

## NEW ZEALAND IS DIFFERENT

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The purpose of this first lecture of this series is to consider with you some things about our country which make it distinct and different from all others. My purpose is to view our present situation against the background of our national history and New Zealand's geographic situation in the South Pacific Ocean. Geography has always been a major determinant of the course of history. Consider, for example, the influence which the English Channel has had on the course of British history and there is no doubt that if the Tasman Sea were no wider than Bass Strait, New Zealand would have become a state of the Australian Commonwealth in 1900.

I propose to call your attention to New Zealand's uniqueness in eleven particular aspects and the first must be our country's extraordinary isolation.

### 1. We are alone

I invite your attention to the map before you which shows New Zealand as the centre of the world. It shows that of all peoples we are the most remote from the rest of the human family. Apart from the island-continent of Australia, our nearest major land mass is the frozen continent of Antarctica sixteen hundred miles south of Stewart Island. Five thousand miles east is the continent of South America, long settled by Europeans of a different tradition, culture and language from ours. Six thousand miles north east is the North American continent. Five thousand miles north west is the coast of Asia. It is seen that our only near neighbour, apart from the recently independent island states to the north, is the emergent nation of Australia with whom we have a common inheritance of culture, language and history. The two economies are sufficiently different to be in some degree complementary but our problems of military defence are identical. Clearly New Zealand must have a special relationship with Australia. So far this simple fact has received practical recognition from our respective governments in two principal areas viz. trade and defence.

The first of these is governed largely by the New Zealand-Australia-Free Trade-Agreement (N.A.F.T.A.). This inadequate, and in some respects contradictory instrument, was recently

(1979) discussed by Ministers of the Crown from both countries in one of their regular consultative meetings. Their concluding communique left the gross deficiencies of the Treaty plain for all to see. The future evolution of the trade agreement was despairingly abandoned to a haggle of mercantile persons from Australia and New Zealand to discuss and advise upon.

The completely fruitless results of this latest meeting have created in the public mind a vivid realisation of the fact that cross-Tasman trade is of very great and mutual importance and that up until now the matter has been trifled with and that it must be tackled seriously and soon.

The second area of mutual co-operation between the two countries, namely defence, is almost equally unsatisfactory. I will not enlarge upon this matter now save for one comment. The military defence of Australia presents peculiar difficulties. The western part of this enormous continent contains about 1.2 million inhabitants and the eastern part about 13 millions. The populated areas are separated by an immense tract of inhospitable desert land and their shores are washed by different seas. The defences of the eastern half and the defence of New Zealand is one thing, identical, inseparable, mutually dependent and pitifully inadequate. I propose to devote a special lecture to each of these important aspects of our relationship with Australia.

But to return to the theme of our isolation. Australia was colonised by man some 40,000 years ago. By contrast our homeland was the last substantial land area on the globe to be reached by the human race. For countless aeons it was untrodden by any human foot. To misquote Kipling— "last, loneliest, loveliest, apart". Only within the last 700 years has this land echoed to the human voice. There have been two streams of settlement which now mingle as they flow. The Polynesian came about 700 years ago and the European less than 200 years ago.

## 2. Our forebears

Our European ancestors who settled in this land 140 years ago made the longest and most daring migration any members of the human family have ever undertaken. It was utterly unique. There is no historical parallel. They journeyed in wooden ships twelve thousand sea miles to the very antipodes of their homeland. My English grandfather landed at Nelson Haven in October 1842. He was four years old. He was one of the sixty

children on board the "Thomas Harrison". Barque. 400 tons. Captain E. Smith. 153 days from London river. Only one sickly child died at sea. They were magnificent human material. They were displaced persons— refugees from the economic battleground of their homeland in the Hungry Forties, outcast by the social chaos of the Industrial Revolution.

They embarked on the adventure with a simple trust in Divine Providence and the young Queen whom they had crowned three years before. They came determined to build a new society purged of the ancient inequities in the land they left behind — a new Britain in the southern seas. In their ships was a precious but invisible cargo of culture and historical experience. Many thousands of the same good breed have come by the same route since. New Zealand has still today the precious things they brought and they will yet bear abundant fruit.

### 3. We are sea bred

Whether we are white or brown New Zealanders we are bred of sea faring stock. We are an island people surrounded by limitless seas. Historically the sea has been to our people not a barrier but a highway. Yet we have strangely neglected the sea. We have no training schools for seamen other than our tiny navy. It is not a career our boys clamour to enter upon. Our fishing industry has until recently been small business. Most of us had never heard of squid until hardy Japanese seamen began to harvest them off our coasts five thousand miles from their home ports.

We are better placed than any other people on earth to develop a major fishing industry in the southern ocean and clearly this must be a national policy objective which must be vigorously pursued. It must be pursued not merely for economic reasons but to provide a socially beneficent and productive way of life for young men whose ancestors have been seamen for centuries past. Harvesting the sea can become a major primary industry here as it has been in the sea of Japan and the North Sea since time immemorial. We need men, ships, ancient skills and modern knowledge and all are within our reach.

Although our geographic position gives us an advantage over competitors in fishing the southern seas, any export trade in fish or fish products must be correspondingly handicapped by ocean distances and transport costs. This observation tempts

me to one further comment. Our whole economy is peculiarly sensitive to the costs of sea transport whether across the Tasman Sea or the great oceans of the world. Transport services, costly to provide, readily develop a component of monopolism and any such element in our seaborne trade is totally unacceptable. The establishment of the Shipping Corporation of New Zealand in 1974 was an event of tremendous significance and it must be used to its fullest potential to facilitate and cheapen our seaborne trade. It must not become just another member of any maritime cartel. It must develop and grow. May it long remain a fitting memorial to the great-hearted New Zealander who inspired it.

#### **4. We are biracial**

New Zealand is a biracial society. This fact must be deeply realised and be mutually and intelligently appreciated. The Polynesian component of our population gives it uniqueness and it can enrich and invigorate our social life in a number of ways which I will not now elaborate upon. However, there is no doubt that if we as a people are faithful to the basic principles on which our free and open society rests there are no racial tensions which cannot be relaxed and there are no problems arising from our biracialism which cannot be solved. Debate abounds about social policy in this area. Should we assimilate, integrate or separate? In my view the long term racial and cultural character of our society will be determined not so much by policies, plans or academic theories as by biology. The future New Zealander will probably have an olive complexion when by the passage of time, mutual acceptance and inter-marriage, nature shall have welded us into one peculiar and unique people.

#### **5. We are part of Polynesia**

North of New Zealand on an arc about twelve hundred miles away is a line of newly independent island nations which in the main are not capable of an independent economic life in modern terms or of defending themselves in time of war. Except for the islands of Fiji they are inhabited by Polynesians, of the same race as our Maori fellow citizens. Clearly we must have a special relationship with these peoples. New Zealand has the largest Polynesian population in the South Pacific and

we must identify absolutely with these people and bind them to us as with hoops of steel. This relationship must find practical expression in trade policies, overseas aid, mutual defence strategies, education and movements of people within the group. At the United Nations we should form a South Pacific bloc, small though it be, and New Zealand should take her place as the natural leader of this group and must speak with all, or even for all, with force and clarity. In a later lecture the bearing of these observations on our regional defence will be discussed. Here I will only express the view that our mutual interests demand that trade within this group of states should be totally free and totally free movement of people in both directions should be an objective of national policy.

#### **6. Ours is an under-developed country**

New Zealand is an under-developed country and in this respect, among the English speaking countries, she is almost unique. How else can one describe a land larger than Great Britain with a population no greater than that of Sydney? Why our economic growth has been slowed, stunted and depressed is the great question with which these lectures will be concerned. Here I merely record the obvious fact. By an under-developed nation I mean one whose renewable natural resources are only partially used and which is sustaining only a fraction of its optimum population and which has not reached a level of economic growth which can be indefinitely sustained as population grows and technology evolves. By an optimum population I mean a population capable of defending the country against armed aggression.

Under-development may be a mix of many factors which are present in Asia, Africa and South America and which are happily absent here.

I will later advance the proposition that it is the inevitable result of freehold land tenure and that the New Zealand economy affords us an utterly unique opportunity to study this social institution. In other English speaking lands the picture is confused by geographic location, by industrialisation based on minerals or energy resources and other factors which obscure the basic simplicity so evident in our economy here. All production begins by the application of labour and capital to natural resources and from this Stage One various stages of economic production may proceed. These later stages may be

so quantitatively enlarged by technology as to obscure the absolutely essential Stage One. In New Zealand Stage One predominates unobscured by derived development.

The evolution of freehold land tenure in New Zealand has reached maturity and its inevitable impact on farming, housing, town planning and land use generally can be studied here as in a social laboratory as it can be nowhere else in the world.

### 7. We live by farming

Today as in the past our economy is almost entirely based on primary production in its various forms. By primary production I mean the direct application of labour and capital to natural resources. **Gold mining** played a great part in our early days. **Coal mining** was an important primary industry but is now of diminished importance. It may well in future years develop as a major primary industry supporting its own superstructure. **Forestry** has of recent years become a major primary industry and undoubtedly its magnitude and importance will continue to increase in the coming years. **Fishing** has the potential to rival this giant within the foreseeable future. The production of **energy** whether from water power or natural gas and the use of raw land for **construction** are further primary industries of very great importance.

However important as the industries named are in our economy there is no doubt that agriculture and the pastoral industries are now, always have been, and will in future years continue to be, the major basis of the New Zealand economy. We have the means of manufacturing comparatively few of the multitudinous commodities a modern society demands and we trade worldwide to pay for our needs. Seventy per cent (1979) of the foreign exchange we need to pay for these things comes from farming in its various forms. Stagnation in farm production means stagnation for the economy. Buoyant conditions for farming means a buoyant economy. For some years now farm production has been stagnant and it will continue so to be in spite of a host of costly "incentives" until fundamental reforms are instituted.

Our near-total dependence on the produce of this great primary industry has no parallel which comes to mind. The Irish Republic and Denmark may be cited but economically they were until recently, in reality, an integral part of the British economy and not independent entities. They are now both part

of the larger European Economic Community whereas we are remote, isolated and alone. Economic parallels may be found in other under-developed countries in Africa or South America but they are continental and are so dissimilar in cultural, political and racial aspects as to make any comparison unreal.

Primary industries are of immense importance. It is here job opportunities are created. One man employed in them, creates four or five or more jobs as the product is transported from mill, mine or farm gate to the processor and on its way to the final consumer. Prosperous primary industries spell full employment for all. Conversely stagnant primary industries mean unemployment. Either aphorism could with advantage be prominently displayed on every office wall in New Zealand.

#### 8. We are bisected

There is one feature of a physical kind in which New Zealand is peculiar. It is divided by Cook Strait into two strangely dissimilar islands. The distance from North Cape to Bluff spans twenty degrees of latitude; that is about 900 miles. The extreme north is subtropical and the extreme south is cold. Lambing, shearing and harvesting are later as one travels south — a fact of some economic importance. In earlier years the South Island had the larger population. At the turn of the century the populations of the two islands were about equal. Since then the proportion of the population in the North Island has steadily increased and at present is around seventy-two per cent.

The strait is an important economic determinant. Transport costs and unreliable service across it are tending to produce two semi-independent economies — one in each island. The sea link is vulnerable to "Wahine" storms and the ravages of that form of civil war known in the local parlance as "industrial action". It has had no particular military significance since Te Rauparaha and his allies crossed it in 1828 to harrass the coasts from Akaroa to Farewell Spit. It could possibly have strategic significance again one day. The strait is crossed every few hours by splendid ships, by majestic giant petrels and occasionally by a Miss McKenzie. It presents problems which must be solved if New Zealand is to develop in an optimal way.

The Cook Strait ferry has become an obstruction to communication rather than a link in the railway system. It has proved to be a much less efficient facility for passengers and

goods than was the Wellington-Lyttelton Express and the fleet of small coastal vessels which it displaced. There are two main factors contributing to this disastrous situation. These are the vulnerability of the Picton-Christchurch railway to blockage because of the nature of the country traversed and the ease with which industrial action, by any one of seven different unions, can bring it to a dead stop.

The South Island economy is smaller and weaker than that of the North and it is damaged more gravely by interruptions to the service. It is safe to say that a stoppage in the ferries affects nearly every South Island family personally if it lasts a week.

Naturally the next most damaging consequence is to tourism, whether local or Australian. A unique and interesting cross strait journey has changed from being a tourist attraction into a nightmare of uncertainty and expense.

Not much can be done about the unstable country the railway traverses south of Kaikoura but something can surely be done about industrial stoppages. A strike can be compared to a tourniquet. Both cut off the circulation. Around a little toe or a sheep's tail it can do little harm. Around a limb it takes some time to do serious damage but around the neck even if applied for brief periods it can produce disaster. The Cook Strait ferry is the South Island's neck.

It is imperative that this service should be totally exempt from man-made holdups. The hazards of storm and landslide are bad enough. The nation's larger interests demand that policy must be framed and implemented to achieve this end.

The South Island is tending to become a place one comes from. The northward drift of people is of considerable significance. It should not be passively accepted.

## 9. Our Pacific neighbours

On the wall of every home and school in New Zealand there should be a good map of the Pacific Ocean and the lands bordering thereon. There should be printed alongside the name of each country the total population. It will be found that on the western side of the Pacific (excluding Russia and including India) about half the entire human family live. We have considerable trade with Japan and some with Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea but very little with the remainder. At present we have more trade with Fiji than we do with the Indian sub-continent although there are a million citizens in



India for every thousand in Fiji.

These Pacific neighbours of ours eat eggs, poultry and pig meats but we do not export any of these things to them though others do. They eat very little sheep meat or dairy produce though there are in fact more sheep in China than in New Zealand— and more people.

These peoples will in time be great and prosperous nations and our future and theirs for good or ill, are inevitably entangled.

These facts must be generally recognised. There is an element of urgency in translating them into clear and purposeful policy.

Far to the east there are the littoral states of Central and South America. With this group we should constantly cultivate the closest ties we can, even if such should be mainly cultural and economic exchange be small. There are advantages in cultural contacts in themselves.

I do not mention prominently the Dominion of Canada or the American Republic because they are our cultural kinsmen and already we have close and advantageous relations of every kind with them and this is clearly understood by all New Zealanders.

#### **10. We are a democracy**

New Zealand is a real democracy. We, the people, govern ourselves at all levels from private associations to the sovereign state. I believe history will record this sort of polity to be the supreme achievement of our age and the English-speaking peoples have led the way.

Every human person yearns for freedom as he yearns for air. In every country the democratic ideal is cherished but in few, in our troubled world, is it achieved and in fewer still has it been achieved to the degree it has reached in our Ao-tea-roa.

Even here it is not without blemish. We have an electoral system completely out of harmony with the democratic idea. This is all the more inexcusable because this grave defect has been successfully eliminated in some Australian states and most notably in Tasmania.

There are pressures increasing in the modern world which endanger all democracies. They spring from the maldistribution of wealth, land ownership by the few, unemployment, the drain of people from the country into towns too large and the stagnation of agriculture. There are related moral and social

pressures as well as this list of economic factors.

This country is small, fertile and ideally suited to our people. Health and hope are the inheritance of all our children. We are ideally placed to purify and perfect our democratic institutions and procedures. Here could be developed an economic and social system to be an example and an inspiration for mankind.

### 11. We are idolators

I say it with sorrow and with sincere apologies to the exceptions. Most of us are nominal Christians. You will immediately object that this characteristic in no way makes New Zealand unique. As in so many other things, in this we merely follow the fashions of other lands. I admit the validity of this objection but suggest that we are unique in the extent of our dedication to our idol. We worship with amazing devotion our national Golden Calf. We call it, in tones reverential, "the Standard of Living".

Nowhere has this cult a larger or more devoted following than here in New Zealand. In politics, in private life and especially in economic matters, this para-religious influence is enormous.

To say something will lower, may lower, will tend to lower, could lower, or threatens to lower, the Standard is to damn that something utterly. The highest accolade any proposal can receive is to say it will raise the Standard. The Standard is generally conceived of among the devotees purely in hedonistic or materialistic terms. Vaguely it means wall-to-wall carpet, a colour TV, a swimming pool, a fast car, a speed boat and other such "things".

It does not usually include such imponderables as freedom in economic and political affairs or industrial peace. It does not usually include quiet, clean air, peace of soul, time for refreshing oneself in the garden, or the bush or on a mountain top. Nor does it include time for study, hobbies or reflection, time to play with children or to idly chat with a friend.

In a healthy society these allegedly unrealistic things should be the very essence and core of a high standard of living. We need as much of this world's goods as will sustain, establish, guarantee and preserve all these non-material things. In my view these are the things which, generally enjoyed, mark a society as successful and a nation as great.

We all need and should have as of right the opportunity to

earn the necessities of food, shelter, clothing, a place of our own and reasonable security.

We should all accept it as a duty to provide these things for those of our fellows who cannot earn them. But as Benjamin Franklin once remarked "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary security deserve neither liberty nor security".

In making these comments I am aware that I will be accused of making value judgements. I accept the criticism cheerfully because in my view all judgements of any value are value judgements.

I feel it proper to state the position from which I view the New Zealand scene. To those who completely reject this standpoint the lectures which follow will be of only limited interest.