This is my first talk this year and I am very glad to be back on the air over this Station reporting directly to you the electors of Wannon.

As you know in this coming week Parliament is re-assembling at Canberra and I will be speaking weekly over this Station at this time, reporting directly from the national capital. But this week I want to say a few words on the recent visit of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Macmillan, to this country and the significance of his visit in future Commonwealth relations.

This is the first time in which a British Prime Minister has visited this country during his term of office. Other Prime Ministers have been here but they have come more as Statesmen after they have left or been moved out by the whim of politics of that highest of all offices.

Mr. Macmillan has quite clearly made a great impression upon the Australian people by his friendliness, his frankness and from the manner in which he has expressed himself and put forward views on some of the world's most difficult problems.

On his way to Australia Mr. Macmillan called in at India and Pakistan, important members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. There have been people inside the British Commonwealth who would almost prefer that certain member countries of the Commonwealth were not in the Commonwealth. India has perhaps been to the forefront of people's minds when they have thought in this fashion and they have had two reasons for thinking as they have.

Firstly, that India does not recognise the Crown and, secondly, that on many things India has taken a view if not contrary to ours, then certainly in supporting ours. When I say ours I mean in broad the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada as other members of the Commonwealth. Even some
people of importance hold these views. It is quite wrong, I believe, to say because of this the Commonwealth would be better without India. I regret as much as anyone that India does not recognise the Crown, but as a self-governing Nation this is a choice that is hers to make.

Regarding the other point — the fact that India often puts forward a view different from ours on international problems — I believe this is in a way more an argument for keeping India within the Commonwealth than it is an argument for her withdrawal from it.

India has had a varied history and only recently has she received full democratic self-government. Her people are different from ours — in colour, language and religion. They belong to part of the great land mass of Asia. Millions of her people live in great poverty which slowly and surely is being overcome.

With this background it is not reasonable to expect that India will think directly as we do on all international problems of importance, and Mr. Macmillan, as the British Prime Minister and leader of the country which once governed India, has shown quite clearly that he understands this. He has said that although we cannot always agree with the neutral view that India puts forward, her view is one which at the very least we must respect. This is true and the people who cannot see this are perhaps the of those who long for the days of the British Empire and who cannot understand that the British Empire has changed into something much greater — the British Commonwealth. If we are granted wise leadership in Commonwealth countries, the Commonwealth can do more than anything else to help solve the problem of language, of religion and of colour.

He would understand fully.

remains

form
We have a free meeting of people who are completely different in background and religion but who come together to discuss common problems freely and in friendship. It may be no united view emerges from Commonwealth conferences, but the fact that the leaders of different denominations representing people of a different colour and of a different religion can come together to hear each other's views and learn to respect those views is important not only for the Commonwealth but for the world.

How different it would be if the United Nations were able to conduct its conferences on a world-wide basis in the same fashion. But this must be our hope and this is why the Commonwealth can and does set a great example to the other Nations of the world. Mr. Macmillan has shown he realises this and as head of the first country of the Commonwealth, that is important.
Author/s:
Fraser, Malcolm

Title:
Mr McMillan's visit

Date:
23 February 1958

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/40338

File Description:
Mr McMillan's visit

Terms and Conditions:
Copyright courtesy of Malcolm Fraser. Contact the University of Melbourne Archives for permission requests.