

**SPEECH BY HON BOB HAWKE  
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR MUSLIM AND NON-  
MUSLIM UNDERSTANDING  
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNESCO CHAIR IN TRANSNATIONAL  
DIASPORAS AND RECONCILIATION STUDIES.**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
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Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen –

It is an almost indescribable honour and pleasure for me to be here today; and thinking about what I might say, I thought this is part of a continuum. I remembered that in 1979 I had been invited to deliver the Boyer Lectures, and the title of those five lectures was “The Resolution of Conflict”. I looked up the book in which they were published and I had had the opportunity of writing the introduction after the lectures had been delivered. I think you may see the relevance and sense of continuum in what I had to say then in 1979.

*“For some time I have had a profound concern that our society and the world of which we are part are subject to forces of change so turbulent in character as to be fast constituting a condition of crisis. I have attempted in the Lectures to point up some of the resultant conflicts and to suggest some possible avenues for the resolution of these conflicts.*

*The ambitious nature of my theme “The Resolution of Conflict” does not imply that these are more than suggested avenues;’ I make no claim to having definitive answers capable of meeting the complexities of the conflicts about which I speak. I have only one certainty and one hope – that we are in dangerous times and that my efforts may provoke thought and public debate on these issues.”*

I refer to the fact that after the lecture had been delivered, I received many letters indicating support and I did say I got a few which were somewhat negative, which seemed to suggest that those writing were totally content with things as they are. I said to them, and indeed to all readers,

*“I merely say this: while change and adaptation of our attitudes will certainly pose some difficulties for us all, these will be as nothing compared with the potential chaos facing our society if we meander on, enveloped in the warm cocoon of apathy spun from the threads of an earlier, easier and increasingly irrelevant age.”*

I think you can see there is a sense of continuum. Those words, those thoughts that I expressed thirty years ago are even more true today, and there is of course a new dimension to the context in which I was speaking then, which was still one very much of The Cold War.

One of the fascinating features of course of the Cold War, was that atheistic, hegemonistic Soviet Union had brought together Muslims, Christians and Jews who were combined in their antipathy to that atheistic, hegemonistic Soviet Union; but once the cement of the Soviet Union collapsed latent hatreds and antipathies exploded and of course we witnessed that most dramatically and terribly in 9/11 2001 and the next year in our own region with Bali and then Madrid and London. Out of that terrible situation of the expression of Muslim fanaticism, there developed a reciprocal attitude of hatred, contempt and ridicule of Muslim people around the world, including in this country.

One of the most important things we have to understand as we approach this issue which is couched so much in terms of fanaticism of Muslims which reflected itself so tragically in 9/11, is that we must remember that Muslims have no monopoly on fanaticism. I have, I think, on one other occasion in South Australia, in talking about some of these issues, given an example of the fanaticism that we can find within the Christian religion.

I quote The Australian newspaper 5-6 August 2006....how frightening is this....

*Last month the Reverend John Hagee, a Pentecostal television evangelist from Texas, convened a meeting in Washington of 3500 members of Christians Unified for Israel.*

*Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas, a Republican presidential hopeful, attended the rally, as did senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, Ken Mehlman, the Republic National Committee chairman, and Daniel Ayalon, the Israeli Ambassador.*

*Mr Hagee called the Israeli attacks on Lebanon a “miracle of God” and suggested that a ceasefire would violate “God’s foreign policy statement” towards Jews. The evangelist is a leading figure in the so-called Christian-Zionist movement, rooted in a literal interpretation of the Book of Revelations, which predicts a final battle between good and evil in Israel, where two billion people will die before Christ’s return ushers in a 1000 year period of grace.*

*“The end of the world as we know it is rapidly approaching...Rejoice and be exceeding glad – the best is yet to be.”*

*President George W Bush sent a message to the gathering praising Mr Hagee and his supporters for “spreading the hope of God’s love and the universal gift of freedom”.*

As I say, don’t let us believe that the Muslims have some monopoly on fanaticism and in respect of our Jewish friends, look at the tragedy of the great peacemaker, Rabin, who was killed not by Muslims but by a Jewish fanatic.

So, as we approach with such hope and confidence, the establishment of this International Centre of Excellence for Muslim and non Muslim Understanding, let us understand that we are not dealing with misrepresentation by fanatics of true Muslim faith – we in the Christian world and the Jewish world, have our share of it.

What my concern has been that led me to make the suggestion that this university should establish this Centre, was that this is a massive problem at two levels – at the level of the very stability of the world – the macro level -because if this fanaticism is allowed to have free reign, there is no doubt that it could lead to a situation of global nuclear conflict. That is the macro dimension of it , which is disturbing enough.

But then on the human level, just try and put yourself in the place of Muslim families in this country who are traduced; treated with contempt and ridicule and treated as second and third class human beings. This is not something of which we can be proud; that we can tolerate. Even more so now as we enter into this period of unparalleled economic crisis in most of our lives, just remember what happened at the time of the great depression. The economic collapse in Germany gave rise to a situation where fanaticism took over - and what did that produce? And in this time of crisis, this is going to give hope, comfort and support to those who preach fanaticism.

So all that we have been thinking about over the last few weeks is even more important.

I want to thank the University for the way in which they have responded to my suggestion, particularly Premier Mike Rann – thanks for coming straight here from your return from China – I appreciate it very much. When I had this idea and I talked to Vice Chancellor Peter Hoj and Professor Pal Ahluwalia, I said I think I know a good bloke who may support it – the Premier was immediately positive. The South Australian Government is giving \$3 million – I have seen the federal government and they have committed \$7 million. So we now have a situation where we have the funding from the State and Federal Governments for \$10 million. I have not gone out into the private sector, either here or overseas, until I had that but am very confident that on the basis of our own governments giving their support, that I am going to be able to raise a very significant amount of money which will give the financial basis for the continued and expanding operation of this Centre.

As I have said before in this State, I believe we are at a unique point in human history. Never before has mankind had the technological capacity to deliver a decent life to every human being, and the paradox of course is that never before have we had the capacity to destroy civilisation as we know it.

The pre-condition of good and sensible policy of decent attitude within society is knowledge and understanding; the abolition of prejudice and misinformation. That is what we are going to be about here - to broaden and deepen understanding so that we will have a situation, where not only our leaders, but our people, will know that it is not only morally wrong to have prejudices against people on the basis of race, colour, gender and religion, but that it is counterproductive.

So that is what we are going to be about. I hope that out of what we are able to do here, we are able to get into the minds of people and particularly the minds of religious people – people of all faiths, the truth of what my father said, and always remains with me. He said to me when I was a young man: “If you believe in the Fatherhood of God, you must necessarily believe in the Brotherhood of Man”. I hope that concept and understanding will grow through the work of this Centre.