

Just over three years ago, hon. members of this House joined in a welcome to Mr. Curtin's predecessor in office. Mr. Menzie's visit came at a time before Pearl Harbour, before the territory of the United States had been wantonly attacked, and before the militaristic ambitions of a belligerent Japan had created a menace to freedom throughout the whole of the Pacific area.

Mr. Curtin assumed the office of Prime Minister at a very critical moment in the fortunes of his country, and at a time when no one could foretell how widespread would be the limits of Japanese aggression in the Western Pacific. It is a high tribute to him, both as a man and as a leader of the people of Australia, that the war effort of the Commonwealth of Australia was developed to so great an extent. Australia had not only to defend her own shores - which more than once suffered under enemy air attacks - but she had also to help in driving out the Japanese enemy from his entrenched points of strategy in the island outposts of the western Pacific. This latter has been a grim task, from which the armed forces of Australia have never flinched.

In paying tribute to the successes of Australian arms in this jungle warfare of New Guinea and New Britain,