

SINGAPORE**STATE DINNER****SPEECH GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA, THE****RT. HON. WILLIAM MCMAHON, CH, MP****9 JUNE 1972**

Prime Minister, Excellencies, and Distinguished Guests:

It is a privilege to be the guest of the Singapore Government and to return once more to a city I have visited many times, but not until now as Prime Minister of Australia.

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As you said, Mr. Lee, I was last here as Foreign Minister in 1971 for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. On that occasion, I was impressed by the admirable way Singapore played host to our Commonwealth colleagues -- and if you will permit me to say so, Mr. Lee, I admired your masterly handling of the proceedings as Chairman.

When Australians come to Singapore, Prime Minister, they do not feel they walk among strangers. They know they are among friends. It is in that spirit I am here tonight.

There are bonds between our countries which I value -- and some are the subject of political differences in Australia. But, as I said this morning when we spoke together in private, it is not my intention to export domestic political controversy.

The matters that concern us both, are, I believe, fundamental in the social sense as they affect relations between people -- and of practical importance in our common effort to advance the fortunes of our countries and do all we can to secure peace and progress in the region.

I speak for a country that has great natural resources but which for a large part is a harsh, dry land which we have tamed and learnt to live with, and developed a society, getting on now to be some two hundred years old.

You, Sir, lead a country that has not the natural resources we possess. But you, too, have triumphed and have built up a progressive environment, whose people have cultures going back to ancient times.

There are differences of magnitude in our histories. But there are also forces which I believe bring us together and which today find us with common interests in South-East Asia at a time of challenge and change.

You, Mr. Prime Minister, have spoken of the momentous political changes in the world in the last eighteen months, and I agree with you that we must not rush to firm conclusions as a result of what has taken place, or as you so aptly said, to “start changing our friends”.

It is about our friendship, Mr. Lee, that I want to say something tonight, because we both know that all is not politics in life, and there are meeting points for our people in many ways which can lead to rare fulfilments in human relations.

Neither country can live alone in these later years of the twentieth century. For our part, the twin determinants of geography and history are involving us increasingly in South-East Asia. Geography has placed us on the southern rim of that area.

As to history, the fall of Singapore in 1942 was a dramatic catalyst for the future development of Singapore and for Australia also.

For your part, in the past 30 years, and more rapidly in the past seven years, you have moved with vigour and purpose to a prosperous, orderly, well-developed and independent state in Asia, with links to our European civilisation of enduring strength. You have displayed rugged self-discipline, a vitality and an enthusiasm of a remarkable order.

There is one thing which impresses itself on me whenever your country of Singapore comes to attention -- whether in the news or in our minds. It is the wealth of goodwill which automatically extends to it -- as if by nature.

I wonder whether, as we sit here tonight, we realise the full length and depth and breadth of that goodwill, or of the opportunities for co-operation between us which flow from it.

We know you as an illuminating element in the society of Asia. We know you also for your enthusiasm and success in your development in many important directions. For instance, in your exciting urban renewal and in the tall buildings I

saw reaching for the sky as I drove in from the airport yesterday. In all this there is a quality in your country for everyone to see.

And, if I may, I would like to analyse the quality I speak of a little further. It comes partly, of course, from your people. But there is another source -- leadership.

In this your own innate capacity and instinct stand out. They have had very much to do with the success of your country. You seek quality in your society, as we do in ours. And in pursuit of this you have been practical and far-seeing. You have been innovators and practactists. For these qualities, Prime Minister, we feel close to Singapore.

I have come here on this visit conscious that already a web of mutual interests and contacts has brought our societies together. In terms of security we are partners in the Five-Power Defence Arrangements with Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand and Britain.

Under the arrangements, Australia has units of its three Services in Singapore. One purpose of my visit has been to see units of these Services on the ground for the first time.

As my talks here today confirmed, the Five-Power Defence Arrangements, including the composition and disposition of our forces, continue to be regarded as important by both our Governments. They are working well.

Let me illustrate our contacts a little further in other ways. I have in mind the relationship that is now well established in educational matters by the facilities we have been able to offer your students. And the increasing interchange between our university administrators and scholars.

We have, too, joined hands in special projects being developed under the Australian-Asian Universities Co-operation Scheme.

I am confident, Prime Minister, that the future will see the development of increasing links between our universities, and more generally among the universities of the region.

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I would also mention, in the context of knowing each other better, the growth in tourism between our two countries. We are crossing the threshold now into what I believe will be a new era of lower fares for air travel. This will open “magic casements” on new lands for thousands of our citizens. This, too, will work its ministry on our societies.

No man, it is said, travels with impunity. And in this environment of South-East Asia, travel communicates goodwill, creates understanding, and has, of necessity because we live in a practical world, significant commercial benefits.

Prime Minister, we in Australia respect Singapore as a trader. We value your market and we are glad to see it grow. At the same time, we acknowledge that the balance runs heavily in our favour. Like you, we support and follow a policy of liberal, multilateral trade. But we hope it will be possible in the future for you to have more opportunities in our market.

Finally, Prime Minister, I must refer to what I believe was a most successful export to Australia. I have had enthusiastic reports of the great success at the Adelaide Festival in March of the Singapore cultural troupe. The troupe was acclaimed in Australia, because it was exciting, colourful and original. It was good for cultural relations. And it was a reminder that in cultural exchanges, which we must encourage, we have a rich fertilisation of our friendship.

Prime Minister, I and my party are glad to be here. I have had an instructive and, I hope, constructive day with you and your senior Ministers. I have had a fascinating afternoon at Jurong. And in my discussions and in my

travels, I have seen examples of these many qualities in Singapore to which I bear witness tonight.

I salute the “Lion City” of the twentieth century. And I say to you, Sir, and all assembled here that Australia values Singapore’s friendship. We extend to each other our friendship and trust in full measure. And we believe that our friendship and trust will have a long life and be a rewarding one for all of us, and to the region where our destinies belong.

I thank you.

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