



Remarks in the New South Wales Parliament

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Reverend the Honorable Fred Nile, MLC, Deputy President of the Legislative Council; Master of Ceremonies Professor David Flint, AM; Your Grace the Archbishop, and to this distinguished gathering: my great thanks to you for the opportunity to be with you in this, the Mother of Australia's Parliaments. And thank you for your wonderful and characteristically Australian warm hospitality.

It is a distinct honour and privilege to be with you, not least because my Grandfather, His late Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie, would have been overjoyed that we were finally building on the ties he tried to cement between Australia and Ethiopia. He recognised that our two nations were linked by the Indian Ocean; that our peoples had consistently fought on the same side of history; that our cultures were inevitably the product of the same Abrahamic ethos. And that the unbroken Solomonic line which, for Ethiopia, began with the union of King Solomon and Queen Makeda of Saba — the Queen of Sheba — produced an historical line which represents the timeline and bloodline of Western civilisation.

My Grandfather's particular fondness for New South Wales partly originated in his love of horses, and particularly for the Walers which found their way into the Imperial Guard Regiment as a result of the Australian Light Horsemen having to leave these gallant mounts in the Middle East before they sailed for Gallipoli. At least in that light, we see the ANZAC Spirit still at the gallop in Ethiopia's beautiful terrain.

There were, however, many other factors which caused my Grandfather to come here on a formal State Visit in 1968. He saw in Australians a population he admired, taking the best from its British origins but fighting — as he

saw in World War I, World War II, and Korea — with an easygoing, good-humoured spirit to defend a tradition of civilisational values.

He saw an Australia committed to the principles of collective security; of participation in the defence of the rights of many peoples. This, for my Grandfather, resonated profoundly. He had seen the failures of talk among the international community when the League of Nations could not prevent the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. He, and Ethiopia, were left alone, cast adrift, and seemingly bereft of hope by the failure of the global community to stop the invasion.

His words as he left the podium at the League of Nations were: “Today it is us; tomorrow it is you.” And finally, as the world collapsed into World War II, he saw Britain throw him the first lifeline of hope with a small force to support the Ethiopian resistance. When they re-took Ethiopia they gave the Allies the first great victory of World War II. It was in a broader Middle East in which Australians were already heavily committed, understanding then that Australia’s lifelines passed through Ethiopia’s sphere of influence to Europe.

But from that point forward, the Emperor championed the causes of collective security, as Australia itself did. He threw himself into the development of international bodies to work for the common good, from the United Nations to the Organisation for African Unity. He committed himself and the blood of the Ethiopian People to these concepts, as did Australia. Ethiopian and Australian troops were to fight together on the same side again — the side of the united nations; the Allies — in Korea.

So my Grandfather saw in Australians an egalitarian people who spoke directly to each other; *with* each other. There is no question that some of the World War II links with Ethiopia continued. Certainly, Australian Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies was familiar with the role of Ethiopia and the Emperor in World War II, and Australia’s Governor-General, Lord Casey, had been heavily engaged in the Middle East during the war. Casey was familiar with the Emperor and Ethiopia. And so began Australia’s overtures to Ethiopia, starting with a typically Australian gesture: cricket diplomacy.

I am conscious of the fact that I should not take too much of our time together with my remarks, but it is fitting to note Sir Robert Menzies’ gesture

of sending a youth cricket team to Ethiopia in 1965. It was a team of New South Wales schoolboys under the tutelage of the great Australian test cricketer, Bert Oldfield. They went to play the Wingate School team in Addis Ababa. Of course, Wingate School was named after Ord Wingate, the British soldier sent by Churchill to assist Ethiopia recapture the country, and who later fought in Burma alongside the Australians. Anyway, Bert Oldfield took a cricket bat to give to the Emperor from Sir Robert, and it was a gesture which touched my Grandfather greatly.

It led to the State Visit of 1968, by which time Sir Robert was no longer Prime Minister. Even so, when the State Visit took place with Australia under the Premiership of John Gorton, the nation was still seen as an ideal by the Emperor.

What is so fitting is that today, in this room, we have the nephew of Sir Robert's envoy, Bert Oldfield. It is none other than Dr Paul Scully-Power, AM, Australia's first astronaut, and one of the world's great polymaths. He looked down upon Ethiopia from the Space Shuttle, remembering his uncle's stories, not realising then that he and I would one day meet, and that he would become a great friend himself to Ethiopia, to the concept of the Solomonic Crown, and to me. Paul is today a scientific advisor to the Ethiopian Crown Council, and Ethiopia is grateful to him and his family tradition of friendship with the descendants of Solomon.

There were many personal touches in the links between Australians and the Emperor; and between our two strikingly compatible but vastly different cultures. The Emperor saw in Australia's political structure something which embodied what he sought to create in Ethiopia.

He *wanted* governance devolved upon the People.

He also saw the vital necessity, of course, to perpetuate the great continuity which an ancient Crown and bloodline gave to the identity of Ethiopians — the sixty or so nations of people which comprise the Ethiopian entity — but he wanted that Crown to be iconic and above politics. And he knew that what ultimately drives national confidence and successful governance of any people is their sense of identity security. The Solomonic identity, and the great saga of the *Kebre Negast* — the Glory of Kings — were part of

what defined the Ethiopian People in the same way that ANZAC defines the Australian and New Zealand Peoples.

Emperor Haile Selassie saw that Australia, and other British dominions in similar though different ways in New Zealand and Canada, had created something unique and special from the British parent from whom they sprang.

There is no question that my Grandfather profoundly admired the iconic, stabilising role which the British Crown gave to the United Kingdom, but he saw that Australia — as well as New Zealand and Canada — took that iconic and historical Crown and blended it with the egalitarianism of new societies. New societies which he saw as self-reliant, egalitarian; intrinsically rather than legalistically democratic; and in which the Crown and the People were a fused entity.

My Grandfather loved democracy, and fought diligently to bring it to Ethiopia, first by introducing education on a broad scale. My Australian strategic advisor for many decades, Gregory Copley, in a talk at the US Library of Congress talk a month ago, said that the Emperor introduced education at a helter-skelter pace in order to create an informed and proud electorate. He introduced assemblies which were modeled on those created in the British Commonwealth. Gregory, who is also here with us today, indicated that he felt that the Emperor's approach to giving an international education to as many young Ethiopians as possible worked against the Crown in the short-term.

There is no question that, by educating so many passionate young people so quickly, and bringing them back into a country struggling desperately to escape the poverty of an agrarian economy, he saw expectations rise more rapidly than his fledgling democracy could deliver. In that, he may have sown the seeds of the 1974 coup which gave Ethiopia decades of poverty, dictatorship, and regression, only now beginning to fade.

But the Emperor was not wrong in his historical vision of what Ethiopia needed.

It needed education; it needed democracy; it needed to retain its many millennia of identity. I do not believe that his vision was destroyed by that dreadful coup and his cruel regicide in 1974, at the hands of a few individu-

als who wanted personal gain and ended up having to sell our country to an alliance with totalitarianism. I believe that the Emperor's vision *will* come to pass. Ethiopia's return to its three millennia of Solomonic identity and the duty of Ethiopians to share that with the world; Ethiopia's commitment to modern governance and education: *all* will yield the perpetuation of our ancient civilisation, but now in a modern context.

My Grandfather saw, when he came to Australia, a constitutional monarchical democracy which sat easily on the shoulders and in the hearts of Australians. He saw the unimpeachable valour and dignity of a society which embodied self-reliance, compassion and duty to others — an easy and loving commitment to the true meaning of mateship — and a familial relationship between their own Crown and all of society. A society in which both Crown and the People — gathered from so many places and from Australia's own ancient societies — were equal, sovereign, indivisible.

I hope you see what you have here in your great society. Do not let it slip away.

Some have asked why I chose to commemorate the Emperor's State Visit to Australia, when he visited so many lands.

But where else should I be? I know why this sunburnt country; this land of sweeping plains, felt like a home to my Grandfather. And why Australia and Ethiopia are family.

Family who should meet more often.

Thank you, on behalf of myself, my Grandfather, and for all Ethiopians: for what Australia represents, and what it can and must represent in the future to my Ethiopian Peoples — in their ancient homeland and now scattered around the world — and to all those of all societies who value what a Crown and a People can do together.

God bless you. God bless Her Majesty the Queen of Australia. And God bless the Parliament of New South Wales.

And may I take the opportunity to present this old Ethiopian processional Cross — one of several I have had in my family — to you, Rev. Niles, as a memento of how much this day means to me and to Ethiopians.