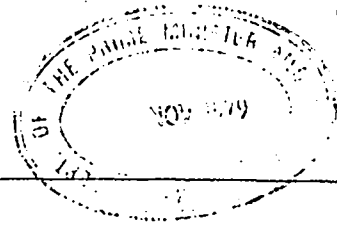




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PRIME MINISTER

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BANQUET SPEECH AT NEW DELHI

I address you tonight on the eve of the 26th January, the date of the deepest significance for both our countries.

For India, the 26th January represents the culmination of your struggle for independence as a republic. That struggle constitutes one of the epics of modern history.

I am very conscious that for many of you it is more than that, that it is biography rather than history, something you lived through and participated in, and which has been a part of you ever since.

For Australia, too, this is the day on which we commemorate our achievement of nationhood and reflect upon our aspirations as a nation.

Both our countries achieved independence after a long period of colonial rule. I think that we are both free enough of any inferiority complex and sure enough of our identity to reflect on that period dispassionately.

It brought us many things which were good and which even today contribute greatly to our welfare including, notably, modern science and technology.

I mention those aspects in particular because both our countries have subsequently been conspicuously successful in building on those foundations and creating scientific and technological establishments which are impressive by world standards.

Despite the very great differences in our colonial experiences, the fact that we were both British colonies means that we share many things: Common heritage of parliamentary government, the principle of common law, the independent role of the judiciary and the rights and privileges of our citizens. It is a heritage to value.

But when all this is acknowledged, and it amounts to a great deal, it is still true that colonialism was colonialism, not to be endured, not to be continued.

Apart from the balance sheet of costs and advantages for individual countries, the extent to which the world we live in has been shaped by the colonial experience is striking.

It is very evident in the way states are grouped and labelled today, and we are living in a world which is obsessed with labelling.

Our countries have had contrasting tags attached to them over the years. Thus India is a "developing" country, - member of the "Third World", part of the "South" in the North-South dialogue.

Australia is "developed", "Western" and part of the "North". How inadequate, and, in some ways, positively misleading these labels are.

As far as India is concerned, they work to obscure the fact that, while still a developing nation, you are in many important respects, industrially, scientifically, culturally, amongst the most developed countries of the world.

The term "Third World" applied as it is to cover both yourselves and many countries which are not a hundredth of your size in terms of either population or area, serves to disguise rather than to illuminate the distinctive character of India.

Similarly, in the case of Australia, simply calling us "North" when we are situated deep in the Southern Hemisphere, or "West" when we are thousands of miles from the centres of western power, is to miss much of what is distinctive and individual in our character as a country.

One can understand the appeal of this type-casting. It represents an attempt to make an increasingly complex world more comprehensible and manageable.

But insofar as it tends to obscure the living reality with an abstract concept the unique character of the particular case with a stereo-type it has its dangers.

Both India and Australia are in important respects atypical countries whose experiences cut across accepted patterns, which have a very pronounced characters and voices of their own.

It is precisely in terms of that individuality that, it seems to me, they can make their most valuable contribution to the world today.

That world is one characterised to an increasing extent by bloc diplomacy and bloc thinking. Unless the central problems which confront it, problems such as: Racialism, with its unique capacity to poison human relations, the need to redefine relationships between rich and poor countries, inflation which has the capacity to destroy the international system, and to harm all people: Unless these problems are solved, we are faced with the prospect that those blocs will harden, and that rigid confrontation will result.

The problems we face are not isolated, discrete ones. If the colonial experience taught us anything it taught us that what start as economic matters quickly assume political and strategic implications.

In the interdependent world in which we live, one in which issues, as well as countries, are interdependent, that is a lesson which it is essential we remember.

Famine, energy shortages, frustrated aspirations for a better life can lead directly to political crises. And, as recent events in the Middle East have illustrated, political turmoil can quickly render economic projections meaningless.

There is a real danger that extremism will prevail, extremism that takes the form of a refusal to understand the perspectives and problems of others, the lack of respect for the legitimacy of different approaches. Let our passion be in pursuit of tolerance.

I believe that, both by example and by acting as voices of moderation, our two countries can contribute significantly to averting that danger.

We have it within our capacity to strengthen the cause of reason and co-operation both within the groups to which we respectively belong, and by acting as moderators between those groups.

The very fact that we are not typical, that we have distinctive perspectives of our own and are not inclined simply to run with any other, make it easier for us to do so.

India already has a distinguished record in this regard. At the risk of drawing criticisms from all sides, you have been militant in upholding the cause of moderation.

In your practice, the stress you place on self-reliance, on solving your own problems and creating the right domestic conditions for growth and development has provided a healthy and salutary example.

For while there is most certainly an urgent need for some changes in the international economic order, this can never be a substitute for responsible and determined domestic programmes.

In this regard, India's performance over the years stand high. As India has disassociated itself from the extreme position sometimes found in the Third World, which depicts relations between it and the West in terms of irreconcilable antagonism: So has Australia firmly disassociated itself from the extreme position in the First World which claims that the Third World's troubles are all of its own making, that there is nothing that can be improved in the international economic system.

In recent years we have increasingly taken initiatives, over the Common Fund, in the Commonwealth context, in our own region, to develop and sustain a constructive dialogue between developed and developing countries.

Within the councils of the OECD countries we have taken a lead to ensure that the case of the developing countries is considered at its strongest and in a sympathetic and positive spirit.

We have done so, and we shall continue to do so, because we believe very strongly that much is at stake.

The international system will be placed under increasingly severe strain if the voice of moderation, of plain ordinary commonsense fails.

I hope that our two countries can find ways of collaborating to diminish the chance of that happening, both by consulting and co-operating at the diplomatic level. and by developing a mutually beneficial bilateral relationship which will stand as an instance of what is possible.

I feel very honoured to be your guest on this occasion, My family and I look forward immensely to the coming week and to the richness of experience it promises.

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