



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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ELECTORATE TALK

Last Tuesday Americans elected a new President. Governor Reagan will be sworn in early in the New Year and with him a new Republican administration will come into office. I have congratulated President-Elect Governor Reagan, on behalf of the Government and people of Australia. He has the good wishes of all of us.

The job of the President of the United States is a truly onerous one. The problems he faces concern his own country. They are also of great significance to the democratic world. We have common objectives and common ideals in wishing to preserve the kind of freedom and liberty so important in a democratic society.

At this time in the transition of power in the United States I would like to say something about the relationship between Australia and our traditional friend and ally. There is a long tradition of close ties between our two countries. Indeed, it will be my objective to work for a continuing strengthening of that relationship. Because of the unsettled world we live in, a strong relationship between the United States and Australia and our regional neighbours is of continuing significance.

The United States is the unchallenged leader of the free world and the cornerstone of the Western alliance. Its role is of the utmost importance to the peace and well-being of the world and to the security of Australia. In shouldering its world burden, the United States made an enormous contribution to the recovery of post-war Europe through what was called the Marshall Plan. It also showed great generosity and wisdom in the post-war reconstruction of Japan. For many years, it has provided large amounts of aid for developing countries.

In our part of the world, for thirty years the United States has been the largest partner in the Anzus Treaty, which is vital to Australia's security. In the years following World War II the United States was enormously strong by comparison with other countries. Economically, militarily and in terms of political influence, the United States was the predominant power in the world. For many years, United States power and strength tended to be taken for granted. Because the United States was so strong, it was often left to carry the burden of safeguarding the interests of the free world.

However, over the last decade there have been important changes in the position of the United States relative to other countries. Within the NATO Alliance, the economic and political balance between the United States and Western Europe has changed substantially. Western Europe has resumed its position as one of the major economic centres of the world. Japan's importance has grown greatly. A number of developing countries, especially in Asia are establishing a new strength. OPEC has emerged as an important factor on the world scene, with great power to influence the economies of industrialised countries through its oil pricing policies.

Thus the world has changed greatly from that of the earlier post-war years when the United States had unparalleled overall military and economic power. Now Soviet conventional superiority is matched by nuclear parity or as some judge even by nuclear superiority.

As a result of many events over twenty years, the United States' confidence in its own special leadership role has been to some extent eroded. It is important that it be re-established. As I have indicated on other occasions it is important that the Western alliance be strengthened. It must also adjust to the current realities of world power and influence.

Europe is wealthier, Europe has more power and an undoubted voice, quite different from the years when the alliance was first formed. It is not good enough for other countries to sit back and allow the United States to carry the burden of defence of the free world alone. That applies to the powerful countries of Europe. It applies also to middle ranking countries such as Australia.

Without having any unreal view of what a country Australia's size can achieve, there is much that we can do. We need to pursue adequate defence policies as we are. But in addition where we have shared objectives and concerns, a common understanding of the problems and dangers in the world, then we have an obligation and responsibility to state our own views. If the course is difficult, it is not good enough to leave it to the United States alone. An American President needs the support of Congress and of people. That can be more easily sustained if it is also known that there are other countries with similar views, with shared objectives.

We do not support the United States simply because it is the United States or because there is an Anzus Alliance. We support the United States when we believe it to be right, when out of our own analysis, our own judgement, we share United States' concerns and objectives. In particular, with Soviet conventional and strategic military power at an all time high, it is essential that we have a strong and vital United States working in close co-operation with her allies.

Over recent years there has been a very close relationship between the United States and Australia. I established a close working relationship with President Carter and I hope to do the same with President-Elect Reagan.

It will be an advantage that his views on containing Government expenditure, on giving people greater freedom to choose, and on the paramount importance of reducing inflation - views which have been given such overwhelming endorsement by the American people - are also views which I and my Government have held and pursued vigorously for the past five years with the support of the Australian people. None of this means that we have similar views to the United States on all things. Of course we do not and we cannot. We have our own perspectives. And if there are differences of view then they will be stated. But in recent years we have developed a close identity of view on the main challenges confronting free societies in the 1980s.

I look forward to working very closely with the new United States' administration, building on the traditional strength and solidarity of Australian/American alliance.

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