

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 29

22 December 1972

BROADCAST ON RADIO AUSTRALIA BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. WHITLAM, CANBERRA, 23 DECEMBER 1972

This is the Prime Minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam, speaking to you by the facilities of Radio Australia. Radio Australia has asked me to make this broadcast so that the millions of people who know and trust this radio service might get some idea of the intentions of the new Government which has just been elected here in Australia.

So the first thing I would like to say is about Radio Australia itself. My new Government wants Radio Australia to keep going exactly in the same way as it has done in the past years. The Australian Government - the government which has just been defeated in the election as much as my own government - has never used and shall never use Radio Australia as a propoganda machine. There has never been any difference between our Australian political parties about this. Radio Australia will continue to be completely independent, completely free to report the news as it truly is. Radio Australia is not the voice of the Australian Government. It is the voice of Australia, and the speakers and writers whose work you hear are expressing their own views, not the imposed views of my Government, or any Government. They can do and say what they like, according to their professional judgement and skills, to bring you the best, most honest programs.

But there has been a change of Government in Australia - a change brought about just by a majority of the Australian people exercising their choice through the ballot box. The previous Government had been in power for 23 years; but when the will of the people became clear on election night, the previous Prime Minister, Mr. McMahon, immediately said that the will of the people was clear and the power of government must therefore be turned over to me and my party. And it was done - within a few hours - completely, quietly, efficiently. And the great thing about the democratic system is that this is how it happens. Today, my colleagues of the new Government and I have working, with us and for us, the whole of Australia's great and dedicated civil service - the same men and women who have been serving a different Government for 23 years past, now giving us the same faithful, loyal service they gave our defeated opponents.

.../2

Yet, in this context, it would be churlish not to acknowledge our traditional, our deep and abiding relationship with the United States. In the great essentials, there will, under my Government, be no decisive change in that relationship. The treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States, the ANZUS treaty, will remain the crucial treaty for Australia. Indeed, we shall try to make ANZUS live again, more constructive, more fruitful, more meaningful, than it has ever been. It is my Government's profound belief that Vietnam did not end America's role in our neighbourhood; it ended the destructive part of that role, and we believe a new, better and magnificently constructive role lies ahead for the United States, if only we in this region can help encourage the American people - the most generous, most idealistic people in history - to accept this new role. But it depends on us - all of us in this region - as much as on them.

Let me say this - I am tremendously confident about the prospects for our region. There is every chance that over the next 10 years the rich countries like Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United States will accept greater responsibility in making a determined and combined attack on the poverty, starvation, illiteracy, that keep us all back, and lessen all of us as human beings. There will be no international war in our region in our time. Let us all use this unparalleled opportunity! Let us make this our objective - that every child now born in our part of the world shall have a chance for a life without fear, without want, without war. Is this an impossible goal? Perhaps - but why, in the name of reason, in the name of humanity, should we set our sights at less? Let us at least make the attempt. Years ago, I said, in a rather bleak time for my party, "Let us now begin". For our region I say, with hope and confidence, "Let us now begin anew".

CANBERRA. A.C.T.