

AS DELIVERED SPEECH TO COMMONWEALTH JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION

Prime Minister:

Patrick Keatley and Claude Forell, thank you very much for that. The first thing I want to do is to disturb you all and ask you to join me in a toast to the Commonwealth Journalists' Association. I am told one or two of you are thirsty, anyway. Will you rise and drink to the health of the Commonwealth Journalists' Association, and its inaugural meeting in Australia.

I was listening very closely to what Patrick Keatley was saying. I started to get worried when he said it wasn't an imperial organisation, it was a labour of love. I can just believe and imagine that those great pro-consuls, whether it was in southern Africa or India, used precisely the same words about 150 years ago, but Patrick, we will take you at your word. Maybe we can be imperial in reverse, and from Melbourne, take you over.

I am delighted to be present at this inaugural function of the Commonwealth Journalists' Association in Australia, and I do want to congratulate the founders, Patrick Keatley and Derek Ingram. They have already mentioned the stimulus that Tony Eggleton has been in earlier days, because the objectives of the Association are certainly very worthwhile, and I would like to applaud what you are doing.

Associations like this are very much the life blood of the Commonwealth. There is a great diversity of experience within the Commonwealth which, in many ways, enriches the lives of all of us, and the Commonwealth isn't just meetings of government leaders or ministers of bureaucrats, it is very much the kind of interchange that takes place at many different levels through professional bodies, through arts and through culture, and this is certainly a very useful addition.

Non-government meetings of this kind are very useful indeed, and I suppose the inter-government meetings provides a useful focal point for your meeting. I don't suppose you will mind if I say that the Commonwealth Press Union has been conferring while you have been working, and I am glad of the opportunity to make a comment or two perhaps in summing up this particular conference.

But before I do, I again would like to thank the people and citizens of Melbourne for their co-operation over the last week or ten days. There has been disruption, there has been inconvenience, but they seem to have borne it all with pretty fair, good humour. The thing that I am most delighted about apart from what happened in the conference itself is that I don't think I have met anyone yet, and I hope you are not all going to stand up, who by being here for a week or ten days, whether it is in your profession or whether it is government leaders or delegates, or other visitors from the

Commonwealth Secretariat, I don't think I have met anyone who hasn't been turned into some kind of ambassador for Australia. That has not come about because of what has happened inside the conference room. That has come about because the arrangements have worked and because basically people have felt, as I understand it, reasonably at home in this city and in Canberra over the weekend. That is not something that could have been done by governments, by the task force, it is something that could only happen if all the people of this city were participating in it. So, I want to thank Melbourne very much for that.

As at Lusaka, the Commonwealth and I think on many earlier occasions, the Commonwealth has in many ways confounded its critics. The often the Commonwealth has said what is its relevance, it will get broken apart, this issue is coming forward, it is going to be disrupted. Thinking back over headlines of the previous - and if I may say it gently, I don't think it is always just towards the third world that you should press your efforts. There are always some older countries who should always try and increase their efforts and standards, no matter how good their standards are, it is possible to aspire to even higher standards.

But we weren't broken apart by arguments over the Springbok tour, and I can remember people saying, Fraser says that third world issues, Namibia, economic issues are the important things, but that is not going to be so because people are going to play rugby, and then there was the suggestion that something would happen with Gleneagles, there would be demands on one side or the other, and that would divert our attention. Then there were going to be conflicts with the United States over Namibia - as if it matters very much if Australia has an independent view from the United States. I don't think our view is different in fact, but it was almost going to be a terrible thing if we did have a different view. Well, as a somewhat chauvinist Australian, I don't mind if I sometimes have a different view from the United States. I think it is probably healthy. But in any case - I think it is also important that in many areas we have the same view as the United States, but only when we believe they are right, and not for any other reason. Then there were going to issues about the Brisbane Games or other domestic matters, and because I have learnt over these last six years to know something of the Commonwealth, and to know something of many of the people who were going to be here on this occasion, I never for one moment, not even for half a second, believe the heads of government and heads of delegations would be diverted from the causes which had brought them to Melbourne or were going to bring them to Melbourne.

That in the event, proved to be right. There is an occasional good headline out of predictions, but those headlines do in fact misunderstand the nature of the Commonwealth and the determination of Commonwealth leaders. Patrick Keatley and Derek Ingram and many others know quite well and - I think I suppose I should I had better say, every one here, that this in fact is the only organisation where heads of government give up, with travelling, more than a week of their time, to talk together, to work together to get to know each other and to get to trust each other. And that is something which they

as important, not only in that way. But where other heads of government get together it is generally on a block arrangement - the Group of 77, or African states, or non-aligned states, and this is an association, the Commonwealth, which cuts right across those rigid rocks that are present in the world - rich and poor, old and new, north and south and from nearly every continent, from nearly every race. For leaders of a quarter of the world's population from 40 or more countries to get together is something of value. I wonder if people really sit back to think if it had not been for Lusaka and Kenneth Kaunda's chairmanship, if it had not been for the fact that Margaret Thatcher was sitting down with Julius Nyerere, with Kenneth Kaunda and with other people, getting to know, getting to trust, getting to like. How could that sort of arrangement ever have been encompassed at the United Nations where its ambassadors who are speaking or meeting or people in committees have to cable back for instructions. Those instructions that come back from governments or from departments where they were not getting the flavour of the discussions and of the personal relationships and the friendship and the trust that is induced as a result. The Lusaka arrangement could never possibly have happened without the Commonwealth. It just would not have occurred, because people would not have known each other and they would not have trusted each other enough to take that kind of step.

So the organisation is something of value and I think it is worthwhile for a moment just to take a look at this heads of government meeting and over and above the question of greater understanding within the Commonwealth. The Melbourne Declaration I believe was an important document, but that and the communique have to be taken hand in hand. Both had a particular point in relation to a meeting being held in Mexico in a very few days time, and especially for other Commonwealth heads of government who are attending that meeting because I think they must be enormously encouraged in what they will want to say to know that there are 40 countries already committed to objectives they want to pursue with great vigour and with great energy.

Both the Declaration and the communique give a significant impetus to the recognition of the problem of world poverty and to the generation of resolve, the determination to do something about what is in many countries, the sad and hopeless state of the way in which people live out their lives. I said this at the press conference yesterday - some people suggested that the Declaration was just words. Well, in a sense it is, but when you are trying to generate just feelings, just commitment, just resolve in the minds and hearts, not only of government leaders, but of people. Then what tools do you have to do it with? You are not going to generate that kind of feeling by writing out a check. You are certainly not going to generate that kind of feeling with a gun, and words have often been used to express ideas. The most powerful thing in the world is an idea, and idea which does capture the minds and the hearts of people. The idea of freedom - how powerful is the idea that journalism, the press, must be free. But that is only words. It is nothing else. It is not protected by concrete and mortar and whatever protected by laws, certainly, but only because it is an idea that is powerful, that has captured the minds and hearts of governments and of people around the world in countries old and new.

So, when people depreciate the strength of an idea, the strength of words that say something that is true but something at the same time which needs greater recognition greater acceptance and greater action then I think they want to be careful in what they are, in fact, depreciating, because a good idea, accepted by many people, are governments and countries and as a result, acted upon. That is the kind of thing which can help to build a better world.

The Melbourne Declaration was an important statement of principle a persuasive encouragement to resolve the determination. Julius Chan in the closing session asked that it be sent to every country in the world with a message from myself asking all leaders to support it. It is worth noting in this particular communique that perhaps for the first time, there was a reference to the fact that the Soviet Union ought to do more in aid for the third world. In past years, I think that question has been bypassed. They are often very good at supplying guns and provoking difficult situations, but not always so good at providing aid in the fabric by which people can build a better life for themselves. This declaration from aligned and non-aligned countries - not the Declaration, the communique - drew attention to the importance of all countries doing more in this area. The message of that declaration as I believe and heads of government believe is important for the kind of world that we will leave our children. It does contain fundamental truths which must not be overlooked truths which need stating, again and again until we do not only accept them, but until we also act upon them.

I don't believe there can be anything platitudinous about a statement which identifies one of the most important problems facing all countries of the world.

The communique is a statement of specifics, an expression of the Commonwealth's practical approach of our determination not just to rest upon an idea or on words, but our determination to put that idea, to put those words into practice. When Sonny Ramphal first released the declaration, that is precisely what he said would happen. We already knew enough of the discussions that had taken place to know that when he released the declaration on Sunday, when the communique came forth, it would be a practical document giving a lead to Cancun.

I would like to underline the key themes. There is a significant attention to far reaching world issues, and support for global negotiations. I am not sure that we understand the importance of that in Australia, but there are many countries that have a feeling of being acted upon rather than being participants in what happens in the world and what affects the lives of their people. That is why global negotiations are so important. Of course, the call for that from the Commonwealth in which India with her several hundred million and the smallest states of the Pacific are treated as equals can understand that, perhaps much better than others. We have also decided to establish a special study group to examine the negotiating process itself and the importance of that particular decision I think may also have been, to an extent, overlooked, because the negotiating processes that have been developed over the years have their own inbuilt rigidities which make it harder to get to agreement in many cases. No one group, not one particular blocks' fault,

but whether you have come from the advanced nations, the B group of countries or from the Group of 77, and you are in a negotiation and then you have to change position to get to a meeting of minds, you have got to refer back to your principles, ambassadors have to get instructions. Because the Group of 77 is so large is often quite difficult to get positions changed and modified, and the B Group can be just as stubborn in altering their views on certain matters. There have been occasions when Australia has tried to break through this process and while technically we belong to the B Group, the so-called advanced industrial countries, we have decided on our own account that we will adopt different positions because we believe that negotiating positions were too rigid and that was especially so in relation to the Common Fund.

But a special examination of the negotiating process itself and whether that can be modified in ways that can make it easier to get to agreement between nations, is I think a valuable decision. We have reaffirmed our opposition to protection. I indicated and other people did that this can be uncomfortable in part to many countries. It can in part be uncomfortable to Australia. I agree with those who say that protection must be continually reduced, gradually and as we can, without causing undue disruption. I do not agree with those who try to suggest that Australia is one of the highly protected countries of the world, because so many new devices have been introduced in recent times, that we do not practice. In some countries, they have got no protective barriers, but if you try to get a retailer to sell something, you just won't be able to get a retailer or an agent to handle whatever you happen to be producing and that is a non-tariff barrier, an absolute bar, but it doesn't appear on the journals or the records as any form of protection, but it happens to be a very practical fact. When we are looking at the impact of protection, we need to judge that kind of protective device just as much as the formal barriers of tariffs or of quotas.

Anyway, we are establishing a study group to look at the impact of protection on developing countries, and I believe that will be an interesting study.

An Australian paper pointed out that in a relatively limited range of agricultural exports from developing countries if there were no protection at all, the additional financial flows to developing countries would be over \$30 billion a year. We only have to imagine the extent to which that would reduce the need for official development assistance or alternatively enable them to advance the cause of their own people much more rapidly. That study, I think, will have some interesting results.

We have supported practical measures on energy. We support the proposed energy affiliate of the World Bank, designed especially to assist the developing and the least developed countries. An initiative that was taken within the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting and run by our own Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, and the programme is called the Commonwealth Regional Renewable Energy Resources Information System at the request of members of the Commonwealth

is being made available to all states of the Commonwealth and not just to the local regional ones within our own area.

We took many decisions that will improve food supply and production within the Commonwealth and beyond, and we are increasing the Commonwealth Secretariat's capacity to assist the food needs of developing Commonwealth members. We paid significant attention to a number of world trouble spots. There was a strong statement on Namibia and strong support for the unified approach of a contact group. At the moment there is some degree of optimism but in dealing with that particular question, people have been optimistic before. They thought they had jumped the last hurdle only to find South Africa rolling new road blocks in the way as people thought they were going down to the straight. So, while there is some degree of optimism, as a result of what we have been told, I think we have to wait until there is a final agreement and final settlement before we know whether or not that optimism is justified.

There was agreement amongst all of us that the Polish people should not be subject to foreign interference, that they should be allowed to determine their own destiny. There is a statement on the need for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and Kampuchea. There is significant attention to some important regional issues and issues with wider-than-regional consequences. There is recognition for the need for non-interference by outsiders in the affairs of African states. There is a call to end nuclear testing in the Pacific and support for the call that has been by the Pacific Forum and the small island states of the Pacific hitherto supported by New Zealand and Australia.

Support for the South Pacific Forum's mission that will be led by the Prime Minister of Fiji to France about the problems of New Caledonia were unused to the idea that the last of the decolonisation process in the Pacific might be a difficult one and not quite so peaceful as the processes up to this point. That mission is regarded as very, very important by Pacific states because they do not want to see the peaceful decolonisation processes that have so far been a hallmark to decolonisation in the Pacific interrupted or disturbed as the Pacific moves towards the end of the road.

We called for urgent action on the Law of the Sea. We have had some discussion about readmission of a member to the Commonwealth but that has not been concluded, and leaders will be keeping in touch with the matter.

These things just show some of the breadth as well as the practicality of the Commonwealth's concerns, and I think it is important to realise that it is not an inward looking organisation on the world scene, it is not out of date as the old Commonwealth of Britain and four white dominions would have been. It is an active organisation. It is a contemporary Commonwealth addressing itself to some of the most important and urgent issues of our time. I believe the Melbourne meeting has demonstrated that the Commonwealth does have a significant contribution to make in discussions of importance to the way in which many millions of people will live out their lives on this earth.

I would like to take this public opportunity - not all our guests have yet left, there are a number here, a number of heads of government are leaving today, but they certainly made my task as chairman much, much easier than it might otherwise have been. They all made their own decisions that they were not going to be diverted, that they were going to concentrate on issues of importance, that they were going to make this a constructive meeting of which they, and we, can take some pride in having been part of.

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