



PRIME MINISTER

10 October 1996

**ADDRESS TO THE INAUGURAL FULBRIGHT ORATION
CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAMME
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP**

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I am delighted to be with you this evening for this important occasion and to share in the celebration of fifty years of achievement for the Fulbright Program.

There are many people here this evening who have worked over many years to help fulfil the aims of the Program and many who have benefited from its generosity.

I would like to join with others in conveying a very warm welcome to Mrs Harriet Fulbright. Your presence with us in Australia for this fiftieth anniversary gives us a special personal link to the founder of the Program, and I wish you a most enjoyable and productive stay in our country.

The fiftieth anniversary of any organisation is an important milestone.

It is a time for looking back on what has been achieved and for looking forward to what *can* be achieved in the years ahead.

It is a time for drawing strength from the vision and the ideals of those who have gone before us as we confront the challenge of building for the future on the basis of their achievements in a very different world.

In looking back tonight on fifty years of achievement for the Fulbright Program, we reflect on what one man's practical vision has achieved in advancing the interests of so many individuals and communities. We recall, in particular, the very important contribution which that one man, Senator J. William Fulbright, made to the public life of his own country, and to the cause of education and understanding between the peoples of different countries.

The Fulbright Legacy

The long political career of Senator Fulbright has always defied easy classification.

He was a man of reflective intellectualism and scholarly diligence - yet he was also a visible and influential advocate of change in the practical world of international politics.

He was a man deeply concerned about the policies of governments in an era of the "nuclear balance of terror" - yet he remained always positive and hopeful about the power of people to break down barriers of misunderstanding and distrust.

He believed in the inherent value of international institutions - yet he recognised the uniquely important responsibilities of the United States in the search for world order and international stability.

He had strongly held views about what he saw as the limits of American power - yet he was a strong internationalist and an enemy of American isolationism.

As a result of his upbringing, his education and his own inclinations, he drew on the wisdom of the past - yet he also revelled in exposing what he called "old myths and new realities" in international relations.

He understood the realities of the international system - yet he also believed in the reality of an international society, and what he saw as the need for "civilising and humanising" relations between people and nations.

He emphasised the need for new dimensions of international cultural understanding - yet he saw it as unrealistic and undesirable to aim for *universal* values, arguing (in his words) that "the rapprochement of people is only possible when differences of culture and outlook are respected and appreciated rather than feared or condemned".

He once championed Presidential power as the source of any effective American foreign policy - yet his later career highlighted what he believed should be the Congressional limits on that power.

He knew the creative and constructive opportunities that political power bestowed on elected leaders - yet he never ceased warning about the proper limits of government and the potential for power to create its own arrogance.

He was at the heart of the great American debates over policymaking during the Cold War - yet he became, in effect, one of the earliest and most articulate spokesmen for many who belonged to the first *post-Cold War* generation.

He was a man without pretensions - yet he is one of those very few people in history whose name has also become a proper noun, as thousands of Fulbrighters around the world will attest!

The career of Senator Fulbright was certainly one of contrasts. It was also one of achievement and endurance.

In 1939, he became the youngest University President in the United States. He was the first American Rhodes Scholar to be elected to the US Senate. He was Chairman of the influential Senate Foreign Relations Committee for fifteen years. And he was returned by the electors of Arkansas as one of their representatives in the Congress for thirty two consecutive years from the 1940's to the 1970's.

Throughout that period, Senator Fulbright became involved in an extraordinarily wide range of foreign policy issues.

Those issues included the management of new international structures for enhancing security and co-operation; the definition of "national interest" and the changing nature of "national power" in an era of rapid international change; the appropriate balance between America's international aspirations and its limited national resources, between its global responsibilities and its domestic priorities; the revolutionary potential of endemic poverty, nationalism and population growth in developing countries; and the need to build bridges of co-operation and understanding between the American people and the peoples of other countries through trade, scientific and cultural exchanges.

The debate over many of these issues, of course, continues today - though in a very different context to that of Senator Fulbright's time.

Some of Senator Fulbright's views were a focus of passionate support as well as vigorous dispute. But the distinguishing mark of all of them was that they were presented by him with forthrightness, personal integrity and a commitment to the principles in which he believed. They were all underpinned by his faith in the power of ideas and in the common aspirations that he strongly believed all people shared.

He had a clear vision of the role of creative leadership, liberal education and international understanding in helping to build a more peaceful world.

It is that vision which has endured and which lives on in the scholarship program that bears his name.

It is that vision, and its important future role in a rapidly changing world, which we celebrate tonight.

The Constructive Internationalism of the Fulbright Program

What motivated the establishment of the Fulbright Program, and what has sustained and strengthened it during its first half century, has been its commitment to a constructive internationalism built on direct educational and cultural links between the people of different countries.

It was the same constructive internationalism that had inspired the passage into law in 1943 (three years before the establishment of the Scholarship program) of the 'Fulbright Resolution', committing the United States to support a post-war international organisation to maintain peace, and thus pre-empting any move to post-war American isolationism.

It was that motivation and spirit which were again clear in 1946 when Senator Fulbright secured the passage through Congress of his Bill to convert the sale of surplus American war property abroad into a major student exchange program. It was an initiative he had launched the year before, just two weeks after the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. And it was to be described by President Kennedy some fifteen years later as "the classic modern example of beating swords into ploughshares".

Senator Fulbright saw this exchange program as an important catalyst in the search for a new constructive internationalism that could contribute to the avoidance of war in the atomic age. But he also understood the limits of any such programme, once describing it as "not a panacea but an avenue of hope".

The purposes of the Scholarships have been described in countless ways over the past fifty years. But, not surprisingly, the best description comes from Senator Fulbright himself when he reflected on them in later life in the following terms:

"There is nothing obscure about the objective of educational exchange. Its purpose is to acquaint Americans with the world as it is and to acquaint students and scholars from many lands with America as it is - not as we wish it were or as we might wish foreigners to see it, but exactly as it is - which by my reckoning is an 'image' of which no America need be ashamed. The program further aims to make the benefits of American culture and technology available to the world and to enrich American life by exposing it to the science and art of many societies. Finally, the program aims, through these means, to bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs and thereby to increase the chance that nations will learn at last to live in peace and friendship."

In its fifty years of operation, the Fulbright Program has fulfilled these high ideals of fostering leadership, learning and empathy between cultures.

Approximately 200,000 individuals - including 70,000 Americans and 130,000 from other countries - have participated in the Program since its establishment in 1946.

Over 140 countries are currently involved in the program with participants including a wide range of graduate students, scholars and professionals from outside of academia.

Those who have benefited from the Fulbright Program have contributed to their societies not only in the field of public leadership but also in the sciences, the arts, education, literature, business, the media, community support and many other areas of activity. Some have done so prominently and spectacularly. Countless others have done so without as much public acclamation but with no less effectiveness in making their communities better and fairer places in which to live.

The Fulbright exchange program between Australia and the United States began in 1949 and since 1963 it has continued under the auspices of the Australian-American Educational Foundation. Over 4,000 Australians and Americans have benefited from the opportunity which the Fulbright Program has provided for study and exchange in each of our countries.

I am proud to be Honorary Co-Chairman of the Foundation, and I am proud of the Australian Government's ongoing financial support for the Scholarship scheme.

The Fulbright Program's Next Fifty Years

In looking to the next fifty years of the Fulbright Program, we can be confident that its aims and ideals have never been more relevant.

In a bilateral sense, the place of the Fulbright Program in the broader architecture of Australia-United States relations will be an increasingly important one.

Australians and Americans share rare ties of history, language and culture. We are united by common values and beliefs including our commitment to freedom, democratic rights and equality of opportunity. The Fulbright Program reflects many of our mutual characteristics as relatively young countries, including the value we place on openness, vitality and innovation.

The relationship between our two countries is bound together by close and effective interaction between our governments and our private sector enterprises - and this is evident across a very broad range of political, security, commercial and cultural activities.

At a government-to-government level, the range of interaction between Australia and the United States is diverse and mutually advantageous. My Government has made it explicit clear that we aim to reinvigorate and strengthen our relations with United States in the future.

I know it has become fashionable in some quarters to categorise alliance relationships, such as Australia's with the United States, as anachronistic in the post-Cold War world. That perception is, in my view, totally mistaken.

Alliances are as important in times of great change as they are in periods of direct strategic threat. The Australia-America alliance contributes as much today as it has ever done to peace, security and stability - and we will be working to expand that contribution even further in the future.

Nor does alliance co-operation, particularly between two such vigorous and open democracies as the United States and Australia, entail any diminution of sovereignty or independence on the part of either.

We will have differences on specific issues - as we have had in the past. We will convey those differences forcefully and unambiguously in support of our national interests where the need arises. But we will do so in the broader context of a bilateral relationship that is strong, enduring and clearly in the national interest of both our countries.

Just as we have fundamentally significant economic and security ties with the United States, we also have dynamic economic opportunities, strategic interests and strong bilateral relationships in Asia.

As I have made clear on many occasions, my Government does not see any choice to be made in Australian foreign policy between our past associations and our future hopes, between our history and our geography.

Nor do we see any choice to be made between strengthening our engagement with Asia and reinvigorating our relationship with the United States.

Under my Government Australia can, and will, do both.

The bilateral government-to-government links between Australia and the United States to which I have been referring work most effectively in the context of strong people-to-people associations. And it is those associations which add an important and enduring quality to the nature of the Australian-American relationship.

For an older generation, there are the special ties of history between Australians and Americans which were forged during and after the Second World War. For younger Australians and Americans, there are the special associations developed as a result of the expanding scale of two-way business and tourism between our two countries and the accelerating pace of educational, technological and cultural exchanges to which the Fulbright Program adds such a significant dimension.

It is also cultural links at a popular level that are increasingly opening up our two societies to each other - through films, music, creative art, the Internet, and much more.

It is these direct links between Australians and Americans that provide such critical sustenance and support to the official ties between our governments. And it is in those links that the realisation of the Fulbright vision of understanding, mutual respect and shared common purposes can be advanced.

The future relevance of the Fulbright Program, of course, extends well beyond the bounds of the Australia-America relationship. It is a Program that is well-attuned to what will be powerful forces of international change into the next century.

The realities of globalisation and economic interdependence are the product of the revolutions in transportation, communications, technology and commerce, as well as political will, that have transformed the nature of policymaking between, as well as within, nations.

And as part of these processes of change, the Fulbright vision for better understanding between different cultures and for broader areas of co-operation will have an increasing relevance.

Another great driving force of international change in the late twentieth century is the economic dynamism and the developing regional architecture of the Asia-Pacific region.

This regional economic revolution has transformed the Asia-Pacific as well as its relationships with the rest of the world. It has created changes of an order which, in my lifetime, have been surpassed only by the implosion of communism.

For both the United States and Australia, the nature of our interactions with the Asia-Pacific region - as well as our strategies for broadening and deepening them - lie at the forefront of policymaking in both our countries.

More than ever in the years ahead, the Fulbright vision for more extensive educational exchanges, for better cultural understanding and for wider horizons of co-operation will have a special significance in relations between the United States and Asia, just as they will in terms of Australia's relations with the region.

Maximising Opportunities In, and With, Asia

Against this background, I wish to make some brief comments about the nature of the emerging challenges and opportunities for Australian and American policy in development of closer interaction with our region.

No region will be more important to world prosperity and stability in the twenty-first century than the Asia-Pacific region.

It includes three of the world's most politically and economically influential countries - the United States, Japan and China. The futures of those countries, and their interaction with each other, will be critical for the region and the wider world.

Inevitably, the relationship among these countries is changing as they themselves change. The scale of change in China in particular is immense. Growth in China has averaged ten per cent for more than a decade. This stands to change the relativities of power in the region. But China's opening up and its growth are indisputably positive developments. They provide new economic opportunities for others. They also provide China with a stake in the stability of the region and in the effectiveness of regional and global political and economic structures.

My Government is strongly committed to engagement with China. In particular, I think China's entry into the World Trade Organisation is important and I hope that it can be achieved in the near future on reasonable terms for all concerned. More broadly, the management of the relationship among the United States, Japan and China is of the utmost importance for the stability and prosperity of the region.

The Asia-Pacific region is already a global economic powerhouse, and it is likely to become even more significant in the world economy over coming decades.

In terms of the separate national perspectives of both the United States and Australia on these regional economic realities, the facts speak for themselves.

Already, one third of US exports go to East Asian markets, representing over two million American jobs. US projections have put Asia, even excluding Japan, as the United States' largest export market by 2010.

For Australia, there are comparable realities.

We are far more closely integrated economically with the Asia-Pacific region than with any other part of the world. Two thirds of our exports go there - and more than half go to East Asia. Nine of Australia's top ten export markets are in the Asia-Pacific region, with seven in East Asia.

What happens in, and with, the Asia-Pacific region will clearly shape and influence Australia's destiny.

Consistent policies over many years have enabled Australia to become an integral member of the Asia-Pacific community and an important political and economic partner of individual regional countries.

That outcome has been achieved by the work of many Australian Governments, both Coalition and Labor. I acknowledge the contributions made by all of them, and my Government is committed to building further on their achievements.

This continuity of Australian policy towards the Asia-Pacific region was one of the key messages I conveyed during my recent visits to Japan and Indonesia - and it was one which I believe was well understood and appreciated. As a new Government, we will inevitably do some things differently and we will have some different regional policy emphases - that is only natural and to be expected. But we intend to be, as the Prime Minister of Japan Mr Hashimoto reaffirmed recently in Tokyo, an "indispensable partner" for our neighbours and friends in our part of the world.

Our links with the countries of our region have implications which go beyond mutual bilateral advantage. They contribute to a strengthening network of regional associations. They also add value to our relationship with the United States, just as our relationship with the United States contributes importantly to our region.

We believe that the active engagement of the United States is vital to the continued economic growth of the Asia-Pacific region, to trade and investment as well as to regional strategic stability.

Recent reminders of the ongoing US commitment to a leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region have been an important reaffirmation of America's continuing role in support of regional stability and prosperity. They reflect the importance of the region economically and strategically to the United States and they are very welcome to us in Australia.

I am thinking of the signature earlier this year by President Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto of the Joint Declaration of Security. I am also thinking of the reaffirmation of ANZUS at the recent Australia/United States ministerial talks held in Sydney, with the unprecedented attendance by the US Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I am also thinking of the extent of America's economic engagement with the Asia-Pacific region.

The United States plays a vital role in the economy of the region as a source of capital flows to fund the vast infrastructure needs of the region, as a supplier of technology and as a market. The United States is the largest single market for ASEAN.

The American commitment to APEC is also fundamentally important in both regional and global terms. APEC's liberalisation and co-operation agenda will be critical in ensuring that the region reaches its full economic potential. The commitment of APEC countries to liberalisation can also be a powerful force against pressures to protect markets elsewhere in the world. APEC can be an important force in helping to maintain momentum for further trade and investment liberalisation both regionally and globally under the World Trade Organisation.

I am very much looking forward to discussing these and other aspects of American regional policy with another son of Arkansas, President Bill Clinton, when he visits Australia next month. He will be assured of a very warm welcome to this country.

As for Australian regional policy, the purposes and goals of my Government are clear.

We have stated from the outset our profound commitment to the priority of engagement with the Asia-Pacific region. This is the region with which Australia's economic and strategic prospects are most immediately involved. This is the region in which Australia needs to succeed and my Government is determined to equip Australia for such success.

We aim to facilitate the development of dynamic, exciting and expanding networks of regional interaction - in trade and commerce, in security co-operation, in cultural and educational ties, and in people-to-people links.

We aim to develop strong regional *relationships* as well as to pursue Australia's regional *interests*.

We aim to do so in a way that embodies vitality, dynamism and innovation in opening up new areas of regional co-operation. We also aim to do so in a way that reflects pride in our national values and institutions.

It is governments which co-operatively set the tone and provide the lead in terms of developing regional relationships.

My Government will continue to do so with our regional partners in terms of building strong political links, maximising two-way trade and investment opportunities and developing regional security co-operation.

We will also continue to do so in seeking to enhance the scope for direct people-to-people links and in reaffirming in the strongest terms our commitment to Australia's racially non-discriminatory immigration policy which has made us a stronger, richer and more diverse nation - an issue to which I will return later.

We are committed, as a Government, to accelerating the scope and pace of our interaction with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and to doing so in a way which mutually respects our individual national priorities, traditions and attitudes.

We aim to expand - through global, regional and bilateral channels - Australia's current level and range of trading and investment interests in Asia and the Pacific.

Australia supplies nearly half of East Asia's coal, iron ore and beef, as well as over half its wool and alumina. We are a growing source of manufactures and services to East Asia - especially through small and medium size enterprises. And yet over recent years, we have barely kept pace with the dynamic growth in regional markets. Although the value of our regional exports is increasing, our share of key regional markets over recent years has been declining.

We have opportunities across the board - not just in traditional areas such as food supplies and raw materials but also in services generally - in education, in tourism, in medicine, in finance, in processed food, in manufacturing, in construction, in science and technology, in transport : in fact, across the full range of our resources and value-adding industries.

Australian exports have made important inroads in most of those areas over the past decade or more. But in terms of what we are capable, I believe we have only scratched the surface of our full potential in many areas.

My Government has a clear vision of Australian possibilities in, and with, Asia. But rhetoric alone will not be enough to make it happen. Nor is a hopeful faith in geographic proximity to an economically dynamic region sufficient to ensure that our national potential is realised.

What my Government is committed to is a practical strategy to fulfil our regional potential.

That potential will only be unlocked when we address the inefficiencies in our own national economic infrastructure and when we develop, in the Fulbright tradition, patterns of interaction that will enhance personal contacts and cultural understanding.

That is why, as a nation, we need to pursue policies of fiscal responsibility. It is why we need to tackle our foreign debt and current account problems. It is why we need to lift our level of national savings. It is why we need to reform our arthritic labour market system. It is why we need to pursue the essential task of microeconomic reform in our transport and communications sectors.

Our actions since our election in March confirm the fact that these are all clear priorities for the Australian Government.

Australia also needs to continue to work with our regional partners in taking the APEC trade liberalisation process forward.

We must encourage other regional economies to match the significant liberalisation already undertaken in Australia.

With tariff levels now at five per cent or below for all sectors except passenger motor vehicles, textiles, clothing and footwear, sugar and cheese Australia has already moved a long way towards the Bogor targets of free trade and investment.

Australia's regional trading partners have taken some significant steps. ASEAN countries, for example, have cut applied tariffs on a trade-weighted average by about two-thirds between 1988 and 1995. China's average tariff rate has come down from 35 per cent in 1988 to below 20 per cent in 1995. Japanese and Korean markets in citrus fruit, beef and rice are more open than they were.

But Australian exporters of manufactures still face some very high tariff peaks in the region. For example some on cars are as high as 200 per cent. Australian agricultural and food exporters still face tariffs and other barriers, such as monopoly or state importing arrangements. Our exports of legal and financial services are often obstructed by regulatory barriers.

The value of APEC is that by liberalising in concert the benefits are maximised. For this to work effectively, everyone must contribute.

We will use every avenue - not only APEC but also the World Trade Organisation, other regional associations and bilateral links - to ensure that access barriers are reduced and opportunities created for our exporters.

We need to pursue other priorities as well if Australia is to realise its full potential for regional interaction.

We need innovative co-operation between government and industry on regional trade strategies, such as the "Supermarket to Asia" strategy which we launched recently.

We need a reform program that will make Australia an even better place from which to do business with Asia.

And we need expanded people-to-people links with regional countries.

All these priorities are fundamental if Australia is to compete effectively and engage expansively in the Asia-Pacific region.

And they are all key priorities for the Australian Government.

In addition to our trade and commercial interests, we aim to enhance Australia's security interests in, and with, the region.

Australia makes an important contribution to regional stability because of our strong and professional defence force, our alliance with the United States, our active diplomacy, and our close defence links with other regional countries. My Government aims to strengthen each of these four elements of our regional security policy.

Our aims in the Asia-Pacific region go beyond, and supplement, our trade and security objectives. Those aims also relate to enhancing the direct people-to-people links between regional countries.

Immigration has played an important direct role in developing those links. In that context, it is important to re-emphasise the non-discriminatory character of Australia's immigration programme to which the Australian Government is unequivocally committed.

There is certainly room for open and vigorous debate about the size and composition of Australia's migrant intake provided that such debate is against the background of a bipartisan commitment to a non-discriminatory policy.

A wide range of independent contact between Australia and the countries of our region has been developing. We see this especially in the growing links between Australian chambers of commerce, professional associations, cities, schools, universities and community groups, and equivalent bodies in many regional countries.

This range of contact is very much related to the Fulbright vision of enhanced cultural understanding, and as a government we intend to encourage it as much as we can.

Tourism, of course, is an obvious example. 783,000 Japanese tourists visited Australia in 1995. 77,000 Australians visited Japan, and nearly 300,000 visited Indonesia.

We have many Australians able to contribute with special language, cultural and trade expertise, as well as through family and other personal ties, in developing Australia's business, cultural and other relations with Asia.

And we have great potential to build on those resources in the future through Asian language training in our schools and through greater awareness within our wider community of the scope for regional interaction.

We also have a great opportunity to develop the extensive educational links that have already been built up throughout the region. For example, there are now nearly 70,000 students from Asia studying in Australia, representing around eighty per cent of all foreign students here. Nearly 200,000 people living in East Asia have been educated in

Australian universities since the beginning of the Colombo Plan in 1950. And more young Australians are now studying in Asia each year.

These are critically important personal ties which we aim to further encourage and develop. They are also ties that relate directly to the high ambitions of the Fulbright Program for broader and for more direct contact between the peoples of different countries.

Conclusion

Senator William Fulbright was a proud American. He was also, in a very real sense, a citizen of the world.

Tonight, we honour his service to public life in the United States. We celebrate the world-wide achievements over fifty years of the educational exchange program which he initiated. And we recognise the ongoing relevance of his vision in a world that is very different to the one he knew and in which relations between nations, regions and people are changing very rapidly.

But above all, we celebrate tonight the power of an idea : the idea that through direct exchanges between the people of different countries and through direct experience of different cultures, people around the world could learn to focus more on the things that unite them than those that divide them - and so make the world a better and safer place.

Senator Fulbright once described the pattern of international educational exchanges which he initiated as "a modest program with an immodest aim".

He knew its idealism. He recognised the difficulties it faced. But he never lost faith in its constructive power - and nor should we.