

SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER AT LUNCH IN HONOUR OF  
PREMIER ZHAO ZIYANG, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA

18 APRIL 1983

MR PREMIER

FOREIGN MINISTER WU

DISTINGUISHED CHINESE AND AUSTRALIAN GUESTS

Your visit, Mr Premier, the first to our country by a Chinese Head of Government, marks an important step forward in relations between Australia and China.

The first step was taken by my distinguished predecessor, Gough Whitlam, who as Leader of the Opposition made a pioneering visit to Peking in July 1971. In December 1972, the Whitlam Labor Government established relations with the People's Republic of China and in October 1973, Mr Whitlam made the first visit to China by an Australian Prime Minister.

I am happy to say that the relationship forged in that period was carried on by the Fraser Government with the result that today, a decade later, friendship with China has become a significant element in the foreign policies of all Australia's major political parties and enjoys widespread support in the Australian community.

In the ten years since we established relations there has been a remarkable growth not only in our links with China but also in China's contacts with the international community. The policies of containment and isolationism of the 1950's and 1960's are no more than a bad memory. China now participates actively in international organisations including the United Nations Security Council and I might mention that I am looking forward to addressing the International Labour Conference in Geneva later this year, where a Chinese delegation will participate for the first time; China's scientists are respected participants in international conferences; its students study abroad (there are 250 in Australia); its cultural richness is being seen abroad through exhibitions, and China has developed economic policies which have facilitated trade and commercial activity.

China's leaders have also opened the political door. They have sought an active dialogue with other nations, as, Mr Premier, your presence here today, and earlier visits by Vice-Premiers Li and Chen, attest. The past ten years have witnessed the establishment of relations between China and Japan and the normalisation of relations with the United States. Relations with ASEAN have improved significantly. Most recently China has also entered discussions with the Soviet Union to try to improve the difficult relationship they have had with each other. As a reflection of China's interest in the Third World, you have recently visited eleven countries in Africa.

Australia welcomes this active approach to international affairs. I have mentioned it in order to underline the importance of nations being in dialogue. It is essential that nations seek to understand each other, even if it is only to understand where the differences lie. With a better understanding of those differences there lies the hope of reconciliation, compromise and accommodation.

It is Australia's deep belief that the major problems confronting the world, the threat of nuclear war, the differences between rich and poor, and the economic recession, are all issues on which nations must work

together to find solutions. Without having any exaggerated view of our own dimension on the international scene, my Government is willing to participate constructively and energetically in seeking the resolution of these problems and to pursue the path of reconciliation abroad as at home.

Premier Zhao, we have talked this morning about the state of the world. We both want to see peace and stability as a basis for development of our region. The Asia-Pacific region is an area of dynamic economic growth, whose vitality is critical to global economic recovery. North Asia is certainly vital to Australia's economy, as the destination of almost 40% of our exports. Between us lies Southeast Asia. There we can observe the positive fact of the prosperity and success of the ASEAN countries. But we can also observe the tragic differences which have prevented Vietnam from taking a legitimate place in regional affairs and cooperating with its neighbours.

There are other outstanding strategic and political problems in the region - in Korea, between Japan and the Soviet Union, and in the tension still existing between China and the Soviet Union. For the long term it is essential that full regional harmony be established and Australia would welcome the development of a close political dialogue with China that could help to achieve this goal. There are no ready solutions to these

problems. But the region today is far more stable and prosperous than it was a decade ago, and one can approach its future with optimism. Much of the credit for this enhanced stability and prosperity must belong to your country and the policies you have followed in recent years. The broadening of China's relationships throughout the region since the early 1970's has contributed greatly to the present improved scene.

Tomorrow we will hold further discussions, about our respective approaches to national development and aspects of bilateral relations. I am pleased that you will then be travelling to see something of our cities, our agriculture and our mineral development. I would like you to leave Australia with an appreciation of our skills and our dynamic prospects.

I look forward to hearing from you about China's achievements in readjusting and modernising its economy. We appreciate the great differences in scale and complexity between your development and our own. But there is a basis for economic partnership through which we stand ready to contribute to your modernisation programs. The trading relationship is valuable to us both. We will remain a reliable supplier for you of agricultural products and mineral resources.

I hope that we will be able to find practical opportunities for investment in each other's countries.

Beyond economic cooperation, we have many other important exchanges. Our largest government sponsored sporting exchanges are with China. Our cultural exchange with you is one of our largest. Two major Chinese exhibitions have been here this year. We exchange teachers and students, a number of your scientists have been working at Australian Antarctic bases, and we have technical co-operation projects. These exemplify the fact that while some larger industrial countries may have large scale technologies available for transfer, Australia, with its size and skills, has much of direct relevance and on a scale often more directly applicable. This evening, you will be meeting a number of Australian businessmen. You will learn from them the importance which the Australian private sector attaches to the development with China of a variety of exchanges of mutual benefit and profit in the spheres of management and technology.

Mr Premier, the progress in relations in recent years has seen new agreements in science and technology, agricultural exchanges, technical co-operation and cultural exchange. The pace has been quick and

satisfying. We are committed to consolidating these successes, to ensuring the effectiveness and value of these various agreements.

We are approaching the broadening of relations from the basis that our national futures are linked, and that our governments and peoples must work for increased political, economic, commercial and cultural exchange.

My welcome to you and your colleagues today is thus extended in a spirit of warm friendship.