



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

20 January, 1980

ELECTORATE TALK

This week I had the pleasure of receiving in Canberra, the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Ohira.

We had extensive discussions covering a wide range of bilateral, regional and international matters.

I believe our talks were highly productive.

It is a mark of the maturity and strength of the relationship between Japan and Australia that a Japanese Prime Minister can fly here for a brief visit and, with a minimum of formality, get down to solid and frank discussions on the international, economic and strategic issues which concern us.

It shows that we have developed an effective working relationship, over a long period of time, of great mutual benefit.

One of the more important matters Mr Ohira and I discussed was the expansion of the cultural basis of our relationship, so that the level of understanding between our peoples can reach the level that exists between our governments.

Much progress has been made in this area but more needs to be done.

We are taking a number of initiatives to realise this.

The Australian Government will be contributing to the extension of the Australia, Japan and Western Pacific Economic Relations Project at the Australian National University.

The Japanese private sector is already organising fund raising for this purpose, and Mr Ohira has indicated that the project had his co-operation and support.

We are increasing funds for the Australia-Japan Foundation.

We will be pursuing arrangements for working holidays for Australia's and Japan's young people in each other's countries.

And we are pressing ahead to reduce air fares to a scale comparable to that already achieved on other international routes out of Australia

In the trading and investment area, I urged Mr Ohira to encourage greater participation by Japan in the development of Australian resources and energy supplies, and also in putting the two together in Australia rather than in Japan to produce Australian-processed products

The concept of a Pacific Basin Community was also a major theme of our discussions.

The Western Pacific area has abundant human and natural resources and is one of the fastest growing areas in the world.

Japan and Australia will have an important co-operative part to play as opportunities grow for greater regional co-operation in development.

The Pacific Basin Community concept is a forward looking idea, and we agreed that as a first step, we will discuss it with our friends in the region.

If the response is encouraging, Australia would be prepared to sponsor a seminar for this purpose later this year at the Australian National University, hopefully one of the first of a series of such seminars around the region.

I look forward to the further development of this concept if our consultations with other countries indicate an interest in taking it further.

Mr Ohira's visit came at a time of increasing international concern about events in Iran and especially Afghanistan.

Mr Ohira assured us - and I quote - "the Japanese position (on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) is identical to the position taken by Australia".

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan represents the greatest threat to world peace and stability since World War II.

We should especially understand the fact that Afghanistan, a non-aligned country, did not prevent it being invaded by the Soviet Union.

And it is absolutely critical that the free world meets the challenge of impressing upon the Soviet Union an understanding that there are clear limits to its aggression.

If Soviet aggression is allowed to proceed unchecked into the neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan, and into the Persian Gulf area, the consequences for the free world would be momentous and disastrous.

Some would argue that this is a "worst case" option, but our advice is that the prospect cannot be ignored.

It must be anticipated in advance, We must use our resources to prevent it.

The overwhelming United Nations vote of condemnation of the Soviet Union's aggression - 104 in support, only 18 against - shows the depth of world-wide revulsion and concern about what the Soviet Union has done.

The challenge is now, to the NATO countries in particular, but also to smaller countries and others in the region, to make known to the Soviet Union that its ruthless opportunism will not be tolerated.

We must do what we can to build a free world consensus on these issues.

With this same objective, I will shortly be making a working visit to the United States and to Britain for discussions with President Carter and Mrs Thatcher.

In addition, the Foreign Minister, Mr Peacock, is planning to visit the ASEAN countries and India and Pakistan.

We will be discussing with these various governments the present international situation and in particular, the implications for future security and stability following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan - an invasion that has given all nations, whether aligned or non-aligned, cause for grave concern about broader Soviet ambitions.

If detente with the Soviet Union is ever to be restored, and if nations are ever again to conduct relations with the Soviet Union on a basis of trust, it can only be through the free world - its small, middle and large members alike - showing now the strength, unity and determination that have characterised its great achievements in the past.

I believe that in this regard, Australia must not shirk its responsibilities, and the Government will discharge these in the long term interests of all Australians.

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