

AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION 25TH
ANNIVERSARY DINNER HELD AT MELBOURNE

29TH OCTOBER, 1965

Statement by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies

Sir and Ladies and Gentlemen :

May I first of all enter a caveat about this word "Oration". Now having like some of you learned a little Latin and less Greek, which puts us on the same footing as Shakespeare - I know about the Oratio Recta and the Oratio Obliqua - have any of you forgotten that? - I hope so, because that will give me a spurious reputation for learning. But I don't like this word "oration". I don't propose to make an oration; I just want to talk to you a little about one or two things, but before I talk to you about one or two things, may I just mention something about one or two people.

First of all, I would like to say that it gives me great satisfaction to sit here comfortably and listen to Wesley Ince making a speech, because he and I were at school together. You would never believe it of course, because, really, Wesley's a cultivated fellow and I'm a politician, but we were at school together, and he's been a friend of mine ever since which does him infinite credit. And therefore Wesley, I was delighted to be able to hear you speaking tonight so admirably, if you'll allow me to say so.

And then of course Floyd Blair, a reticent character, is here from the United States. Now some of you may have forgotten that Floyd Blair is a merchant banker. Now this is a very mysterious occupation. And he arrived in Australia - what was it Floyd? - about a year ago, and had a press interview. You know the passion that Americans have for press interviews, and so Floyd had one. And he encountered a cross-examiner who for the first time in his experience or mine, wanted to know something. And the cross-examiner said, "What is a merchant banker, Mr. Blair?" And he said, "Oh, that's quite simple. You see there's a fellow over here who has money to invest, and there's a fellow over here would like some money to be invested by somebody, and so we bring them together and as the money crosses the board, we take a little out of it for our own dividend." Now I must say Floyd, that was the first time I ever understood merchant banking to perfection. But having said that, which may be derogatory for all I know, though I don't intend it to be. I want to tell all of my fellow Australians here, that if there's one man who has been the moving spirit of the American Australian Association in New York, it's Floyd Blair. He's a wonderful man and a great friend, and I am, as I'm sure you are, delighted to have him here tonight.

Then there's one more preliminary observation that I might like to make, and that is that you had a message from Lord and Lady Casey. It's a marvellous event in Australian history that they should now be at Government House. We're all delighted about this. And the news of the appointment of Lord Casey to be Governor-General must have given particular pleasure, I think, in Washington, because he was our first diplomatic representative in the United States. I don't believe that anybody ever did more - I doubt if anybody did as much - to interpret Australia to the United States as he did. And therefore, now that he sits in the highest position that is available in this country, as Governor-General of Australia, I like to feel that he will continue to be a symbol of the association between our two countries.

And of course Lady Casey, irrespective of him, she's been the President of the Women's Section - you mustn't hold me up on a technical point on this matter. But she has been, and with immense success. So that this association here - in the United States - and this conjunction of the planets in the minds of a man like myself, have their embodiment today at Government House at Canberra. I just want to mention that because I'm sure you would all want to send your greetings to them, and your thanks to them.

As for the Cinque Ports, well, I'd like to tell you in case you haven't heard it, though I've done my best to promulgate the idea. The other morning when the radio announced this appointment, a man rushed out of his filling station at Canberra to a happy passer-by who wanted five gallons of petrol and said, "Have you heard the news?" "No, what news?", said the fellow, very drily. All that he knew was that he wanted five gallons - at an extravagant price he thought. And the garage-keeper said, "But Sir Robert has been made Lord Warden of Singapore." Now I would like to make it quite clear that this is confidential. I wouldn't want my distinguished colleague, Mr. Lee of Singapore, to know about this, because it might involve me, mightn't it, in some obligations, but there it is, so treat me with respect - I'm the Lord Warden of Singapore.

And the other preliminary remark I thought I'd like to make to you was this, that years ago - eight or nine years ago - having made a powerful speech at the Pilgrims, this most celebrated society in London, I was invited to be the guest of honour of the Pilgrims in New York at the Waldorf-Astoria. Six hundred men and women, if not all Daughters and Sons of the Revolution, at least all impeccable and I know I was the guest of honour, because it said so on the menu. And being the guest of honour, I thought well I must, as I have tonight, give a little thought to what I'm to say, and I prepared a pretty powerful lucubration, you see. Well, before all this happened..... you know, in the United States of America, if I may say so, Floyd, you are devoted to gadgets, and one of the gadgets this night was a sort of lectern, which rose or fell and it had buttons on it marked "up" or "down". And in my colonial innocence, I thought "up" meant up with the noise, and "down" meant down with the noise, but it turned out no. It was up with the whole jolly machine. And I almost had my neck broken, you see, two or three times when I pressed the wrong button.

But anyhow there were some powerful speeches made as there always are in the United States of America. Nobody will ever say that the United States of America failed for want of being vocal, and so two or three people made speeches. One or two of them I thought were quite acceptable, and then up got a distinguished Minister, as we would call him - he was one of the secretaries of one of the departments - and he made a powerful speech about me for ten minutes. So flattering, that I knew instantly that he didn't know me, but I was none the less pleased on that account, and having done this, and I was beginning to purr, and thinking, well, now this where I get up and hope to press the right button, he put his hand up like that, and one of his speech writers - they have those animals, you know, Floyd, in your country - he came along with a typed script, and for half an hour, I listened to a learned discussion on automation.

Well, I'm of course many things, and possess a great variety of talents, no doubt, but I'm not automatic. But this was half an hour on automation, and at the end of this time, all the men out of the Sons of the Revolution were down like this. Some of them had their heads right down on the table, others were half way, and the women, with that diabolical faculty with which God Almighty has endowed women, were sitting up, bolt upright, with their eyes open

and sound asleep. Oh, yes, this is a form of feminine genius, and all I know is that when at twenty to eleven - what's the time now? - when at twenty to eleven, I, the guest of honour - I repeat, so described on the bill of lading - got up to speak, the men were in that comatose state that I've described, the women like this - and for the first ten minutes I had to put on a music hall turn in order to wake them up. Well, after all, that's what I've been doing for the last five minutes.

Now having said all those things for what they are worth, I would like tonight, without being quite as long as John suggested, I would like to say something because this is the twenty-fifth anniversary, and we're living in a state of affairs in the world in which the relations between the United States and Australia, and indeed between the United States and the entire free world, have never been more important and have never been more urgent. And so, I would like to offer a few views on them.

I don't know whether you realise that today is October 29th. Well, from October 15th to November 15th was declared by the Communist Party at Hanoi in North Viet Nam to be a special propaganda month, and it was to be described as the Hate America Month. Now this is not fiction, this is it - the Hate America Month, from October 15th to November 15th. And in the result, Sir, identical demonstrations have been put on in most of the capitals of the world, including great cities in Australia, based on this slogan - Hate America; Down With America. What's America Doing In Viet Nam? What's America Doing Intervening in the Affairs of the World? Hate America. You know this is a horrible, horrible slogan. It's a great pity that it receives so much free publicity all round the world - the Hate America Month; whereas any people who are sensible, who are sensible of individual liberty, who are sensible of the tremendous issues that divide the world, could well be excused if they had a Thank America Month, not a Hate America Month.

We are in this time constantly hearing pleas that we should negotiate for peace in Viet Nam and that we should persuade the United States to give up bombing in Viet Nam. Now I've heard this, you've heard this; there are so many people, decent people, misguided people, including some clerical people who join in this cry: You must make peace in Viet Nam. And it's about time we sorted ourselves out and decided how you make peace in Viet Nam. About time we sorted our ideas out and discovered for ourselves, and, I hope, for other people, why it is that the United States which five years ago would have hesitated a long time before putting a single ground force on to the Asian Continent, now has 200,000 fighting there. Why has this happened? Is this because the United States has some axe to grind?

This just makes me ill when I hear people who ought to know better, accusing the United States of America of pursuing some selfish interest. What selfish interest? Do they want to make South Viet Nam a colony. Really ladies and gentlemen, who wants a new colony today? Of course it isn't because they want a colony. Is it because they have overwhelming commercial interests? Of course they haven't. It just happens, and I'll come back to this before I finish, that the United States of America today has accepted and acted upon policies which, I believe, set an example to the modern world in unselfishness and responsibility.

Now perhaps it's not a bad idea on these matters to try to settle our minds on a few first principles. Would you mind if I mentioned one or two? I don't want to be too tedious on a happy night like this. But in a civilised world, every nation is

entitled, in the immortal words of the American Declaration of Independence, to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This wasn't something that Thomas Jefferson wrote just for the American colonists. This was something that was written, as it turns out, for the entire world. We're all entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These are very simple things. They are not aggressive things, they are homely things. They are the kind of things that in our own families we all understand - life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And what's happened is that above all people, the administration of the United States of America have said, if not in terms at least by implication, that this is true for the people of South Viet Nam, just as it was true for the people of Virginia and Carolina - life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

And that being so, our second great principle is that each nation has the right, the right to defend itself against aggression and to call on its friends to help it. Does anybody quarrel with that? So far I've not heard that anybody does. But when any nation - our own nation, Australia - has to decide its answer to that call for help, then it has to answer itself a few questions, and I thought about this a great deal before I did,

Some of you may recall the Jefferson Lecture at Monticello a couple of years back. Do you mind if I engage in the poor exercise of quoting one paragraph of what I said on that occasion? I said: "The freedom of man (this was a good topic in the home of Thomas Jefferson), the freedom of man is not a local perquisite, and it can't be defended in isolation." Now that remains true. It isn't a local perquisite. It's not good enough, it would never have been good enough for the United States to say, "Well, as long as we preserve our freedom, it doesn't matter about the rest." It would never be good enough for us in Australia to say, "As long as we defend our freedom and preserve it, that's good enough." Because freedom is one of the great human things in the world, and it can't be defended in isolation.

Now all these principles have been recognised both by the United States and by Australia. And it is because of their belief, - their belief and our belief in these principles, that we have Australian forces, small enough in all conscience, operating in South Viet Nam, and the United States has vast forces operating there. And yet the presence of both of those forces is today in our own country, and in many other countries under attack.

The Hate America Week has been reproduced in Australia. Who are the people who attack it? Will I understand when the Communists attack it? Because the Communists in this issue in the world are the aggressors and nobody seriously disputes it. Nobody. On either side of Parliament at Canberra, nobody disputes it, nobody denies it. But the Communists of course believe, particularly those who are allied with Peking, that the withdrawal of American forces would mean the collapse of successful resistance, and therefore would mean Chinese Communism triumphant in South East Asia. This is not oversimplifying it. This is so profoundly true. It's perfectly understood in Washington. It is not perfectly understood by some of the critics and agitators in Australia.

If the United States walked out of South Viet Nam and we walked out with them - not that we are a major factor - what do you suppose would happen? How long would South Viet Nam last? How long would it take to have Chinese Communism triumphant on the very edges of the Sunda Straits? This is the great issue of our time and we in Australia are indeed fortunate that we should have had in the United States of America a predominant view that accepted the responsibility for saying this must not happen. Because if it does happen then we can give up exercising ourselves about who

is going to win the cup next Tuesday. We'll have to begin to exercise ourselves very fiercely about whether we are to be here self-governing, free, at all. This is not an extravagant statement. This is an extremely sober and considered statement.

Now as a matter of fact you'll be told by some people, including some who ought to know better, that what's going on in Viet Nam is just a sort of civil war, there's a struggle for freedom. And they are not incapable of telling you that this resembles the struggle by the American Colonies themselves in the late years of the eighteenth century. This is a struggle for freedom. Well, fortunately, the facts on that are very clear because the South Viet Nam Liberation Front, as it's called - they've started one in Viet Nam; I haven't yet heard that they've started one in Australia, but no doubt they will - but the South Viet Nam Liberation Front was established in 1960 by the North Viet Nam Communist Party. It is their puppet. It is their instrument, and in order to make this quite clear, the commander-in-chief in North Viet Nam as recently as March in this year said, "The problem of the peaceful reunification of Viet Nam is the affair of the Vietnamese people". So far so good, on the face of it.

"It will be settled", he went on to say, "by the Viet Nam 'Fatherland Front' (that's the major Communist Party) and the 'South Viet Nam Liberation Front'". In other words, this will be settled by the Communists and no non-Communist need apply. This is perfectly clear. This is not a strange exercise of my own. This has been repeated time after time by the Foreign Minister of Great Britain whose party is not my party. This is not a party affair. The other day he made a speech in Tokyo in which he reiterated the same thing, Michael Stewart did, that here is a crude demand by the Communists of North Viet Nam, that they shall be in charge of the future of South Viet Nam, and therefore, of course - never forget it - of the future of Thailand, the future of Malaysia, the future of Singapore, the future of Indonesia and, and then there's the big question, the future of Australia?

And are we to be content to allow these dreadful things to happen, leaving them alone, being frightfully high minded, leaving them alone until the day comes when at the very end of the line we find ourselves defending ourselves on our own shores? Of course we shall do it, of course, but should we? Should we allow ourselves to be beguiled by these people who want us to believe that this is just a little civil conflict in South Viet Nam? I believe, Sir, I believe most profoundly, that all of those who are agitating on this matter in Australia are consciously or unconsciously, and I hope most of them unconsciously, are trying to weaken the national will in Australia by propagating doubts as to the justice of our actions, and of course, American action in South Viet Nam, for no other purpose, no other intelligible purpose than to weaken the resistance to aggression in this part of the world.

Now Sir, I've spoken already rather longer than I intended to, but could I add two things? Every now and then somebody says to me in a very well-meaning way, "But why don't you favour negotiations? Why don't you favour peace?" And I could say for myself and for all of you, "Of course we favour peace, just as the United States favours peace." But who stands in the way of negotiations for peace? Who is it? I wish people would just read and reread the sober history of events in the last two years. There must have been thirteen or fourteen or fifteen attempts made on our side of the world to secure a negotiation. The United States, the United Nations, the Prime Ministers' Conference, (the last one that I attended when we set up a mission to go), the seventeen unaligned nations; Tito in Yugoslavia in a strange but fruitful alliance as I would have thought with India. Time after time, and every time Peking and Hanoi have said,

"Nonsense, we won't talk," and they have usually rejected these approaches with contempt and with insult. This is the great thing to remember, that in the whole of this period of two or three years when decent human beings in both our countries have just been sweating over this matter, and hating the idea of a war that might be avoidable, not one word has come from the aggressor to indicate that he would even talk about it. You may understand, I'm sure you do, how I feel when people of eminence, here or there or there, write to me and say, "Why don't you negotiate?" The answer being, of course, I would negotiate, my Government would negotiate, the United States Administration would, the British Government would at the drop of a handkerchief, if the other man said, "I am willing to negotiate." But of course he's not. He has made it quite clear that as long as he thinks he is winning by violence and terror, he won't talk. And that's why in plain simple English the United States of America is so profoundly right, and we in our smaller way are so profoundly right in saying, "Very well, as he won't talk until he knows he can't win, it's our job to beat him."

Now the last thing that I want to say to you rather reproduces something I said in my own Parliament not long ago. I'm no servile follower of United States policy. I'm happy to say that in my time I've been on such terms with all the American Administrations that I could say what I thought even in terms of disagreement and have it listened to. What the United States has done with Australia in these years is treat Australia as being an adult country with a point of view that is worth listening to. And therefore we've always been able to disagree on details - the press views on details, but on the central things that determine the future of mankind, we've been happy enough to find ourselves in complete unison with them. This, I think, is of tremendous importance.

However, it will be all the more important to our own people if they will just remember one great central fact. It's one of the great facts of modern history. Not a matter of whether Australia likes the United States because it has a sort of cupboard love for the United States. This is one of the great central facts of modern history. In this century, the United States of America has had prolonged periods of isolationism, and it has been jolted out of them twice by the terrors and horrors of war. And one of the great things of our time has been that ever since that happened for the second time in the second great war, the United States has without hesitation moved into a position of supreme power, carrying with it the acknowledgment of supreme responsibility. This is the most terrific thing in our modern time.

If the United States had simply been the greatest power in the world, the greatest arms power, the greatest nuclear power, the greatest industrial power, and it sat back and said, "Well, that's rather nice, isn't it, we're the great power," this would have been a terrible thing. But ever since 1941, the United States has cheerfully and sometimes under great criticism accepted the responsibilities that go with great power. It pours out aid, it pours out assistance of every kind. It does it with such generosity, a generosity of its own taxpayers, never let us forget. It does it with such generosity and so frequently, that a lot of us are disposed to say, "Oh, well, you can take this for granted. Ask America to do this, ask America to provide that." Look, this is not true. The American people are just like us in Australia. They don't like paying taxes unduly. Of course not, but they have through all these years accepted the responsibility that goes with power, and the result is that in all these other parts of the world what the United States has done and is doing deserves not miserable

carping criticism, but an intelligent understanding. This is something that fits into the broad structure of the defence of freedom which, in the long run make no mistake, is our own defence. And therefore it is not difficult for the head of a Government in Australia to find himself en rapport with the head of an administration in the United States; not difficult at all for people like myself to understand that Australian-American association, Anglo-American association is no longer a post-prandial bit of enthusiasm, but something which is the very stuff of life for all of us, and not only for us, but for other people.

Now I'm sorry to have spoken for so long, and perhaps so seriously about this matter, but I just wanted to convey to you the feeling of distaste I have when people want to promote a "Hate America Week", when people cash in on the easy temptation to throw stones at the rich relative. This is so easy, we all know all about it. And yet it is on this association, this "marriage of minds", this "marriage of passions", this "marriage of understanding" that the future of all your children and grandchildren will depend.
