

Tuesday, 14 September 1976

Mr ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lucock) took the chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

DEATH OF CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG

Mr MALCOLM FRASER (Wannon—Prime Minister)—Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, died on 9 September. He was, as honourable members will know, the principal architect of China since 1949 and one of the very few men who had a major impact on the course of world history. He led the Chinese Communist Party through a long and destructive civil war and in his writings set out a new conception of what China could be. Mao Tse-tung devoted his life to the vision of a rigorously egalitarian society, and, in pursuit of that vision, he mobilised the vast energies of the Chinese people. For the first time in many decades Mao Tse-tung gave China an effective administration, restored a country ravaged by civil war and secured the basic necessities of life to China's people. He sought for China self-reliance. Under his leadership China assumed a major role in world affairs.

Mao Tse-tung's conception of the desirable organisation of a society was not and is not ours, but he achieved peace internally and respect for China. He came to symbolise the new China for his own people and for the world. In recent years under his leadership China began to adjust her ideological objectives to the realities of world power. His meeting in 1972 with the President of the United States of America was a significant and deliberate step in that process. For Australians it is of considerable significance that as China's supreme leader he lent his personal authority to the establishment and further development of China's relations with Australia. In the closing years of his life important steps were taken in the improvement of friendship and mutual understanding between China and Australia.

The loss of Mao Tse-tung will be deeply mourned by the Chinese people. I have publicly expressed on behalf of the Australian people my sympathy for their loss, and was first to sign the book of condolence in Canberra. The Australian Ambassador in Peking has laid wreaths as a formal act of condolence. I am sure this House would wish to place on record its sympathy for the Chinese people in their loss. I therefore move:

That this House records its sincere regret at the death of Chairman Mao Tse-tung, expresses to the people of China profound regret and tenders its deep sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Mr E. G. WHITLAM (Werriwa—Leader of the Opposition)—China and the world have now lost the second of the 2 great figures who dominated the country's history for most of the 20th century. Seven months ago the House passed a motion of condolence on the death of Premier Chou En-lai. Today we mourn the passing of his great compatriot. Mao Tse-tung served his country and his people for more than 50 years. I do not think I am being disrespectful or unnecessarily provocative if I say that 5 years ago this motion would have been unthinkable in the Australian Parliament. It says as much for the changing attitudes of Australian politicians as it does for the greatness of Mao himself that we are paying tribute in this place to a man and thus to a nation and a people who until a short time ago were the objects of widespread hostility and suspicion in this country and in many other countries of the Western world. All parties, though some more readily and graciously than others, have come to acknowledge the place of China in the world and the stature of her leaders, both as contemporary statesmen and historical personalities. This progression from hostility to recognition, from recognition to respect, and from respect to admiration has been slow, belated and welcome. I am gratified that my colleagues and my Party have been in the forefront of this movement.

Contemporaries and compatriots though they were, Chairman Mao Tse-tung was a man of very different temperament and gifts from Premier Chou En-lai. Whereas Chou was pre-eminently the skilled administrator and interpreter of China to the world, Mao was the inspiration to the Chinese people themselves. Devoted as he was to Marxist doctrine, the inspiration he gave his people was very much a personal expression of his own character and his unique gifts as a leader. He set examples of courage, fortitude and determination to his people which brought them safely and triumphantly through one of the longest episodes of civil and international conflict the world has known. Under Mao's leadership, and largely because of that leadership, the Chinese people found the purpose and summoned the strength for a prodigious effort of revolutionary struggle. It was to carry the most populous nation on earth out of feudalism and chaos and make it a secure, stable and self-confident member of the world community. No man has so embodied the aspirations of a great people and given in equal measure

practical and spiritual impetus to a revolutionary movement as did Mao Tse-tung during his long and remarkable life—50 years as a leader of the Chinese people, 40 years as head of the Chinese Communist Party, and 27 years as leader of the Chinese State.

I have visited his country 3 times and on my second visit in 1973 had the honour to be received by him in Peking. We had a most useful and absorbing conversation. His knowledge of Australia was considerable. No one who visited his country could be in any doubt of the veneration in which he was held by the people. It was an affection which grew rather than diminished with time. He was the authentic father of his people and the new China. His courage, his sagacity, his gifts as a writer and interpreter of Chinese philosophy and civilisation, and his extraordinary stature as national leader have ensured that his influence will outlast his death; that the Chinese people, far from discovering a vacuum in their national life, will take renewed inspiration from the memory of his great achievements. On behalf of my colleagues and the Australian Labor Party, I extend to the Chinese people and Government our sympathy in the loss they have sustained.

Mr ANTHONY (Richmond—Minister for National Resources and Minister for Overseas Trade)—I wish to associate the National Country Party with the motion of condolence for the late Chairman Mao Tse-tung moved by the Prime Minister. Chairman Mao was one of the historic figures of the twentieth century. Born of humble origin, he rose to become leader of 800 million people. In this process, he welded the difficult factions in China into a cohesive and united nation. His achievement was remarkable by any standard and in paying our respect to his memory, we also wish to express our sympathy to the Chinese Government and people at the loss of their outstanding leader. The fact that we do not share the same political or philosophical views does not mean that we do not understand the sense of loss which the Chinese people must feel or that we do not recognise and acknowledge the tremendous influence which Chairman Mao had on his nation and his place in history.

Mr UREN (Reid)—I join with the Prime Minister (Mr Malcolm Fraser), the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Anthony) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr E. G. Whitlam) in the motion of condolence for Chairman Mao Tse-tung. Mao Tse-tung was a great leader, a brilliant revolutionary thinker, a great military strategist, an outstanding patriot, a scholar and a poet. But above all he was a man of the people. He was a

man who dominated his country's history and development for half a century, guiding it from a state of political and economic collapse in the 1920s through the troughs and peaks of its development to the thriving, self-reliant and internationally respected nation that China is today. By the people of China Mao was not only respected, he was loved. Our hearts go out to the Chinese people as they mourn the death of Mao Tse-tung.

As a revolutionary thinker Mao made unique contributions to the theory and practice of revolution. His inspired analysis of the Chinese situation led to the recognition of the key role to be played by the masses of the people, who in China were the peasants. He merged the cause of national liberation with the goal of social revolution to overthrow the Chinese ruling class. He developed the idea of the continuing nature of revolution. In the cultural revolution he alerted the Chinese revolution and all social revolutions to the dangers of the re-emergence of the ruling cliques or classes. Mao was a patriot and a man of the people. He had a profound faith in the ability of the Chinese people to overcome the vast obstacles that faced them and to carry through an effective revolution. 'The will of the people is a spiritual bomb', said Mao. His firm conviction placed an indelible stamp on the course of the Chinese revolution, and on the revolutionary theory that the world has inherited from Mao Tse-tung.

Mao also based his strategy for the revolution and for a new China on a belief about the nature of man which is very different from the beliefs that dominate our society. To Mao people were not fundamentally selfish and self-seeking. If they were it was because of the dominant ideology of the ruling class. He believed that through persuasion and example, through correct ideology, people's attitudes could be changed so that they would cast aside selfish considerations and, in the interests of all people, commit themselves to the tough struggle to build a new China. As a result, China has undertaken a process in which material incentives are being steadily abandoned in favour of moral incentives. The people do not work for increased material gain for themselves or out of economic insecurity. I have observed at first hand many examples of the Chinese people taking joy in their work for the benefit of the whole society. Mao stressed the need for the Chinese economy to be self-reliant. After more than a century of exploitation by colonialist powers, and economic disruption at the hands of the Soviet Union, the Chinese economy has been set upon the course of

self-reliance. No other country in the world is less affected by the upheavals in the present world economy.

The speculation about a successor to Mao that has been taking place in the Western Press is, at best, an illustration of a gross lack of understanding of the significance of Mao Tse-tung. Many Western commentators seek to reduce his stature to that of just another political leader. But the significance of Mao's life and thought is so much greater than that. He was a man of the modern world. The people of China have inherited the fruits of his work. They have inherited his theory to guide the course of their revolution for a long time to come. There will undoubtedly be struggles ahead in the course of China's continuing revolution. Mao foresaw that. The Chinese people foresee it. It is closely tied up with their understanding of the nature of change and progress. However, my visits to China, particularly the second visit a few months ago, have left me totally convinced that, for the Chinese people, no struggle is too great and that the will of the vast majority of the people will undoubtedly prevail.

The thoughts of Mao that, people, of great significance to all classes of people throughout the world who have felt the authority of the ruling class and of foreign domination. His thoughts have guided the Chinese revolution for 50 years and they will live long in the future achievements of new China. They will be a guide to the future shaping of all human society.

Mr WENTWORTH (Mackellar)—This is a time for us to reaffirm our friendship for the Chinese people and to express the hope that the death of Mao will usher in a new and better era for them and for the world.

Mao Tse-tung took charge of a China which was weak, divided and exhausted, and created a nation which was unified, formidable and dedicated to the destruction of freedom. It is perhaps pardonable that, as we tremble, we should also praise, but it would be unpardonable if that praise were unleavened.

To subdue fratricidal factions, to bring order out of chaos, to organise the masses for their own better living is always commended, even if it is not always entirely commendable. We rightly derided those who praised Mussolini for making the Italian trains run on time, and for sure the Chairman faced a far worse situation than did Il Duce. But Mao murdered a thousand times as many of his own countrymen as Mussolini ever did and destroyed ten times as many of their freedoms. He made a prison and called it peace.

It is plausible to say that he had no alternative and that the Chinese masses could have been controlled by no gentler means. But against that conjecture there stands the hard fact of Taiwan. There on an island half the size of Tasmania Chiang Kai-shek, without resort to comparable violence, found the means to organise 17 million people and to give them a standard of living far higher than those on the rich mainland had ever attained. The island microcosm confutes the mainland colossus.

It was Mao, with his tactics of treachery and terror, who drove Chiang Kai-shek from the mainland and prevented the application there of the milder tactics which were so successful in Taiwan. Perhaps, but for the misguided General Marshall, aided and abetted by ignorance and worse from Washington and Canberra, a better road may have opened for the Chinese people. *Dis aliter visum.*

Three men in this last half century have attained supreme power—Hitler, Stalin and Mao—and it is no accident that they had so much in common. Hitler failed and was unmasked before he fell, so that no one praised him in his death. Many praised the dead Stalin before they realised the true nature of the monster. And most now praise Mao. For him, the verdict of history may well depend upon who writes it.

It is the fashion now to speak well of Mao because Chinese communism provides some counterpoise to Russian communism. It may indeed continue to do so, though those who recall the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 may well doubt the permanence of totalitarian tensions, however they may be protested and especially when they are protested too much. Even if you lick one boot, you cannot rely on the feet fighting each other.

We may choose to ignore the basic Marxist militancy, but at least we should not forget that the primary split between the 2 communist giants occurred because Moscow would not accept Mao's urging to risk nuclear war and face a world holocaust. That occurred nearly 20 years ago when China, having then no nuclear weapons, could only urge and could not herself act.

Maotism has subjected the Chinese people to an alien ideology and has denied them all their traditional life and culture. It has demanded the rejection of all family ties and accepted decencies, culminating in its assault of Confucianism. For religion it has substituted the ritual nonsense of the Little Red Book, the analogue of the ridiculous 'Heil Hitler' of the Nazi discipline.

Will the Chinese people now have the wisdom and courage to abandon these moronic aspects of Maoism and reassert their historic values? The question is not academic because Mao has tried to cut off all their roots and 800 million rootless people would be a menace to the whole world. People who have cast out their cultural values need something to fill the empty house, and the communist ideology has plenty of its own self-proclaimed devils. If Maoism persists eventually there will be another Genghis Khan and the new golden horde will have nuclear weapons strapped to its saddles.

And so, as we hope that the Chinese people will be partners in a peaceful world, we must realise that this will depend largely upon their replacement of Maoism by something better—something which retains at least part of the Chinese values and culture in which for so long they have taken such proper pride. Mao has indeed given them material power, but with that power he has left them a dreadful legacy.

De Mortuis nil nisi bonum, they say. But this is no private death, and may no word be spoken in rebuttal of misleading adulation.

Mine is a small voice and in the larger tumult of the world even the strongest voice from this Parliament would be little heard. But if no man may speak, what hope is there for any man?

Mr YOUNG (Port Adelaide)—I too wish to associate myself with the motion moved by the Prime Minister (Mr Malcolm Fraser) and in the fashion described by the honourable member for Mackellar (Mr Wentworth). I do so enthusiastically because with the passing of Mao it has been a very sad year for China. The Chinese people have lost not only their Chairman and their Premier Chou En-lai, but also their great military leader, Chu Teh. With the passing of those 3 men in one year we can look at the remarkable history of China since the formation of the Communist Party in 1921. The Chinese Communist Party was almost wiped out in the Long March of 1934-36 but these men won sufficient support within their country to be able to take over the government of the country in 1949 and be the first government in history to unify China and have the support of all the Chinese people.

Those men took over a country that had enormous poverty, great illiteracy and many enemies. The majority of the world's leaders were opposed to the Government which Mao led in 1949 and they showed in many ways, including the imposition of trade embargoes and diplomatic non-recognition, that they hoped that the

Government which Mao led would be shortlived. So not only did these remarkable men live through the period from 1921 to 1949 before taking over government but they lived through the period until 1976 which saw that Government consolidated. I think it speaks well of Australia and perhaps the maturity of our foreign affairs politics that the last 2 Prime Ministers of this country have visited China and have seen the significance of China in terms of future relations for Australia in this region. I hope that the relationships that have been built up will continue. We should not dwell too much on earlier relationships between Australia and China but rather see ourselves as partners working towards stability within our own region, and recognising the great part that this remarkable man has played for his country.

Mr HAYDEN (Oxley)—Chairman Mao Tse-tung was a great man of great achievement who in his own lifetime ensured for himself an indelible record in the history of man. He cannot be denied the achievement of rescuing and restoring the strength and vitality of his country. Chinese history has a remarkably consistent cycle of periods of strong central government effectively administering an extensive empire because it has maintained and can maintain the support of the people of the nation. The cycle is succeeded periodically by decay in the strength of administration, and the quality of government, followed by a loss of support of the people and a fragmentation of the empire often exposing it through weakness to invaders. Chairman Mao's period of office, as I said, restored that strength and vitality of the Chinese empire.

The Chinese have a greater sense of history than any Westerner can ever understand. They look back with pride to a history which was recorded at least 4000 years before the Christian era commenced. I expect, knowing a little of Chinese history, that the Chinese would regard themselves as having been rescued from the humiliation which they suffered with the decay of the Manchu dynasty; the period of unequal treaties when Western imperialistic powers—and they could truly be described as imperialistic colonial powers of that period—brazenly exploited and plundered China, sought to undermine the confidence of the people of that country and to sap any strength and cohesion which Chinese society may have had, in order to exploit China commercially.

The appearance of Chiang Kai-shek was a hope which soured quickly into a failure. I do not think that people should lose sight of the fact that after promising a revolution to restore the pride,

confidence and strength of the Chinese empire, Chiang Kai-shek first turned the machine guns on the striking workers in Shanghai in the early 1920s—workers who had struck to facilitate his takeover of the country—then proceeded to collaborate with the very people who had been responsible for the destruction and subjection of China for so long. He subsequently collaborated with the Japanese occupiers of China. Regrettably the period of administration of Chiang Kai-shek was one of utter failure. It is understandable, therefore, that with constructive policies and practices based on self-discipline and self-denial Chairman Mao and his followers were able to pull the country together. The revolution succeeded because it was able to attract the confidence and patriotic support of the Chinese people. Chairman Mao was able to revive the country culturally, socially and economically and to restore the pride of the Chinese people—something which has been a strong ingredient throughout the millennia of their recorded history.

It is easy for people like ourselves to condemn the system of government in another country, especially if we do not understand the special conditions which may apply in that country. I well remember President Nyerere of Tanzania, at a dinner in this building some time ago given in his honour, pointing out that we were perfectly entitled to apply the ideology and system of government which most suited our own needs but that it was improper to expect other countries to apply similar systems, especially when those systems would not be appropriate to the needs of those countries. I suggest that the system of government, whatever we may think about the ideology of communism, has proved particularly successful in China.

I had an opportunity recently to visit that country and came away enormously impressed with what has been achieved. The high death rates of which I read when I studied Chinese history—the deprivation, the exploitation, the few who are very rich and the mass of people who are very poor—no longer exist. Everyone is well fed, well clothed and well housed. Everyone has a job. Progress is under way and it appeared to me that it is one of the few developing countries in the world which is really succeeding in giving hope to its people. More significantly, it is doing this alone on the basis of its creed of self-sufficiency. I suggest that the future of mankind would be better served if, instead of trying to cut off and isolate countries with different ideologies and systems of government—countries like China—we worked more towards involving them

in world affairs and in associations with other countries. Although I found the statements of the Prime Minister (Mr Malcolm Fraser) on his recent visit to China a little fulsome in some respects, they were far preferable to the antithesis of his sort of approach. Fulsome or not, at least they were helpful and showed a better understanding of the need to welcome China's and the Chinese people's participation in world affairs. The world is worse for the passing of Mao, a great statesman and great national leader. China is worse because of that. I sincerely trust that China and the world will be well served by having to succeed him a man of at least somewhere near equal competence in all respects.

Question resolved in the affirmative, honourable members standing in their places.

DEATH OF MR E. J. HARRISON

Mr ACTING SPEAKER—I inform the House of the death on 9 September 1976 of Mr Eli James Harrison, who was a member of this House for the division of Blaxland from 1949 to 1969. As a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having risen in their places—

Mr ACTING SPEAKER—I thank the House.

PETITIONS

The Acting Clerk—Petitions have been lodged for presentation as follows and copies will be referred to the appropriate Ministers:

Medibank

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully sheweth:

(1) That we deplore the confusion generated by the Government's proposals to radically modify the system of health insurance in Australia;

(2) That we believe the changes will destroy the concept of universality previously incorporated in Medibank;

(3) That the Government's actions will lead to a two-class system of health care and thereby creating a division in Australian society;

(4) That the unnecessary duplication of health insurance funds created by Medibank and private organizations both operating will lead to gross administrative inefficiency, waste and increased costs.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the House will urge the Government to retain at least the original Medibank scheme.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

by **Mr Beazley, Mr Cotter and Mr Hyde.**

Petitions received.