

RENEWING THE US-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONSHIP

Address by Senator Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the Australian American Association Thanksgiving Dinner, Canberra, 21 November, 1995.

Nineteen ninety-five has been an important year for anniversaries, not least in the Australian-American relationship. One of the more exotic of these is the 100th anniversary this month of the visit to Australia and New Zealand by one of America's greatest sons, Mark Twain.

Like many Americans, Mark Twain came to Australia for a combination of business and pleasure; in his case, for a hugely popular lecture tour and a health-restoring vacation. On board ship on the way to Australia he met a so-called 'naturalist' who told him some interesting facts about Australian wildlife. This person informed Twain that the only game-bird in the entire country was the wombat ... and the only song-bird was the larrikin ... and that both species were protected by the government.

Notwithstanding that implausible advice, Twain travelled extensively throughout Australia. And judging by his written account of the tour, Twain enjoyed the things that he saw and the people he met in the then-colonies of Australia in October and November 1895: shark fishing in Sydney, gold digging in Ballarat, Aboriginal art, the Melbourne Cup. He got as far afield as Wagga Wagga, Horsham and Hobart - but he did not of course visit the Limestone Plains that then constituted all that was to be seen of the future national capital here in Canberra.

Millions of Americans have followed Twain's footsteps and visited Australia. And a great many Australians have travelled to the United States. Whether it is for business or for tourism, or for sport or education or cultural refreshment, these visits have for a century and more forged invisible but incredibly strong links in the chain of Australian-American friendship that spans the Pacific.

Those links, enduring in peacetime, are even more powerful in times of war. Australians and Americans are not mere friends, or welcome visitors in each others' homes, or respected business partners - though we are all of those. We are

allies.

Fifty years ago, Australians and Americans fought side by side and shared the sacrifices and hardship of the Second World War. The end of the Second World War is of course the great anniversary in the Australia-American relationship that we have celebrated this year. I believe this year's Australia Remembers celebrations struck a real chord with all Australians - not just the war generation but with their children and grandchildren. And why not? The war years formed a remarkable period in the life of this nation.

It is a source of constant pride to people on my side of politics that it was a Labor Prime Minister, the great John Curtin, who brought the country together in a united effort to secure victory in the Second World War. After the fall of Singapore - in the heroism of the Kokoda Track and the New Guinea campaign, in the terrible anguish of the Burma Railway and of Sandakan in Borneo and in the unglamorous hard work on the home front - Australians found an inner strength which helped them survive, stave off invasion, turn the tide and contribute mightily to the allied victory in the Pacific.

But it is also true that Australia, *alone*, could not have prevailed - indeed could scarcely have survived. This Curtin understood, prompting him to make his famous appeal to the United States in December 1941. The United States, under another great wartime leader, FDR, responded. Without that response - without the unstinting courage of the American armed forces and the enormously productive capacity of its war industry - peace and freedom could not have been safeguarded for Australia and restored in the wider Asia Pacific region. That is one of the fundamental truths of our history.

If tonight is about Thanksgiving, we should surely give thanks to the men and women in uniform who achieved that victory - too often paying for it with their lives. Australian and American armed forces have fought side by side in five wars this century. Indeed, Australia is the *only* country to have shared the burden of warfighting with the United States on each and every occasion that the US has taken the decision to commit troops to war this century - in the two World Wars, Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf. There have certainly been many second thoughts about the Vietnam engagement, including recently by one of its very architects in the-then US Administration. But I believe this can be said without challenge. The Australian-American experience of shared sacrifice, motivated by shared values, in pursuit of shared goals, has given our relationship a resilience, a firm

foundation, that is unique in this world. It continues to play a positive role in the region and the world.

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There is no doubt, fifty years after the experience of the Pacific War, that the Australian-American relationship has changed. It is continuing to change as the region and the world is changing. That is not surprising. Our formal military alliance was born in a Cold War environment, but that environment has disappeared amid the tectonic shifts of recent years - the collapse of Soviet-style communism, the disappearance of the Cold War rigidities which in strategic terms effectively divided the world into two competing halves, and the emergence in their place of a more complex, more flexible, multi-polar world.

But despite all this change, the long-standing, practical, shared benefits of the alliance remain relevant and important. Indeed, there is a paradox that while the alliance no longer reflects the Cold War posture of its early days, the mutual need for the alliance, and the actual cooperation that takes place under it, has never been greater. Both countries recognise this. And I know that both countries are working to ensure this remains true, by ensuring that the alliance continues to adapt, evolve, and *renew* itself in these new circumstances of the region and the world.

In a purely strategic bilateral sense, the alliance certainly continues to yield important benefits, precisely because they are relevant to the changed circumstances of the post-Cold War environment.

- The Joint Facilities continue to perform a vital task today for intelligence gathering, early warning and arms control verification. The threat of superpower nuclear confrontation may have passed, but the need for the facilities unequivocally remains. The missile early detection capability was fully demonstrated in the Gulf War. And as we move to a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty next year the need for the facilities' verification capability will be never more evident.
- Joint exercises, like the just completed *Kangaroo 95* - the major military exercise that Australia has with the United States - provide vital, relevant, multilateral training opportunities.

· Our intelligence arrangements also remain vital for our defence and intelligence capabilities. If there has been a slight decline or re-orientation of American intelligence operations following the Cold War and US defence budget cuts, this has been compensated for by an increase in the scope and capabilities of our own intelligence activities. This means there is much more of a two-way flow now in intelligence exchanges - an area of cooperation that has never been more effective or more intimate.

But what is truly impressive about the contemporary relationship between Australia and the United States is the way in which it has moved beyond the traditional security issues to embrace a whole new agenda of cooperative multilateral diplomacy.

We remain allies. But increasingly, in this new world, we are building a contemporary partnership - becoming actively engaged partners, each contributing to the achievement of agreed goals.

Our world is, as I said, now a multipolar world, in which power and influence is increasingly shared among large numbers of players and in which important goals cannot be simply achieved by fiat, even superpower fiat, and in which regional organisations have become ever more important, not least in the Asia Pacific. In such a world, the arts of multilateral diplomacy are very much back in vogue - and what we have seen in so many multilateral forums is Australia and the United States engaged in close cooperation to achieve goals that for our own separate reasons we both regard as important and worthwhile. US backing has frequently helped Australia to achieve its goals - and together we have achieved far more than either could have done alone.

Let me say clearly that Australia continues to regard the United States as an essential player in this part of the world. We see an outward looking, self-confident United States as making a truly positive contribution to the achievement of goals that we regard as important for the region and for ourselves.

One only has to look at the range of activities in which Australia and the United States have worked together in recent years - recent days, in fact - to see proof that the relationship remains close and mutually beneficial - that it is fact being renewed.

The Cambodia peace settlement, the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Treaty, the establishment and development of the new ASEAN Regional Forum on security matters, the Uruguay round of trade negotiations have all been examples of this close and constructive Australian-American cooperation. We wanted to achieve an effective Chemical Weapons Convention. So we worked together to do it, practising a new form of shuttle diplomacy between Canberra and Washington as our officials and experts worked together and combined our influence and wits to get the outcome we wanted. I am told that even our computer systems were compatible so that draft treaty texts could be transmitted from one computer disc to another. All that remains now is for Senator Helms to allow the US Senate to ratify the concluded treaty!

The world is on the verge of achieving a truly comprehensive - zero threshold - nuclear comprehensive test ban treaty. And this too, if we can achieve it in the timeframe and with the text we hope, will be another product of the close working partnership between our two countries towards agreed goals. We also welcome the President's undertaking that the US will sign the protocols of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

I had the opportunity last month of addressing the World Court in pursuit of Australia's commitment, without reservation, to the elimination of nuclear weapons. I argued that so long as nuclear weapons exist, humanity faces the risk that they might be used, and an ever-growing risk of proliferation. But as I also made clear, Australia also clearly recognises that nuclear deterrence will continue to be an important stabilising factor, but a diminishing one, in the period of transition to such a world. While we differ with the US on our characterisation of the present legality of nuclear weapons, and perhaps in our ambition for the date at which elimination can and should be achieved, I feel that we will, given our links, be able to find an increasing measure of common ground as we work our way through this issue.

Amid this striking new area of multilateral diplomacy, the stand-out achievement is APEC. Paul Keating, Bob McMullan and I have just returned from attending the APEC ministerial and leaders meetings in Osaka. I know I speak for the Prime Minister when I say how delighted we are at the outcome of Osaka. We managed to resolve all the outstanding difficulties, including ensuring that agriculture remains well and truly within the scope of the 2010/2020 regional free trade timetable that was agreed at the Bogor summit last year. It was unfortunate that President Clinton was unable to attend the leaders summit. But let me place on record my belief that the steady growth of APEC that we have witnessed since

1989 would not have been possible without the continuing political commitment of the US Administration, and particularly - since the Leaders' Meetings started in 1993 - President Clinton personally.

It is true of course that Australia and the United States have our disagreements on trade matters. Not the least of these is the familiar topic of market access. Earlier this month my department released a review of US trade barriers affecting Australian exporters. It reported that Australia's trade deficit with the United States continues to worsen, and is now around four to one in favour of the US - proportionately larger than the US trade deficit with Japan. The review catalogued a number of barriers affecting our access to the US market as well as showing how US export subsidies on grain and dairy products continue to hurt Australia's efficient farmers in other markets.

Of course we understand that the US subsidies are not directed at Australia. They are directed at other subsidisers, particularly the Europeans. But the figures do show a distressing story. The US has managed to lift its share of the world wheat and flour markets from 30.7 per cent in 1985-86 to 36 per cent in 1992-93. But over the same period, Australia's share fell from just under 20 per cent to 9.2 per cent. In other words, we are still the ones getting caught in the subsidies crossfire.

I don't want to inflame the current debate in the United States about the Federal budget. But we have always argued that eventually, reality will catch up with the big agricultural subsidisers in Europe, Japan and the United States. The inefficiencies and distortions that are inherent in subsidy programmes, and the long-term hurt they cause to consumers in those countries, will eventually become insupportable. If Congress is indeed about to cut back on its subsidy programme, Australians can only say: about time.

But what remains important is this: whatever the level or nature of our disagreements with the United States, we have always been confident that we can state our problems frankly and vigorously, and we will get a sympathetic hearing. I hope and believe that the United States has the same confidence in putting its views to us.

This is what I call a real alliance: actively engaged partners, close cooperation, and agreed goals. It can only work because of the complete trust and openness between us. There can and will be disagreements about tactics. But there is no disagreement on the fundamental values that unite us - faith in individual liberty

and the democratic basis of authority in our society, and optimism that with hard work and good will the world can be made a better place.

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President Clinton recently observed, in his Freedom House speech, that "there seems to be no mainframe explanation for the PC world in which we're living" - that is, there is no single, clear, overarching rationale by which we can understand a fragmented and uncertain world. And compared with the rigid, grim certainties of the Cold War era - when East was East and West was West and never the twain would meet - today's world does appear enormously unpredictable, challenging, difficult in its seemingly endless flexibility.

But within this shifting world, some essential elements endure. To use President Clinton's metaphor, the PCs may not be connected to a single mainframe, but some of them at least are joined into small networks - networks of nations working together to advance the wellbeing of their people. Among these are multilateral networks, like APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum, which in their different ways show the way forward for the attainment of many of our goals in this new world.

But they also include bilateral linkages such as the alliance between Australia and the United States. I am very confident that despite all the changes we have faced, and despite all the challenges to come, this alliance, this partnership, will remain for many years to come an invaluable tool for both our countries and a force for positive change in our region and the world.

Thank you for inviting me to become Patron of the Canberra Division of the Australian American Association. This Association provides further tangible proof of the warm friendship between Australians and Americans. But let me express, as your Patron, my personal confidence that through the good will and good work of organisations such as this, that friendship will endure and will grow - just as the friendship between our two countries will endure and grow and renew itself as we enter the twenty-first century.