



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE HON PAUL KEATING MP, PRIME MINISTER,
ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENTARY DINNER

JANUARY 2 1991

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Twenty years ago when I was first introduced to you by Alexis Johnson I could not have foreseen that I would have the honour of receiving you as President of the United States, and that the honour would be compounded by welcoming your wife.

Your visit to Australia is a manifestation of a friendship between our two countries and underlines the importance you attach to Australia as an Asian Pacific country.

There is, of course, much that binds our friendship - a common culture; a common language is another reason.

Churchill, of course, said that the United States and the United Kingdom were two nations divided by a common language.

Marshall Green, a former distinguished US Ambassador maintained that much the same could be said of Australia and the United States, and I think there is a lot in that.

Indeed we have different spelling for different words, and of course different accents. One of our great long-standing Parliamentarians, a person by the name of Fred Daly, used to tell the story of a visit he made to Alabama just after World War II.

In those days, of course, calls were put through by operator and an international call was a very big deal indeed. He wanted to call his wife in Sydney personally. He told the operator he wanted Mrs Daly and a certain number. And she said "certainly Sir, Mrs Dily". He said, "no, Daly". She said, "yes Sir, Dily". He said, "no Daley, D-A-L-Y". She said, "yes Sir, D-I-L-Y". "No, no", said Fred, "D-A, A as in Alabama". After a brief pause she came back politely, but quite firmly, and said, "ain't no i in Alabama, Sir".

An Australian friend of mine living in Washington escaped from the Beltway for a weekend in West Virginia where he had a conversation with the Park Ranger about bears and about deers. The Ranger, curious about the funny way my friend talked, said, "where's you from?". And my friend said, "Washington". And the Ranger nodded and said, "Knewed you had an accent".

There are a lot of similarities, Mr President, a lot of similarities. The phone book is one. Our directory is like yours. The Canberra phone book is only about this thick. But there's a column of Bushes, there's a solid set of numbers there for the Bush Fire Brigade, but there's no mention of Pennsylvania Avenue. There are some Scowcrofts and Keatings. But, of course, there's a couple of columns of Lees, and a few of Kims, and a few Italian, German and Dutch names, also Jewish and Muslim names. Our societies have both come to include many different cultures, but they started in the same place.

We were both called upon to choose, in the words of one of our poets - Henry Lawson - "between the old dead tree of the countries we came from and the young tree green of our new countries". We both received what your poet, Robert Frost, called "the gift outright", the continent, or in your case a pretty good share of it.

We were given it. And as Robert Frost wrote, "at first we were still England's colonials. In time we gave ourselves to our new countries and the people and the land have now become one.

These differences of languages to one side, you have flown 14 000 miles to see us. American leaders have had a tough time in our part of the world, but they are rarely discouraged.

Lyndon Johnston was attacked by flying in the United States Airforce in the Pacific, John Kennedy's torpedo boat was sunk in the Solomon Islands, Richard Nixon was a naval officer in fighting around Bouganville, and you, Mr President, flew fifty eight missions in the Pacific War and was shot down once. But you came back. And I can assure you I breath a sigh of relief when Airforce One touched down safely on New Years Eve.

You arrived in 1991 just over fifty years to the day when our wartime Prime Minister, John Curtin, published his appeal to the United States after Pearl Harbour. He said, "I make it quite clear", he declared, "that Australia looks to America free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.

It was a big change. Though Australian and American ties have a much longer history. And you yourself referred to the Bicentenary of the first ship visit today from the Philadelphia.

Prime Minister John Curtin's 27 December 1941 appeal for US support in the Pacific war built on a history of economic and cultural ties, but it began a much closer, strategic tie which was consolidated by ANZUS, signed as a treaty on 1 September 1951, which underlines our commitment to joint facilities.

Since John Curtin's appeal, we have since fought together in three conflicts, most recently in Desert Storm, making five military engagements together in all, and without including the silent war - the cold war - over the end of which you so nobly presided.

Mr President, this visit, through the Asia-Pacific was the first in a long time for an American President through a region of peace. We can now take stock and plan the future.

I've learnt quite a deal on this visit, both about the President and about his policies.

We have an American President, a dominant Western Leader, I believe who cares about the world. A leader who not only cares about the world and America's role in it, but knows about it. A leader who, having triumphed over the West's opponents, now wants to make the world a bigger and better place for everybody.

This world was last like it was in 1914, as we now see the old Russian States rejoining the world economy, as we see Central Europe, India, China, and the countries of South America, provides a new opportunity to shape up the world's trading system. And as Bretton-Woods provided that great historical opportunity for the economic system post-1945, a new opportunity exists for the world trading system post-1992, not just for now but for the next century.

In the end it was the economic superiority of the West that defeated Soviet Communism, not military superiority. And it is that economic superiority that has to be expanded and buttressed. Only in this way can it be a bigger and better place for everybody.

The vehicle for this is trade, and the vehicle for that is GATT, and the key to GATT is Uruguay, and the key to Uruguay is agriculture.

An open trading system is the way to go, which I think is what we all wish.

We also, Mr President, took comfort from your words today. You said we know that our security is inextricably linked to stability across the Pacific and we will not put that security and stability at risk.

We want the US straddling an open system in both oceans for the benefit of all. That means we need GATT and we need an US economic involvement in the Pacific.

Much of the policy between our two countries has been likened to a fan with spokes, with the hub of the fan in California and the spokes going to the treaties of Korea, Japan and Australia. We'd like to put some fabric on that treaty to make the weave tighter for a lot of bilateral conversations between the countries, conversations which are conversations between non-Americans which, in such an arrangement, a country like Australia has independence while keeping and strengthening bilateral links with the United States.

Mr President, on behalf of all Australians, thank you for coming to Australia. Thank you for accepting the responsibilities of global leadership. And we wish you well for the balance of your journey and the greater task ahead.

With those words it now gives me great pleasure to call on another good friend of the United States, the Leader of the Opposition.