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The Governor-General of New Zealand  
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Government House, 2009

Speech

## At her Swearing-in Ceremony

**Issue date:** Wednesday, 12 December 1990

**Speaker:** The Hon Dame Catherine Anne Tizard, GCMG, GCVO, DBE, QSO

Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Your Excellencies, Ministers of the Crown, Members of Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Nga rangatira ma - Ngati Whatua, Tainui, Te Ati Awa  
E nga iwi, e nga mana, e nga reo  
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

As I speak to you today, I am deeply conscious of the sweep of history and tradition which lies behind this ceremony; the development of Western parliamentary democracy, the coming to nationhood of a former colony and the retention of a symbolic ceremonial heritage share by the British Commonwealth of Nations.

The strength and warmth of these common links was made clear to me in visits I made recently in the United Kingdom. Needless to say, international organisations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides Associations; the Royal Commonwealth Society; the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and the Order of St. John are all well informed about their New Zealand chapters.

But I was quite amazed to realise the extent of the programme of activities conceived, organised and funded by the UK/NZ 1990 Committee under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and ably and energetically chaired by Sir Alan Traill, a former Lord Mayor of London.

The year has been a great success. The final objective of the Committee was to strengthen the special relationship between Britain and New Zealand, from which both countries benefit by establishing enduring arrangements for practical co-operation through the establishment of the Waitangi Foundation to fund and widen the scope of exchanges between the two countries in educational and cultural fields. They are well on their way to achieving their \$3m target.

I am still a little incredulous that I should be standing here today as a direct representative of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of New Zealand. I was honoured to be received by Her Majesty very recently and to be reminded how much she cares about the Commonwealth and how much she knows and cares about New Zealand.

I am the fifth, born and resident New Zealander to hold this office and I am proud to be the first woman Governor-General of New Zealand. That the daughter of poor Scottish migrants should be standing here today is in itself a significant statement about this country.

I have never ceased to be profoundly grateful that my parents came to this land in search of a better way of life for themselves and their children.

I and thousands of my contemporaries gained the gifts of good and plentiful food, clean air, free health care, free education and the certainty of employment thereafter and a peaceful, unthreatened social environment even despite World War II then being fought in Europe and the Pacific.

A report in this week's newspapers reminded us of the enormous difference between the New Zealand that gaily celebrated its centennial in 1940 and the New Zealand of 1990.

Fifty years on, those innocently nave perceptions of ourselves have gone forever.

Dr Jock Phillips of the Historical Branch of Internal Affairs is quoted thus:

*"Those values were, a romantic image of Maoris as pioneers and warriors now happily progressing towards total integration; a worship of the pioneer spirit; confidence in material progress; an acceptance of the nuclear family with mum at home looking after the kids; a belief in the beneficence of government and a belief in community coherence.*

"To 1990 eyes, some of these values seem foreign and no longer accepted as a guide to life.

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"Today we have a much more diverse society with very distinctive groups - a radical Mori view of New Zealand, a small-town Pakeha view and a middle-class liberal view. They have very different voices and a very different vision of what New Zealand should be."

Much more succinctly than I would probably have put it, these points are precisely those I had intended to make today.

But I reject any suggestion that 1990 has been "a fizzer". It has been a most important year, not one of unalloyed jollity, but one that I believe will be seen by posterity as a significant milestone in our development towards national maturity.

It is a coincidence that this Swearing-in of a person of immediate Celtic descent takes place only a few weeks after the election of a Prime Minister and a Speaker with similar connections. All three come from stock who in their own histories experienced repression of their native languages, loss of their lands and experienced the stresses of being a minority people.

1990 has opened up to the public a large, rational and productive debate on racial problems, on long-festering land disputes and deep-rooted contentious social issues.

I thank and applaud my predecessor in office, Sir Paul Reeves, who added so much to this debate by his forthright, thoughtful and determined discussion of matters of real importance to New Zealand's development as a truly bi-cultural partnership in an increasingly informed multi-racial community.

I hope that I, in my turn, can make a contribution to furthering understanding, not only between Mori and Pakeha but also of those issues which polarise: - men and women; north and south; urban and rural dwellers.

As we move into a future that is more than ever uncertain in economic and trade terms, as never before, New Zealanders need to pull together. We desperately need to agree on a sense of direction for the country and to selflessly work to achieve that goal.

It will not be without turmoil. I once heard Sir Paul say that "where the river of history meets the tide of the future, we are bound to be caught in turbulent waters". New Zealanders fortunately are good swimmers and experienced survivors but I give you the words of Frederick Douglas, the great American humanitarian who, in 1886, said:

*"Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails and where any class is made to feel that society is in an organised conspiracy to oppress, rob or degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe".*

Mr Prime Minister, thank you for your welcome to me and for your kind words. I look forward to the next five years with enthusiasm and pleasure. I hope that, within the constraints imposed by the position, I can make a positive contribution to the progress and harmony of this lovely country of ours.

My grateful thanks to the tangata whenua and the representatives of the Ngati Whatua and Tainui canoes who have supported me.

I congratulate the members of Her Majesty's Forces and the Air Force Band for their fine displays today and thank you all for being here to welcome me.

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