



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

TUESDAY, 23 OCTOBER 1979

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENTARY LUNCHEON FOR KING AND QUEEN OF TONGA

It is the first time, Your Majesties, that you have been here as King and Queen, and we welcome you very greatly for that. But also we understand that you spent some of your youth here - your years in college, and at Sydney University. We hope you will be able to, in re-visiting Australia, meet some of your earlier friends and at the same time renew your acquaintance and knowledge of this country.

Australia, in recent years has been moving much closer in its relationships with many of the countries of the Pacific, and for that reason also we very greatly welcome your presence here on this occasion.

Tonga and Australia are living in a changed area. It has been seeking its own identity in recent years to a much greater extent than ever before. I think a great deal of progress has been made. New nations are learning to work together for their own advancement, for the safety and well-being of the region. Most nations, most States, have now achieved a fully independent status. That transition has been undertaken calmly, smoothly, constructively. I think that is in marked contrast to the transition that has sometimes occurred in some other parts of the world.

I believe, Your Majesties, that it is very much a tribute to your responsibility and sense of occasion, that one so often finds in the South Pacific and amongst South Pacific nations. The transition has been a smooth and a peaceful one, and by and large a prosperous one. I think that is greatly to the credit not only of former, as it were, colonial powers, but certainly to the credit of the newly independent nation.

Regional co-operation I think is contributing greatly to that peaceful progress. There is a common approach in many of the goals that the nations of the Pacific share amongst each other. There are many reasons why there should be that common approach: there are similar problems - often of scarce resources; of very small land areas; problems of expanding population; exports finding it difficult to get adequate markets in other countries; exports that are often vulnerable to changes in demand, to changes in prices. Against that, there are small domestic markets which make it difficult to expand industry unless it is based on exports.

There are often per capita costs. There are often high-based costs that make economic advancement difficult for many of the nations of the Pacific. But for all of these reasons, the problems that occurred, or difficulties that occurred in common, it means that a common approach to the solutions is very much to the advantage to the nations of the Pacific.

There is a second and vastly important reason why the nations of the Pacific, together with New Zealand and Australia, seek to work together through common goals, through common objectives. We all want peace. We want a peaceful world. We want a South Pacific, in our own theatre, free of great power rivalry - not under the dominance of any of the major powers or the super powers.

Those common objectives I think do give us common ground in many aspects of our relationship with the wider world. I think enables us and helps us to put the case for moderation, for consensus, for reason. Sometimes people suggest that a middle-ranking country such as Australia should keep its head down in the wider areas of international politics. I do not have that view. The Government does not have that view. I do not believe it is one that would be shared by a majority of Australians. Because what happens in the wider world is so important that we cannot leave issues that affect us very greatly merely to be solved by others who have more power, a longer interest or involvement in some of these major issues.

It is not adequate to leave solutions to the great powers, to the super powers alone. Nor is it adequate in some other forum merely to leave the solutions to the great mass of numbers that might be gathered in a particular forum. It is of vast importance for countries, for middle-ranking nations such as Australia, to put a view of moderation, but to put that moderate view with strength, to try and achieve agreement, to try and lessen differences where those differences occur. That is the only way ultimately, we can achieve a more secure and a safer world.

I venture to say that if had not been for the involvement of some countries not directly concerned, that what was achieved at Lusaka would not have been achieved. The progress that has been made in recent weeks in London would not have been made if it were merely left to the countries who were directly concerned in the first instance. That I think is an example of where a concerned interest by others can help contribute to reaching a consensus, to reaching agreement, and hopefully to resolving one of the more difficult and intractable problems in that instance, that has bedevilled relations in Africa over a very long period.

On this point, there is some cause for us to be optimistic about the ultimate result. That again, gets us back to the interests of the Pacific and of Australia and of New Zealand. There are matters that are likely to impinge upon the future and well-being of the nations of the Pacific, of New Zealand's, of our own interests. It is up to us to be involved, to do what we can, to secure a safe path for the whole region and all the nations of the region. In that, I believe a middle-ranking country such as Australia should not write itself down. I believe the countries of the Pacific, Your Majesty, should not write themselves down in the influence that they can have and should have in determining their own future and what happens to the region in which they live.

The interdependence in the region has grown over recent years. That interdependence can be seen in the early origins of the South Pacific Commission: in 1971 the South Pacific Forum, where the South Pacific Heads of Government meet on a regular basis to discuss problems of mutual interest and concern. I think the very principle of consensus about which I have been speaking - the call for moderation - is exemplified in that particular forum as one nation stands out against agreement, against the consensus of the others, everything is done, by the groups concerned to try and overcome the difficulties, to try and seek a moderate path, to try and seek a solution that is acceptable. Not just the majority -- a solution which is ultimately acceptable to all the nations of the forum. That is an example - small in the wider world area if you like - but important to the South Pacific. It is an example of the way in which relations between nations ought to be conducted.

Beyond that, there is the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation to help achieve greater economic development and co-operation between the island States of the Pacific. There are now co-operative arrangements in relation to fisheries, shipping services, aims at rationalising air services, and there is greater co-operation in trade and telecommunications. Australia is associated, and wants to be associated, with all of co-operative arrangements. They are practical examples of the way in which nations can work together, and in this case should work together to secure their own national objectives.

Greater development of trade and greater possibilities in trade, are going to be very important, Your Majesty, as I know you well understand, for the well-being and development of the Pacific nations. Negotiations have now begun to try and achieve a comprehensive, non-reciprocal trade agreement between Australia and New Zealand and the Forum island countries. I hope very much that that agreement can be brought to a successful conclusion. It has as an objective, the extension of duty free access to the Australian-New Zealand market for as wide a range of products as possible from the Pacific nations. In addition to that, we have had a trade and development mission visit the island States identifying trading opportunities from those States to Australia, identifying opportunities for investment from Australia in the island States themselves.

The South Pacific Trade Commission office has been established in Sydney which is designed to assist in gaining access to the Australian market for the products of the Pacific nations. It will operate as part of the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation.

In these important areas of trade, there is clearly an intention and a willingness to make progress and to provide greater opportunities. I hope that those efforts will be successful.

Your Majesty, I believe Australia and Tonga relations have always been friendly and on the best possible terms, with a warmth between our two countries. I am sure it is our joint objectives to maintain and enhance that in future years.

We are both members of regional and international forums. In those forums we work closely together on many different issues. We are both members of the Commonwealth. We were both at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting which was first held last year in Sydney, which will next be held in India in 1980.

I have had particular pleasure working with Prime Minister Prince Tui'Pelehake, who joined platforms with me in a number of these regional forums. There are many things in which we have a common concern. For example, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting in Sydney a concern was expressed the problems of small States. Problems of representation in the wider international theatre can be expensive and very difficult to a small island State. How can those problems be overcome? What can be done to assist to make sure that the point of view of those nations is put effectively and with adequate strength in the forums where it needs to be heard. As a result of that Sydney meeting the Commonwealth Secretariat was invited to develop proposals which might then be put to Commonwealth members generally in relation to the problems of small States. A report from the Secretary-General was put to the Lusaka meeting with a plea and a call for as many nations as possible to act upon the various recommendations within it. That is a matter that Australia will want to follow closely.

Your Majesties, I think that Sydney meeting also emphasised one other matter which is important to the nations of the Pacific. At the wider Commonwealth meetings so often other matters dominate the agenda, but the matters that might well be important to Pacific nations, and some of the members of the Commonwealth, don't always get heard, aren't given enough time on the wider agenda of the Commonwealth. Therefore, the regional meeting has a particular relevance, has a particular concern to the smaller States, because it does enable the agenda to be properly tapered to meet their needs, their concerns, and to make sure that something can be done about their particular matters. The follow-up from the Sydney meeting has given us an indication that something useful and positive can come from that. Those matters at the Sydney meeting involved not only the one I have mentioned - the problems of small States - but also matters of trade and progress, as I have indicated has also been made on that particular front.

Your Majesty, I am pleased to announce also on this occasion, that the Foreign Minister has decided that our diplomatic representation to Tonga should be upgraded with a Permanent Resident High Commission being established in Tonga. I hope that can again be taken as an instance of Australia's concern to establish the closest possible relationship, to be able to work in harmony and co-operation with the nations of the Pacific as we pursue our common objectives.

Your Majesty, I would again like to welcome you very much to Australia on this occasion. I hope that your days here will be happy and successful ones, and I would now like to ask the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Hayden, and then the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Anthony, to support me in this welcome.