



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA AND AUSTRALIA EXPAND THEIR UNTROUBLED RELATIONS

Remarks by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, to the Australian National Press Club, Canberra, on September 3, 1976.

...I have looked forward with a good deal of anticipation to my trip to Australia....

High-level visits in either direction are perhaps not as frequent as would be indicated by the closeness of our relations and by the many interests we have in common. I am particularly glad that we had the privilege of welcoming Prime Minister Fraser to Canada during the Olympics and that we could show him something of our country.

But, although the vast reaches of the Pacific tend to keep us apart physically, these distances are less important than the ties that bind us together.

English is spoken, albeit with a somewhat different accent, in both our countries. We value the same historical and cultural links that attach us to Europe and the Commonwealth. Our political systems are built upon the same model of parliamentary democracy that in the modern world seems to be the exception rather than the norm. Australians and Canadians take pride and care to preserve and continue the traditions that are dedicated to freedom and human dignity.

With large territories to develop, Australia and Canada have both evolved flexible federal structures to respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of our peoples, although my friends of the working press often seem to remain unconvinced. As full-fledged industrialized and consumer nations, we both have to meet the challenges of a modern, advanced, and complex society. Our two countries are rich in natural resources that account for a large part of our wealth. Yet we both remain dependent upon foreign capital and technology to exploit these rich resources. The increased pressures put on our governments to deal skilfully with this dependence are familiar to both of us.

It has for some time been my view that our common interest in the Pacific has not played a large enough role in our bilateral relations. This is an important reason for my visit here, during which I hope to gain some valuable insights from my hosts on the general

political and economic situation in the Pacific as seen from the Australian perspective.

As you may be aware, following an extensive foreign-policy review concluded by my Department in 1970, Canada has embarked on an active program of diversifying its external relations. The countries of the Pacific rank high on the list of countries with which we wish to intensify our relations. Thus, my current tour of Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand and now Australia is intended to carry forward the momentum that has been created in the past few years -- a momentum evident from the increasing number of Canadians that come to this region on private or official business --, and by our expanding trade with this part of the world.

I think our interest in this is clear. Canada has for many years been directly involved in the peace and security of the Pacific region. Our role in the Korean War and our long years of participation in the Indochina peace and supervisory commissions have testified to our interest, as well as to our willingness to play a role appropriate to our circumstances.

This attitude has not changed. We continue to follow events closely, and we are concerned by the tensions that persist after the conclusion of the war in Vietnam. Accordingly, I raised the topic of regional security in my discussion with government leaders in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Wellington. On the basis of these talks, I have been confirmed in my belief that there are opportunities to foster trends that may lead to greater stability, despite the uncertainties that exist.

Canada shares with Australia the view that regional co-operation can be an important source of stability and of economic development. During my stay in Indonesia and Malaysia, I reconfirmed to my hosts that Canada strongly supported the principles and goals of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. I expressed the view that ASEAN's willingness to accept as members other countries in the region that subscribed to its principles was a welcome indication of its flexibility, even though I recognized that there were no immediate candidates for membership.

To express our support for ASEAN in concrete terms, I announced in Jakarta that Canada was contemplating development assistance for regional projects identified by the five member countries. I also indicated to my hosts in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur Canada's willingness to formalize the dialogue between ASEAN and Canada.

In addition to our support to ASEAN, Canada has also offered bila-

teral development assistance. Indeed, our development-assistance program in Indonesia is one of the largest we have in the world.

These, then, are some of the steps Canada has taken to give effect to our desire to play a more active role in the affairs of the Pacific area. Furthermore, we are currently examining the development of more imaginative instruments of economic co-operation with the developing countries of the region. I consider that such instruments should be designed to strengthen ASEAN as a whole, as well as the individual member states.

Canada has followed with interest the initiatives Australia has taken in this regard. For some years, of course, our officials have kept in touch with each other to ensure that our economic assistance projects complemented each other, and served our shared objective: to contribute to growing prosperity in the region, which, in my view, is an essential element of political stability.

As a Western nation, situated in the Pacific, Australia enjoys a unique vantage-point from which to view, and to take part in, developments in the region. I have, therefore, found my talks with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Peacock and his colleagues very timely, and highly informative. I have found it useful to compare notes with my hosts on the various ways in which we can foster the idea of regional co-operation, as well as on the various possibilities that are open to us to expand our bilateral relations with Asian and Pacific countries in general.

Canadians have been impressed by the way in which Australia is moving to establish firm links with their prominent neighbours. The recent visit to China and Japan by Prime Minister Fraser, only a short time after forming his Government, clearly demonstrated the importance Australia attached to its relations with these two key countries. The successful conclusion of the basic Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation between Australia and Japan, which Prime Minister Fraser signed in Tokyo, is, in my view, a significant development, indicative of a new pattern of relations that is emerging throughout the Pacific region.

I have also noted with interest the recent visit of Prime Minister Fraser to the United States, as it is important to Canada that the co-operative relation between two of our closest friends continue undiminished. Moreover, Canada holds the view that enhanced security and growing stability in the Pacific can be ensured only if the United States continues to play a vigorous role and takes an active part in shaping events. The key position of Japan should also be mentioned. By virtue of its great economic strength, it can play a

crucial part in fostering the growing prosperity I described a moment ago as an essential element of peace and stability.

I think you will agree that, if we add up the elements of the complex situation in the Pacific area, we do not get a well-defined picture. The long-range intentions of some of the players are not clear, and unfavourable developments in the world economic situation could make attempts to encourage economic development more difficult. However, there is some ground for hope that all of the parties concerned have an interest in maintaining the current equilibrium.

Clearly, in a climate of cautious hope along with an enduring measure of uncertainty, it is to our mutual advantage to keep in close touch on questions affecting events in the Asian and Pacific region. I consider that my current round of talks with Foreign Minister Peacock and his cabinet colleagues serves the useful purpose of expanding this element of our bilateral relations. As I see it, there is room for greater co-operation in the development of our respective policies towards the Asian and Pacific region and we might well find it beneficial to use our existing links more intensively to do so.

Such co-operation can also stand us in good stead in multilateral forums, and, indeed, I think we have an excellent record of consultation and co-operation. Perhaps two examples will serve to illustrate this point.

At the Law of the Sea Conference, we are now wrestling with issues that are among the most difficult and the most controversial that the international community has ever faced. As major coastal states with vast continental shelves, Australia and Canada have many interests in common, and we share a similar outlook on many of them. Our two delegations have co-operated closely to work for acceptance of new concepts, such as the economic zone, the rights of coastal states with respect to the continental shelf, and the regime that should govern the deep sea bed. Such co-operation has been greatly facilitated by the easy and informal channels of communication that, happily, are so much a part of the fabric of our relations.

We can, and do, draw on this same mutual understanding in connection with another set of crucial negotiations in which our two countries are involved. I am referring, of course, to the Conference on International Economic Co-operation. As you may know, Australia and Canada are represented on different committees, and we work together closely on the many questions that are of fundamental interest to us. In view of the important decisions that face us in the CIEC, and my own efforts together with my fellow co-chairman, Dr. Perez Guerrero, to

move the dialogue forward, I have found my talks on this subject with Mr. Peacock particularly useful.

I am sure you will agree that Australia and Canada have taken good advantage of their healthy and trouble-free relations. But I think it is important to avoid being complacent. The world is ever increasing in complexity, and even old and trusted partners should be alert to new opportunities that may add to their traditional links.

In the field of trade, for example, we have always been quick to take advantage of one another's markets for an ever-increasing range of goods, from industrial raw materials, on the one hand, to highly-sophisticated manufactures, on the other. We have both taken care that the formal framework for this exchange keeps pace with changing conditions so that no opportunities should be lost for even closer commercial relations. The result, I believe, has been a continued and useful awareness of each other's skills and abilities.

But there is a need for more. I am thinking, for instance, of an increase in the exchange of information on our respective domestic scenes. We have gone through a period when some of our most cherished assumptions concerning economic progress and the need to move to even higher standards of living have been severely tested. Goals and objectives are changing. In response, both our governments are giving a great deal of thought to the direction in which our societies should be moving. Although your responses and ours may differ, I think we can learn and perhaps derive inspiration from each other.

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