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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
DEDICATION OF BEN-GURION PARK
STIRLING - 6 FEBRUARY 1987

ALL OVER THE WORLD JEWISH PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CELEBRATING THE HUNDREDETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF DAVID BEN GURION, A FOUNDING FATHER OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

IT IS A PLEASURE FOR ME TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS CELEBRATION BY PERTH'S JEWISH COMMUNITY TODAY - ESPECIALLY SO SOON AFTER RETURNING FROM MY VISIT TO ISRAEL LAST WEEK.

DAVID BEN GURION BECAME THE FIRST PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL, WHEN THE STATE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1948, AND HE SERVED HIS COUNTRY IN THAT POSITION FOR FIFTEEN YEARS.

IT WAS DURING THOSE CRUCIAL EARLY YEARS THAT THE VISION FOR WHICH BEN GURION WORKED ALL HIS LIFE REACHED ITS FULL EXPRESSION - THERE IN ISRAEL THE WORLD SAW A WORKING CLASS BUILDING ITS OWN NATION ON ITS OWN SOIL BY DIRT OF ITS OWN PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL LABOUR.

FOR THOSE OF US WHO CHERISH DEMOCRACY, THAT VISION REMAINS AN INSPIRATION.

AS BEN GURION SAID, "THE TEST OF DEMOCRACY IS FREEDOM OF CRITICISM". FROM THE TIME OF MY FIRST VISIT TO ISRAEL IN 1971, I HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED AND MOVED BY THE ISRAELI DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE.

AS A LABOR LEADER AND TRADE UNIONIST, I WAS PROUD TO ENCOUNTER A NATION IN WHICH THE LABOR PARTY AND THE HISTADRUT WERE INTEGRAL TO THE PROCESS OF NATION BUILDING AND WERE ACCEPTED AND ADHIERED BY THE WHOLE ISRAELI NATION. BEN GURION OF COURSE WORKED AND FOUGHT ALL HIS LIFE FOR BOTH THE LABOR PARTY AND THE HISTADRUT.

EVEN MORE PROFOUNDLY, I WAS PROUD AND IMPRESSED TO ENCOUNTER A NATION INCESSANTLY ENGAGED IN DEMOCRATIC DISPUTATION ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF ITS NATIONAL POLICY.

ISRAEL HAS NEVER SURRENDERED ITS DEMOCRATIC TRADITION EVEN IN THE DARKEST MOMENTS WHEN ITS VERY SURVIVAL WAS AT RISK.

SO IT WAS AN INDESCRIBABLE PLEASURE FOR ME LAST MONTH TO REVISIT ISRAEL AND THUS BECOME THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER TO MAKE A VISIT THERE.

I WAS RECEIVED WITH VERY GREAT GENEROSITY BY PRESIDENT HERZOG, PRIME MINISTER SHAMIR, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SHIMON PERES AND SUCH OUTSTANDING PERSONALITIES AS ABBA EBAN. I HELD TALKS WITH THEM AND A LARGE NUMBER OF MINISTERS AND LABOUR PARTY AND TRADE UNION LEADERS. IT WAS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE AMONG OLD FRIENDS.

A PERSONAL HIGHLIGHT OF THE VISIT TO ISRAEL WAS THE GESTURE OF HEBREW UNIVERSITY IN JERUSALEM IN HONOURING ME WITH THE AWARD OF AN HONORARY DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY. I DO NOT NEED TO REMIND THIS GATHERING OF THE BRILLIANT INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS OF THAT GREAT UNIVERSITY.

WHILE IN JERUSALEM I ALSO HAD THE MOVING EXPERIENCE OF MEETING WITH MOTHERS AND RELATIVES OF REFUSENIKS - PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN PREVENTED, OFTEN OVER MANY YEARS, FROM REUNITING WITH THEIR FAMILIES WHO ARE UNABLE TO LEAVE THE SOVIET UNION.

ONE CASE STRUCK ME AS PARTICULARLY UNJUST : IT INVOLVES A DAUGHTER APPLYING FOR A VISA TO ENTER THE SOVIET UNION TO SEE HER MOTHER WHO IS DYING OF CANCER AND HAS VERY LITTLE TIME TO LIVE. I'VE GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS TO HAVE THIS CASE INVESTIGATED AND I TRUST THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES WILL RELENT IN THEIR REFUSAL TO ALLOW THIS FAMILY TO BE REUNITED.

I ALSO HAD THE OPPORTUNITY OF A VALUABLE TALK WITH PALESTINIANS FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

AS A RESULT OF ALL THESE DISCUSSIONS AND CONTACTS, I BELIEVE LINKS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND AUSTRALIA ARE MUCH CLOSER, AND THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS EVEN BETTER INFORMED ABOUT THE WIDE RANGE OF OPINIONS WHICH INFORM ISRAELI POLICY.

IN ITS EARLY YEARS, ISRAEL FACED AN APPARENTLY PERMANENT THREAT OF DESTRUCTION FROM ITS NEIGHBOURS. IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, ISRAEL OBVIOUSLY DID NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF CONTEMPLATING PEACE WITH THEM.

TODAY, THE WORLD HAS CHANGED. PEOPLE NOW REALISE THAT ISRAEL IS NOT GOING TO DISAPPEAR AND IS A CONTINUING PART OF THE MAP OF THE MIDDLE EAST.

SO I BELIEVE THERE IS A GREATER OPPORTUNITY THESE DAYS FOR ISRAEL TO INVESTIGATE THE PROCESSES OF DISCUSSION WITH NEIGHBOURING STATES WHO DO IN FACT ACCEPT ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST.

THE CAMP DAVID ACCORD WITH EGYPT DEMONSTRATES THE FRUITFULNESS OF THIS PATH OF NEGOTIATION.

I HAD VERY CONSTRUCTIVE TALKS WITH THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL'S NEIGHBOURS EGYPT AND JORDAN. I WAS PROFOUNDLY IMPRESSED BY JORDAN'S UNQUESTIONABLE COMMITMENT TO PEACE AND BY EGYPT'S CONTINUED ADHERENCE TO THE SPIRIT OF CAMP DAVID.

SO WE MUST TAKE THE MEASURE OF THE CHANGES WHICH SEPARATE US TODAY FROM THE EARLY YEARS OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL MOULDED BY DAVID BEN GURION.

BEN GURION'S GENERATION OF PIONEERS HAS, SADLY, LARGELY PASSED ON. ISRAEL IS CHANGING AND MATURING AND IS CONFRONTING TROUBLING AND PROFOUND ISSUES OF WHICH THOSE PIONEERS KNEW LITTLE OR NOTHING.

I CAME AWAY FROM MY VISIT TO ISRAEL CONVINCED THAT THE PRINCIPLES THAT NATION HAS ALWAYS STOOD FOR - EGALITARIANISM, THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR, DEVOTION TO A JEWISH HOMELAND, AND AN ENDURINGLY DEMOCRATIC STYLE OF GOVERNMENT - WILL PROVIDE A SOUND MEANS OF MEETING THE CHALLENGES NOW FACING THE COUNTRY.

THESE ARE THE PRINCIPLES DAVID BEN GURION STOOD FOR AND THEIR CONTINUED RELEVANCE IS THE REAL BEN GURION INHERITANCE.

SO IN CONCLUSION I CONGRATULATE THE CITY OF STIRLING AND THE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN JEWRY WHO HAVE JOINED TOGETHER IN NAMING THIS BEAUTIFUL PARK AFTER DAVID BEN GURION. AS I SAID TO MY ISRAELI HOSTS ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS, THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS NOT ONLY HAD AN ENORMOUSLY BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE ON OUR SOCIETY BUT HAS ALSO BECOME A STEADFAST BRIDGE OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND ISRAEL.

I KNOW I CAN SPEAK FOR YOUR LOCAL MEMBER, RON EDWARDS, WHO HAS BEEN SO ACTIVE IN ADVANCING THE INTEREST OF THIS ELECTORATE, WHEN I SAY IT IS AN HONOUR AND A PLEASURE FOR US TO BE HERE AT THIS CEREMONY TODAY.
