it is that both sides get an argument of case before the Arbitration Commission as its' called: there is a determination which both sides are meant to accept - as industrial matters there are no absolute laws and both sides haven't always accepted the determinations of the Arbitration Commission. But the Commonwealth's role in these matters is to argue what it believes to be right in the economic circumstances of Australia and we have achieved some significant changes in the guidelines being used in the wage-fixing process over the last six months which will help significantly to wind down inflation. But I think that one of the main motivating forces, apart from wages and inflation, in Australia is the rate of increase in Government expenditures, which I think I might have mentioned, went up 46 per cent one year to the next, and Government expenditures and the budget to be revealed on the 17"August will indicate an increase in Government expenditure of a mere fraction of that. So there are many things that we have to do to overcome inflation. There is a Prices Justification Tribunal but we dont, in fact, have rigid price and wage-fixing powers and, therefore, whether or not they should be used has not really been a matter of consideration. The constitutional power does not exist.

Q. A listener, hearing your answer that you would abolish big Government - or are trying to abolish big Government in Australia - asks me to explain how you would cut down the size of Government in Australia.

A. By having policies, I believe, that encourage the independence of people. It is very easy to have welfare programs, for example, that are based solely on spending more of other people's money. But that is not always a solution to problems of poverty or difficulty within a community. The problems are sometimes more a problem of human relationships, lack of capacity to operate within a modern and complex society and, therefore, the solution is much more complex than merely one of spending money and having a Government program designed to do it. Our policies are designed to encourage the independence and strength of the individuals in the Australian community.

That does not mean to say that for those who need some special help that could not be provided in full measure but because of the policies that we are seeking to introduce that will enable us to be in a better position to do more for those who are really disadvantaged and who deserve extra help.

Q. In light of the recent general strike called by the Australian Council of Trade Unions over the Medi-bank issue, what if any, legislative action will your Government be proposing in the area of Industrial Relations?

Industrial Legislation has already been passed Α. and is being proclaimed for the future elective officials in the trade unions will need to be elected by secret ballots - in the past some unions have followed that practice in a proper and very adequate manner - but there are some significant trade unions where people have not really had a free opportunity to vote. In one significant, and to a certain extent militant, union, a significant official was elected on a massive vote of 1.8 per cent of the union membership. We believe that secret postal ballots, properly applied will give people a greater say in determining their own union's affairs. That particular national strike did not get all that much national support. A large number of people did not obey the directions of union officials. In the heavy industrial areas, of course, where people would find it more difficult to operate on production lines is where you find pretty well everyone turning up. Those who obeyed the strike order would have been in the majority but over many areas of Australia, despite the call for a national strike, life operated in a pretty reasonable manner. I don't think those who called the strike would take a great deal of heart from the degree of support it got. In polls conducted about the week afterwards, they indicated that between 75 and 80 per cent of the Australian community felt that the trade union movement had too much power and disapproved of the strike. More industrial legislation is in contemplation, some of it in part borrowed from the study of American practice.

Q. Mr Prime Minister. Has industrial unrest inhibited foreign investment in Australia.

Α. I think it can, but I would believe that inflation has probably been one of the major factors but also it has come at a time when there hasn't been a great deal of foreign investment in any country because of the world recession and one of the things of which I have been advised is that the United States recovery is likely to lead to a revival in demand for additional resources and that therefore more investment is likely to flow. Indeed some significant coal projects where agreement has already been reached, should go ahead. Their development would involve some hundreds of millions of dollars and this I think is an indication of what is likely to come in the future. As world recovery proceeds I beleive we will see more foreign investment in Australia and I have found from people I have met in this country foreign investment guidelines are understood and fully accepted.

Q. You stated that your party welcomes foreign investment and yet the opposition feared environmental damage to the natural resources. Has your party taken any steps to safeguard the natural resources from foreign investors?

Well I think there are two elements to that question. Α. Perhaps if we believe that a particular project can affect the environment there is a capacity to have an environmental inquest statement so that it can properly be assessed. It would not be our intention that that should be a device to hold up particular matters but merely to make sure that all factors are taken into account before major developemental projects proceed. And there are guidelines for foreign investment which are intended to preserve a significant degree of Australian equity in new ventures and partnerships but some projects are so large that Australia certainly is not able to supply all the capital that she wants for the development of natural resources and other matters and very significant overseas investment is required. I believe that not only in Australia's interest but in the interest of other countries who would want more iron ore and bauxite and natural gas and other matters that are waiting for development.

Q. Australia has ordered new warships from the United States. The cost growth of these ships has been great. Will Australia still be able to afford them?

A. Oh - we will be able to afford them, yes. We would like to see the United States if she could, place some orders for some more things in Australia. There is a trade balance in the United States' favour. I already mentioned that the defence vote is going to increase steadily over the next few years because we believe that is necessary. I don't think you need have any fear - the bills will be paid.

Q. Would you make an assessment of the agricultural situation in Australia. Do you expect Australian grain and beef exports to continue to come into competition with American products in the world markets.

A. Yes. I don't know how much wheat we will have for export next year as there has been a very severe drought in many of the wheat producing areas and many of the sheep producing areas which hadn't broken when I left Australia and in a number of wheat growing areas the grain had been planted dry and as farmers would know that is a risky proposition. There is a real possibility that the wheat crop will be very significantly down although we wont know that probably for the next three or four weeks when we will be able to get fairly accurate estimates. We had a capacity to supply beef to the United States and at any time that you are willing to take a larger share of Australian beef I think we would be very happy to make it available to you. After all it is only repaying some kind of a debt that I think we owe as there was a starving colony in about 1792 and it was probably saved from starvation by a shipment of United States meat well cured over the nine months trip in a ship called 'Philadelphia'. Well that is a debt we feel we have an obligation to repay and to go on repaying.

Q. During your visit have you made any progress on the beef carry over dispute with the United States?

A. I think that, I can say, is an area where two good friends are having a vigorous discussion. The vigor of that discussion will continue.

Q. Following the Stonehouse affair has any action been taken to restrict the right of free access hitherto accorded Members of Parliament from the United Kingdom. That is are they now required to complete the same immigration formalities as other aliens?

A. Well, I believe that everyone should really comply to common rules in these particular matters and that is the general thrust of our policies.

Q. In Australia do environmental impact statements embrace economic impact considerations. Is the economy in other words considered a major component of the environment legally, or is it a matter of policy?

A. Well in any project that is being undertaken obviously the economy is very much a part of it, but the environmental impact statements as such are more related to the natural environment or to the human environment and the way the particular projects or developments are likely to have an impact on that. I think the economic element tends to be assessed separately.

Q. How will Australia escape the cycle of wage increases, more inflation and then more wage increases?

A. By continuing to support the policies of the present Government in Australia.

Q. One more beef question. How does American beef compare in tenderness, taste and flavour to Australian beef?

A. Well I think that depends upon habits and practice and we are probably each entitled to our own national prejudices. There are some things I could say about this but again it could perhaps be an intrusion in this particular year.

President of the National Press Club then said :-

Before the final question I would like to present to you Mr Prime Minister the National Press Club Certificate of Appreciation.

Thank you.

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And also for your trout fishing trip to Great Slave Lake in Canada we have the coveted National Press Club Windbreaker in the extra large size especially for Australian Prime Ministers.

Q. And now for the final question. Are you the same Fraser who used to play on the Australian Davis Cup team?

A. Well you know, after I had been a member of Parliament for about ten years one of my constituents came up to me and said:

"Don't know how you do it. You are in Parliament, you report weekly to your Electorate and I get reports every few minutes that you are here and there playing tennis in the United States and Britain and you had a wonderful match last Saturday but I thought you were down at that tea party opening a new hall." I don't think we are any more related than Smiths are related to Smiths. We are not.