

LABOR'S FOREIGN POLICY

Address by the Hon Gareth Evans QC, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the Rotary International World Understanding Month Dinner, Noble Park, 15 February 1996

This election comes at a critically important time for Australia in world and regional affairs. We are, as we all know and can sense, living through one of the greatest periods of change the world has ever known, and it's a period in which we simply have to constantly position ourselves to shape the world and the region in ways that protect and advance Australia's national interests.

It is a period which is extraordinarily exciting, one in which it is possible to see the previously unseeable and imagine the previously unimaginable - to grasp for ourselves and our children what was previously out of reach.

We can see the Asia Pacific region, the most dynamic in the world, but until recently the most protected, working now towards the complete elimination of trade barriers, with all that potentially means is massive income gains for Australians.

We can see the countries of the Asia Pacific region, traditionally among the world's most mutually hostile, agreeing now to work towards achieving security with each other, rather than against each other.

We can see - if not it happening, at least the possibility of - a United Nations that is reformed and re-equipped to meet the challenges of the new century.

We can see a world well on its way to eliminating chemical weapons, and we can now imagine a world completely free of nuclear weapons.

We can see, we can imagine, all these things. But we can do more than that: we can actually help to make them happen. The task for Australia in 1996 is really to grab that opportunity, now and in the years ahead.

In foreign affairs and trade, this election as a consequence really comes down quite simply to a choice between continuing to make things happen, and turning

the clock

[V/96]

back. I know that, this being election time, you will be expecting me to be speaking in pugnacious political mode rather than my more normal dulcet statesman mode. So let me not disappoint you. This election comes down to a very clear choice between, on the one hand, a team of proven leadership, vision, stamina, and professionalism - and, on the other hand, the others!

I think I can fairly claim that Labor's team - the Prime Minister, Bob McMullan, and myself - and before that Bob Hawke, Bill Hayden, and a number of others, have brought three key attributes to our conduct of foreign policy: vision, style and results, and we also have a clear ongoing agenda. So let me discuss each of those elements in turn.

Vision. The first key attribute that Labor has brought to managing Australia's foreign relations is our vision - our clearly articulated ideas about Australia's place in the region, and the world, of the 1990s and beyond.

We've been in office through a period, as I began by saying, of really quite extraordinary change - in the world, with the end of the Cold War, and in the region, with the emergence of East Asia as the fastest growing region in the world. We've been in office, moreover, at a time when the communications and information technology revolutions have been fundamentally changing the way in which businesses, governments, and peoples around the world have been relating to each other. And throughout that period of change we've had, and have been articulating, what can fairly be described as very clear headed and realistic understanding of Australia's national interests, and how they might best be advanced and protected.

We have defined those interests first of all in very traditional ways, as geo-political and strategic interests on the one hand, economic interests on the other. But we've gone further than that. We've added a third dimension, to reflect the rapidly growing sense of international interdependence which has been one of the real characteristics of the 1980s and 1990s: that's our national interest in being, and being seen to be, a good international citizen. This means, basically, being willing to grapple cooperatively with other countries, and in institutions like the UN, with a series of problems and issues which are inherently worth resolving,

but which are for the most part beyond the capacity of any one country to resolve alone: problems like cross-border environment issues, refugee problems, terrorism, drug trafficking, health pandemics like AIDS, and a great many human rights problems.

Generally, we've tried to build our foreign policy in a way which recognises that while we have a number of assets that we can deploy in the pursuit of these interests (and I'll come to those in a moment when I talk about the style of Australian foreign policy), we also have to recognise our limitations. As a middle power, nor a great power, not a major power, we don't have the clout militarily, economically or politically, to rely on anything other than our capacity to persuade - a capacity which is often best applied by building coalitions of the like-minded. But even then one can't do this across an endlessly wide front: we have to be selective in the kind of issues that we deal with.

So the sustaining model which emerges, when you pull those elements together, is of Australia as a middle power with a strong Asia Pacific orientation, pursuing confidently, actively and (as necessary) selectively, clearly defined interests - geopolitical and strategic, economic and good international citizenship in character - and pursuing those interests at global, regional and bilateral levels as appropriate.

The essence of this approach is that one doesn't react to situations, or doesn't proactively generate initiatives, on a willy-nilly, ad hoc basis. One tries rather to develop a sense of how everything fits together: which issues are rational and productive for Australia to pursue - and, just as importantly, which are the issues to which it doesn't make sense for us to allocate priority effort and resources.

The vision that I am talking about is what I have tried very hard to articulate in a series of published writings, including the book on *Australia's Foreign Relations*, now in a second edition; the "Blue Book" so called on *Cooperating for Peace* which was launched at the UN in 1993, and which has become something of a reference work internationally on the UN's peace and security role; and a number of published articles, including in the US journal *Foreign Policy* last year on "Cooperative Security and Intrastate Conflict" which won the Grawemeyer Prize for Ideas Improving World Order.

So we do know what we want to do. We do know how we want to get there. We do know how to prioritise our resources to maximise our influence. And we've been spelling all that out in detail over and over again. I don't want to be too rude

about this, but I think if you ask Alexander Downer for his conceptual framework for Australian foreign policy, I think he'll have to say that the dog ate it!

Style. Labor has the vision. It has the conceptual framework. But it also has what it takes to achieve that vision, what I like to call the style of foreign policy. Achievements such as APEC's regional commitment to free trade by 2020 don't just happen. They have to be made to happen. But what are the qualities that enable things to happen? Two things in particular - and they are two big assets that Australia has been conspicuously deploying.

The first requirement, and the first asset which we are, universally I think, acknowledged to possess, is creativity. Some examples:

- the concept of APEC itself which was initiated in 1989 and the subsequent development of APEC Leader's meetings, from which developed in turn the 2010/2020 free trade vision;
- the concept of an Asia Pacific regional security dialogue forum, modelled loosely on the CSCE (now OSCE - Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe);
- the UN peace plan for Cambodia;
- the concept of Indian Ocean regional cooperation, to be developed initially through so-called "second track" strategies;
- the endgame devised for the Chemical Weapons Convention negotiations;
- the concept of "cooperative security" as the sustaining theme of a post-Cold War UN peace and security agenda;
- the concept of the "East Asian Hemisphere" as a way of describing the region of which we are a part, but without going so far as to insist that we are a "part of Asia" or a "part of East Asia", which both Asians and Australians find counter-intuitive;
- the approach to regional and bilateral security embodied in the Australia Indonesia Mutual Security Agreement signed just before Christmas; and

- the idea of the Canberra Commission as a means of advancing the achievement of a nuclear weapons free world.

The second big requirement, apart from creativity, is energy and stamina - sheer hard work sustained persistently over long periods of time. I think we have amply demonstrated our capacity to do just that.

There are some other critical components in the style of Australian diplomacy under Labor. We have been activist - working with like minded people around the region and the world to build new institutions and to encourage the kind of international behaviour that will make the world a better place obviously for Australians. We have been engaged. Under no previous Government have ministers developed such extensive ties with their counterparts and relevant sectors in Asia. We took the deliberate decision that if we wanted Australians to think differently about Asia, we had to take the lead, establish the dialogue, open the doorways to practical cooperation. We have been, I think I could reasonably claim, articulate. If you want to know what this Government's vision is, it will be said you can find in the books, the speeches, the articles which litter the landscape and do spell it all out. And we have been inclusive - drawing on the expertise and strength of Australian industry, unions and academics; making sure our policy does pass the test of critical scrutiny from experts. With one or two inevitable exceptions, I think we have passed that test.

Record. What about the results achieved by all this? I think we can credibly claim a great deal in the region, bilaterally and globally. Let me take each in turn.

Under Labor, Australia really has become fully enmeshed as a political and economic player in the Asia Pacific region, where the action internationally now is. First of all with APEC: an Australian initiative in 1989, and now firmly cemented as the key regional body for enhancing the economic development of the Asia Pacific region. It is worth remembering that when Australians last voted at a federal election, Asia Pacific regional leaders had never met together to discuss common regional concerns. But thanks to the initiative of Paul Keating, APEC summits have now in that short space of time become fixed items on our regional calendar.

Secondly, the Asean Regional Forum (ARF): not as well known as APEC but already becoming the key forum for addressing and enhancing Asia Pacific security. Let's again not forget that when Australians last voted, there had never

been a meeting of regional countries, all the key players, to discuss common security issues. In July 1990 I made the suggestion at the ASEAN Dialogue Forum, along with my Canadian counterpart, that there should be such a dialogue - informal, confidence building, cooperative in character. The Opposition, I recall, pooh-poohed the idea at the time, but it was - after a cautious start - taken seriously in the region. In July 1994 the first meeting was held, with another one last year, and a third ministerial meeting coming up later this year. The process is evolving and advancing.

Of course it's the case that security relations between the major powers in our region - the US, Japan, China, Russia - will continue to define much of the region's security environment, and old fashioned realist power balancing has by no means run its course. But there is growing support for running, alongside that, trust and confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy and cooperative non-proliferation strategies: there is real potential to strengthen cooperative approaches to security in all these respects. Last year's meeting, for example, did a great deal to defuse the tensions that had been at that stage rapidly building up in the South China Sea issue.

Cambodia is another regional success story for Australia. This was not just an internal issue, horrific as it there was, but a regional security issue because it involved all the key regional players as sponsors or patrons or participants in one way in the conflict, and of course the global superpowers as well. I am very proud to have taken up the work that was started, admirably, by Bill Hayden, to bring about the international solution that did eventually deliver Cambodia from those two decades of horror, giving it the ability to elect a democratic government so that the Cambodian peoples could determine their own fate, free of external influence, free of Khmer Rouge terror. Whatever they're making of that freedom at the moment - there are always disappointments along the way when countries are struggling to throw off experiences of this kind - there is no doubt the country is now working out its own destiny free of those other horrific constraints.

No one individual can take credit for all that. But Australia did undoubtedly play a crucial role, in particular through producing and selling diplomatically the so-called 'Red Book' in January 1990 which broke the deadlock, shaped the final settlement, and created conditions for peace. I can't help but recall throughout the long years we were working on the peace process the chorus of cynics, particularly on the Opposition side, led by Senator Hill who was then the Shadow

Minister, who guffawed and carped and insisted that it couldn't be done: right up until the time that we did it.

In the South Pacific sub region within the Asia Pacific, Australia has continued to play a leadership role, perhaps best demonstrated at the last South Pacific Forum here in Brisbane in 1994 when Paul Keating, with major input from Gordon Bilney, really did win the acceptance around the region for a new, much more mature, approach to our cooperative partnership: one which dealt far more systematically than hitherto with the problems of managing micro-economies, of creating sustainable economic environments, in societies coping at the same time with very real challenges of international economic impact.

We have, moreover, in the context of France's testing in the South Pacific, been key players in mobilising and supporting the opposition to that - as earlier we were the architect of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone itself, now at long last about to be signed by the US, UK and France.

What has the Opposition to say about all these regional issues? It is reasonable to query the extent of the Opposition's commitment. There has been none of the hard yards put into becoming involved with the countries, with the key players of the region, that has been characteristic of so many individual ministers in this Labor government. The truth of the matter is that - with the partial exception of Tim Fischer, who has strived hard over the years to make some acquaintances and develop some relationships in South and South East Asia - it just is the case that the Opposition leadership team in foreign affairs doesn't know the region, and is not known by it, certainly to the extent necessary if we are going to continue the kind of progress that we've made. Alexander Downer made clear on television the other night how much ground he has to make up when he couldn't name the current Prime Minister of Thailand.

To make up for that very obvious deficiency, John Howard has been taking recently to listing all the Coalition's great achievements in Asia. He has been harking back to the Colombo Plan in 1950, the trade treaty signed with Japan by Black Jack McEwen in 1957, and Malcolm Fraser's Pacific Economic Cooperation Council in 1980. All of them, I frankly acknowledge, were very worthy achievements for their time. But they are hardly evidence of a contemporary feel for the reality of the region, which has made an art form of rapid, ceaseless change. Of course, in any of these lists of Coalition achievements in Asia, one will search in vain for any reference to the tragic miscalculation of

Vietnam.

Alexander Downer is making the same mistake. In his Young Liberals address last month, he had this really rather extraordinary thing to say about the Coalition's attitude to Asia. He said this:

It was through our close links with the US, UK and France that we [that is, the conservative Australian government of the day] were able to exercise more influence over the destiny of South East Asia between thirty and forty years ago than we do today. Everyone has been conveniently persuaded to forget that today.

But surely the whole point of the changes that have swept the region is that it is absolutely not the role of Australia, let alone the US, UK or France, to exercise "influence over the destiny" of South East Asia. South East Asia has changed. It perceives itself, and others perceive it very differently from that. Only it seems the Liberal Party hasn't changed.

But we've seen in all of this, and in many other statements, that there is a kind of old thinking in the Coalition of a kind that really does worry leaders and commentators around the Asia Pacific region. This sentiment was expressed very cogently in the Singapore Business Times for example, on 10 October last year, two days after John Howard made his big speech about defence in which he raised the spectre again of the threats from the north:

Perhaps Mr Howard is again out to stoke up a little paranoia about Australia's immediate northern neighbours to buttress his voter support among Australians of European descent. He should know that strutting around like this would only make him open to attack about his credibility if he does gain office...How is he going to deal with South East Asian leaders?

This is a question I think that has to be answered. It is the case that Asian leaders will immediately see John Howard for what he is: a man of the past; a man who is not comfortable with Asia; a man the likes of whom simply hasn't strutted the world stage since - well, since the last time a Coalition governed Australia.

Of course Alexander Downer may not be going to have the same problem, because he told us in an interview recently that he is not going to spend nearly as

much time overseas as I do! This is an original approach, it has to be acknowledged, for a Foreign Minister.

Our bilateral ties are something to which we give an enormous amount of weight and attention to as part of our larger strategy of engagement in the region and indeed other parts of the world as well. We've been regularly lashed for our alleged indifference, or incomplete enthusiasm, for that part of the foreign policy equation: Mr Howard has regularly promised that greater priority will be given to bilateral relations, with Asia in particular.

At the outset on this, I do want to make the fairly obvious point that bilateral ties are not an end in themselves. One does not have good bilateral relations with another country merely for the sake of Good Relations. Good relations are no more than a means to protect or advance Australia's national interests, in the context of building peace and prosperity with the relevant region of the globe. All that said, of course bilateral relations are important, and under Labor we have been assiduously nurturing them right around the world, but particularly in the Asia Pacific region.

With Indonesia our bilateral relationship has obviously never been better, the demonstration of that being of course the mutual Security Agreement with Indonesia signed last year. Just two days before it was signed, of course, we had Alexander Downer saying that the Australia/Indonesia relationship was still in tatters; it hadn't improved over thirteen years in government; it was still full of difficulties! On East Timor let me just say very quickly now that the strength of our relationship with Indonesia has not in any way inhibited our capacity or our willingness to express our concerns. On the contrary, to the extent that anyone is going to be helpful and influential in advancing the cause of East Timorese people I think it can possibly be us.

As to Malaysia and Singapore, the character of our relationship I think hardly needs re-emphasis from me, in the aftermath of the very successful recent Prime Minister's visit. With Vietnam, we have amply demonstrated our understanding of the course of historical development of that country. We have not over-stated its economic significance, but it is difficult to understate its long term significance as a key player in our region. And here again, I have to say that John Howard has blown it very badly: in his stated unwillingness, shared by his Shadow Foreign Minister, to meet Do Muoi, the Communist Party Leader, and absolutely key figure in Vietnam at the moment, he has deeply insulted the

Vietnamese government in a way that simply won't be forgotten. And this is just a very silly set of priorities to be giving to our important international relationships.

With the United States, which we are again accused of neglecting, it is the case that our relationship is as warm and as positive and as constructive as I can ever recall it being. Moreover, it extends to both sides of the political sense and it will be perfectly sustainable whatever the future course US politics takes. It is a relationship that is strong right across, as you would expect, the political and strategic and the economic dimensions. It's so close that it does enable us to take on the United States where we believe this is demanded, as often, for example, in the context of the argument about economic protection by the US towards its grain growing farmers at the expense of ours. What we haven't done is confuse conceptually the nature of our relationship with the United States, and indeed the nature of our global responsibilities. We haven't confused the issues in the way, for example, that Tim Fischer has on so many occasions dangling the prospect of the Australian support for the Joint Facilities being used as some sort of bargaining ploy to trade off against our concerns with aspects of US trade policy.

With Japan, we have an extraordinarily fully rounded relationship, no longer just one dimensional economic, but very mature, very close, and very cooperative politically. With China, we have also a very sound long standing relationship with a country that is obviously already, but is going to become even more so, the giant of the region. If US growth continues, as it is likely to in the next two or three decades, by no more than about 2.5 per cent annually, and China continues at rather less than it is at the moment, say 7 per cent annually, then by 2020 the Chinese economy will be bigger than that of the United States. Now that's a huge development, and one that is making everybody in the region think about the possible consequences accordingly. But in our relationship with China, we haven't played the containment game: we are in the engagement business. The Chinese know that, understand it, and appreciate it as the only sensible business to be in.

With Papua New Guinea, which again we are periodically accused of neglecting, let me say just this. We have had a somewhat bumpy, rocky road to run, particularly over the last twelve months as Papua New Guinea has gone through a period of quite extraordinary economic difficulty, not to mention the continuing political difficulties involved in the Bougainville issue and related developments. We've got through that period in a way that has made the relationship, I believe,

stronger and more constructive than it's ever been. That was the feeling of all the participants at the Ministerial Forum meeting at Kavieng late last year. It was reflected in a letter which I received just before Christmas from the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sir Julius Chan, who said that the relationship between Australia and Papua New Guinea "has matured even further and risen to new levels of goodwill and mutual advantage". So those of you who might be minded to think that something has gone wrong in that particular relationship, please have regard for the evidence.

As for Europe, finally, it has been suggested that somehow we can't walk and talk and chew gum at the same time - that it must be a zero-sum gain; that our preoccupation with the Asia Pacific must be to the neglect of our relationship with Europe. Not true, as demonstrated by the agreement to negotiate, as has been proceeding at the moment, a major framework agreement on trade cooperation. And true, as demonstrated by a statement from the European Union on 31 January "Australia has sought to bring the country close to its Asian neighbours without diminishing the economic, political and cultural influence that is traditionally part of Europe".

That's all as to regional matters. As to our performance globally, I think it is again fair to say that Australia is a respected and influential player in global affairs. We do of course acknowledge, being the size we are and having the influence that we have, that we can only play on a selective niche basis. But we do have areas where we perceive ourselves capable of genuinely adding value. There are a great many global institutions in flux, and a great many in which a country like Australia, with our creative and energetic diplomacy, can make a difference.

I think UN Reform in all its different aspects will continue to be one area in which we will get runs on the board. The achievement so far I think has been to change a lot of vocabulary in the way in which governments and the UN itself talks about its role, and to get the agenda set. The real achievement of course will be down the track a little further as we implement that, and get a more professional structure and funding, and a Security Council better reflecting contemporary realities. I hope we will be able to pursue all this as a member of the Security Council, after the vote later this year.

Again globally we've played a significant role in the GATT, now the World Trade Organisation, with our convening of the Cairns Group of fair trading

agriculture countries being a very crucial dimension in the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round: so successful, in fact, that a few wounds are still being nursed by the Europeans about our effectiveness on that occasion.

With arms control and disarmament, we did play what is widely acknowledged to be a critical role in the endgame of the Chemical Weapons Convention. And we did play, whatever the Opposition might like to say to the contrary, a crucial leading role, acknowledged by the French government, in the campaign against nuclear testing: President Chirac is on the record acknowledging that. We were one of the countries at the forefront of the global extension achieved in May last year on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We have long been a key sponsor of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and I hope to be in a position within the next month or so to announce some further developments in that respect in the negotiations that are now proceeding in Geneva. And we have now embarked on possibly the most exciting and far sighted step of all: to map through the Canberra Commission the way to actual elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. This enterprise provoked the astonishing sight of Tim Fischer saying he would "scrap" the Canberra Commission, and Alexander Downer saying that - notwithstanding it was a "stunt" - the Coalition would "allow [it] to complete its report". A typical Coalition performance.

On environmental issues, apart from our role in negotiating conventions on biodiversity, climate change and hazardous waste, key achievements have been the banning of mining and oil drilling, effectively in perpetuity, in the Antarctic and the establishment of the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary.

On human rights we continue to make something around 500 inter-governmental representations each year on behalf of individuals and groups - almost certainly more than is done by any other country. We argue that human rights, as enshrined in the International Declaration Covenants, are universal values and should be honoured everywhere. I don't hesitate to raise these issues personally in meetings with foreign ministers, presidents and prime ministers: it can be done, politely but firmly. And when I say I raise these issues, I mean it: unlike Alexander Downer last year who claimed that he had raised these issues with visiting Foreign Minister Cam, and was immediately wrapped over the knuckles for his inaccuracy in a press release issued by the Vietnamese Embassy later that day.

More publicly and visibly, we have been prominent voices in advancing human right causes of great sensitivity, including the situations in East Timor, and

Burma/Myanmar. We have initiated significant human rights dialogues through visits to China and Vietnam. We helped establish the Independent National Commission on human rights in Jakarta. And against the protests, scepticism and downright cynicism of the Opposition (Malcolm Fraser personally, honourably, excepted), we played a key role in ending apartheid in South Africa, not least through our development and advocacy of the concept of financial sanctions.

Agenda for the Future. So much for the record to date. A good deal of the basic design work has been done and some of the architecture is in place, but a lot of the building remains to be done at both global and regional levels. There are nine broad areas I would identify as being central to the future agenda of the next Labor Government. The first five of them have a regional flavour, which reflects the emphasis Prime Minister Keating gave to regional themes in his Singapore lecture in January.

First, we will make further progress on regional trade liberalisation through APEC. Nobody doubts that the process of reconciling national interests, finding domestic consensus within eighteen separate economies and coordinating these efforts over time so as to maintain mutual confidence will be a huge test of regional commitment. But there is no better group to maintain the momentum than the leadership of this Labor Government.

Secondly, we will press ahead with further action on the Asia Pacific security agenda, through strategies designed to build trust and confidence, develop preventive diplomacy and prevent weapons proliferation. The ARF process has got off to a good start, but it needs constant nurturing, tending and stimulating.

Thirdly, we will press ahead to win greater recognition of the urgent environmental agenda in the Asia Pacific. As Paul Keating said in his Singapore Lecture last month, we will need to see protection of the environment in the Asia Pacific, not as an alternative to economic growth, but as the only thing that will ensure its continuation, and we will be seeking to ensure that environmental issues really are fully integrated into APEC's work in a way that is not the case so far.

Fourthly, I want to develop further acceptance of the concept of the "East Asian Hemisphere" as a way of describing the larger region, embracing East Asia, of which we are a part - but doing so in a way which articulates our sense of belonging to it without in any way at the same time undermining the larger

significance of the Asia Pacific region, or the relevance of the regional entities of the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean as part of our repertoire as well.

Fifthly, I want to continue to do a lot of work on Indian Ocean regional cooperation, something that we began last year at our large inaugural Forum in Perth in conjunction with the West Australian Government: a very cooperative meeting which set going a whole new agenda to take advantage of new realities. These realities are that South Africa has joined the real world; India since 1991 has joined the international community economically by coming out of its very inward looking shell; and we have the potential, with the triangle including Australia as a base, of really getting some momentum and dynamism into that region. The main emphasis is necessarily economic, but this has potential to stretch out into all sorts of other areas of cooperation including security cooperation as well.

Sixth, on the global agenda for the future will concentrate in the first instance on our nuclear disarmament objectives, working obviously to try and improve negotiations on the CTBT nuclear test ban treaty by the middle of this year, and beyond that, working through the Canberra Commission to mark out a practical strategy for the really big objective, and the one that's absolutely crucial if we are to win on non-proliferation, and that's the actual elimination, the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the world.

We will be making, seventh, continuing efforts to achieve reform of the United Nations, in particular using as the vehicle for that our hope for membership of the Security Council from the latter part of this year.

Eighth, we will be seeking to build momentum towards enough progress in the trade area to launch a new round of global multilateral trade negotiations. Bringing the Uruguay Round itself to a successful conclusion. It is a huge task, with still some implementation and further development of that to occur, but it's already necessary to begin planning for the new round of negotiations. We are looking to the inaugural Ministerial Review Conference in Singapore later this year as the vehicle for advancing that.

Finally, in the agenda for the future, we will continue to make maximum bilateral efforts to achieve improved market access and penetration for Australian goods, not only in the region, but around the world. Our economic focus, let me emphasise, has never been just on the global WTO basket, or the regional APEC

basket. Always bilateral market access efforts and promotional efforts have been crucial: that job will never cease and nor has it ever ceased.

Let me conclude by saying then just this. One of the bizarre elements of this campaign in 1996 is the extraordinary way in which the current Leader of the Opposition is trying to pass himself off as Gough Whitlam. He is seeking to suggest that after thirteen years in the wilderness - and let me tell you that is a lot shorter time than twenty-three years! - the Liberals feel that "It's Time" for a change of Government. Well, let me tell you: I knew Gough Whitlam. I worked with Gough Whitlam. And John Howard is not Gough Whitlam.

Some of you may be unkind enough to say that that's no bad thing! But for present purposes, when it comes to foreign policy, I think there is real point to be made about the comparison. John Howard has definitely not erected anything like the foreign policy framework, a real watershed in this country's history, which was clearly formulated, argued out, and implemented, as the most lasting political legacy of Gough Whitlam.

Of course the world has changed, dramatically, since that time in the early 1970s, and with it the need to rethink and reshape the framework of Australian foreign policy. We can credibly say that we have done that - repositioned Australia in the region and the world in accordance with that new framework with spectacular success.

But the question that really has to be asked is to whether all of this will really continue to be possible with a change of government:? It is really within the capacity of John Howard and his foreign policy team, Alexander Downer and Tim Fischer? Can they answer with anything other than platitudes the question: 'What is Australia's place in the region and the world?'

Gough Whitlam set a trend: he was a strong foreign policy Prime Minister. Those who have followed him into the Lodge - and I include Malcolm Fraser as well as Bob Hawke and Paul Keating - have all been strong foreign policy Prime Ministers. The truth of the matter is that John Howard would be a weak foreign policy Prime Minister. And that's not what's needed at this stage in our nation's history.

Please stick with the strength.