



PRIME MINISTER

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EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
AT INTERNATIONAL HOUSE,
MELBOURNE, 1 OCTOBER 1985

Warden,
Chairman of Council
Distinguished Guests,
Students,

I was particularly delighted to be invited to officially open this dining hall in International House and in so doing to honour Sam, who was Warden of the College from the early days of its establishment and construction.

Residential colleges have traditionally had a special place in university life, and an institution such as International House has, of course, a particularly significant contribution to make on the campus of Melbourne University, serving the needs of both overseas and Australian students. Like most colleges or halls of residence, the services it provides to all its residents extend beyond simple material needs, with students benefitting from the personal interest, support and assistance college tutors are able to give them.

Just as importantly, residents are also able to learn from each other. The informal daily contact of all residents permits a cross fertilization of cultures and of ideas. Through this kind of opportunity Australian students are able to broaden their knowledge and understanding of overseas countries and other lifestyles and philosophies. Overseas students, in turn, gain a deeper appreciation of the Australian way of life, and feel less isolated in our country because of this interaction.

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I believe this kind of exchange is important in terms of its impact both on academic and on personal development. This is a personal view which I formed years ago when I was a student at the University of Western Australia. It was then that I realised the need and advantages of a residence designed specifically to house overseas and Australian students, to the benefit of both groups.

Although my early attempt at raising funds for a similar residence in Perth in the early fifties did not come to fruition, it has not lessened my belief that residences like International House act to promote excellence in education as well as better understanding between countries.

This striving for excellence is a feature of the Australian education system which my Government is determined to foster and develop. The need to maintain and improve the quality and relevance of Australia's education system together with the goal of increasing participation, have shaped the actions taken by my Government in the education area.

In talking of the relevance and quality of education, I am not denigrating the traditional role played by universities as the repositories of knowledge in our society. Universities have, over the centuries, provided the focus for the development of intellectual thought and rigor and for concentrated research into the manifold issues affecting humanity. Rather, I believe that the university system has a very substantial responsibility, and very much to offer in the years ahead, in consolidating and building upon the gains we, as your Government, have made to Australia's economic and social fabric.

Our concern for the quality and relevance of education has led the Government to initiate inquiries into tertiary education by the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission under its Chairman, Hugh Hudson, and into primary and secondary education, under Professor Peter Karmel. These reports are providing the Government with a basis for ensuring that the resources going to education are used most effectively in the years ahead.

The recent Budget, building on that of 1984, clearly demonstrates our commitment to education. Despite the difficult budgetary circumstances and other competing priorities for funds, funding for universities and colleges of advanced education has increased by 2.8% in real terms in 1985. We shall continue to increase our funding in 1986 and 1987.

Many of you are no doubt aware that the Government has, over the past year, undertaken a major review of its overseas student policy. Details of this were announced earlier this year but it is worthwhile recapitulating some of the major features, which will be of particular concern to many associated with International House, both tutors and students.

Under the new policy the Government will continue to determine the overall number of overseas students who are able to study in Australia, but at a level which will be subject to regular review. In addition, the number of overseas students at any tertiary institution, and in any course, will be fixed within specific limits. While we would like to be able to accommodate many more overseas students, these controls represent a realistic balance between Australia's role and responsibility as a member of the regional community of nations, and our responsibility to respond to the increasing home demand from students seeking tertiary qualifications.

This new policy will guarantee continued access for students from neighbouring countries to Australian education facilities, while providing for a more even distribution of overseas students over the range of institutions and courses of study available in Australia.

An important element of the new policy, not least from the perspective of students, is the new level of overseas students charge. As you will be aware, we have decided that fees should increase progressively, towards the level of 45% of the total cost of courses. We consider that this level of charge represents a reasonable contribution by overseas students towards the cost of their education, costs which are otherwise borne by Australian taxpayers.

I hasten to add, however that Australia will of course continue to meet all the charge for students sponsored under overseas aid arrangements and from developing countries, who comprise the majority of overseas students.

With the aim of improving access for overseas students, and simplifying administration, the Overseas Student Office has been established to provide a "one stop shop" or point of contact. The Overseas Student Office is also responsible for policy advice to Government, and will draw upon the collective wisdom offered by the new Australian Council for Overseas Students. I personally believe that this reform is long overdue - and I am sure that those of you from overseas who have battled with various Government agencies would agree.

Perhaps the most significant aspect, potentially, of the new overseas student policy is the decision to allow universities and CAEs to market courses at full cost to overseas students either in Australia or overseas. These places will allow an important new avenue for access to education opportunities. These places will be additional to those under existing arrangements.

The guidelines for these courses have been developed largely to allow institutions to test the waters in regard to these activities, to see whether courses can be run competitively and to establish the real level of demand. They provide for orderly development to take place, while safeguarding Australian students' access to the continued provision of high quality education.

The marketing of courses-overseas also has the potential to contribute to the growth of the education system as we know it, to expand employment opportunities and Australia's overall export performance.

But benefits cannot be measured in simple dollar terms. The intangible benefits - greater understanding of cultures, of increasing our abilities to listen and to learn and to work co-operatively for the good of humanity - these are some of the benefits which provide the basis and the hope for future peace and progress in our world.

Australia does not seek an exaggerated role for itself in efforts to address the major issues bedevelling world order. We have a realistic appreciation of the limits to our own influence. Nevertheless our foreign policy is making a constructive and realistic contribution to peace and prosperity in this part of the world.

Our future must be seen as being predominantly with, and determined by events in, the region of Asia and the Pacific. Australia's destiny is inextricably linked with this region, the fastest growing and most dynamic part of the world economy and to which most of the overseas students in International House will return.

The Labor Government has made it clear from the time of its election the importance it attaches to Australia's relations with ASEAN. We value the association as one of the most effective and lively regional organisations anywhere in the world. We will continue to seek to expand political, economic and other forms of co-operation with ASEAN.

Bill Hayden and I have attached great importance to developing understanding and support with our counterparts in South East Asia. We have both visited

the countries of the region on a number of occasions and have welcomed leaders from these countries to Australia.

The close political relationship we have enjoyed with the ASEAN countries is progressively being broadened to areas such as trade. The process of regional trade consultations, the latest round of which was held last month in Seoul, is giving real substance to the growing regional sense of shared economic and trading interests. And all countries of the region, including Australia, have much to gain by being part of such a dynamic growth region.

Secondly, the Government has given a new dimension, a new priority, to arms control and disarmament issues - a priority unprecedented in Australia. I know that these issues are of great concern to you, and particularly to our nation's youth. I would in particular mention the initiative we took in 1983 to launch the concept of a nuclear free zone in the South Pacific. It is a matter of considerable gratification that the text of a treaty was endorsed at the recent South Pacific Forum at Rarotonga and that it has been signed by nine regional countries.

This Treaty and the overwhelming support for it which has been expressed by the countries of the South Pacific Forum will bring greater pressure to bear on the French to end their totally unacceptable nuclear testing.

The French continue to maintain that their nuclear tests at Mururoa are quite safe. But the logic of this argument, is that if these tests are as safe as is claimed they should be conducted in France, and not in Australia's back yard.

Thirdly, it is appropriate that, at this institution, which bring together students of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural background, I should mention our policies on racial tolerance and equality.

Just as we stand resolutely against any manifestation of racism in Australia, we reject international policies which seek to entrench racial injustice. This Government, like the Whitlam and Fraser Governments before it, stands at the leading edge of international opposition to the abhorrent system of apartheid, the only institutionalised form of racism in the world.

We want to see that system abolished and an orderly, peaceful process of change introduced in South Africa which could lead to the emergence of a genuinely multi-racial society based upon universal adult suffrage. In the words of Bill Hayden, we want to see

South Africa brought to its senses, not its knees.

I shall be exploring ways of furthering this process at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in the Bahamas later this month.

Among the options we shall explore will be the possibility of mandatory economic sanctions being adopted by the United Nations. But at the same time, we believe that comprehensive measures by Australia alone or by a limited number of countries are self-defeating and probably counterproductive. To date, the necessary international consensus for mandatory sanctions with universal compliance does not exist.

If the world community is to achieve its aim of seeing a peaceful transition of South Africa to a multiracial Society based on universal adult suffrage it is critically important that trained South Africans will be available to take over the responsibilities of the transfer of power in that country.

Without fanfare and without political rhetoric the Commonwealth, through the Commonwealth Trade Union Council and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation has been engaged for a number of years in helping to train South African students and workers for this task. We shall be encouraging increased efforts by the Commonwealth in this field.

We shall also be seeking enhanced cooperation through the Commonwealth in areas where Commonwealth links have not been as developed as much as they could in the past in the field of employment and labour, youth and women and development. In these fields progress is vital in all societies, whether in relatively prosperous countries like Australia or in poorer countries like Tanzania or Swaziland.

In closing, I would like to say simply I look forward to a continued association with you as International House continues to serve the academic and international community. I am honoured to have the opportunity of naming this building "Dimmick Dining Hall", in memory of Sam who contributed so largely to the foundation of International House.

I know that there will be many long and memorable hours of discussions of debate and of laughter in this, "The Dimmick Dining Hall".

Thank you.
