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FIFTEENTH ANNUAL

JOHN CURTIN MEMORIAL LECTURE

AUSTRALIA AND THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Bruce Grant

Australian National University

1985

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Printed and published at:  
SOCPAC Printery  
The Research Schools of Social Sciences  
and Pacific Studies  
H.C. Coombs Building, ANU

1985 The Australian National University

ISSN 0814-8554  
ISBN 0 86784 751 4

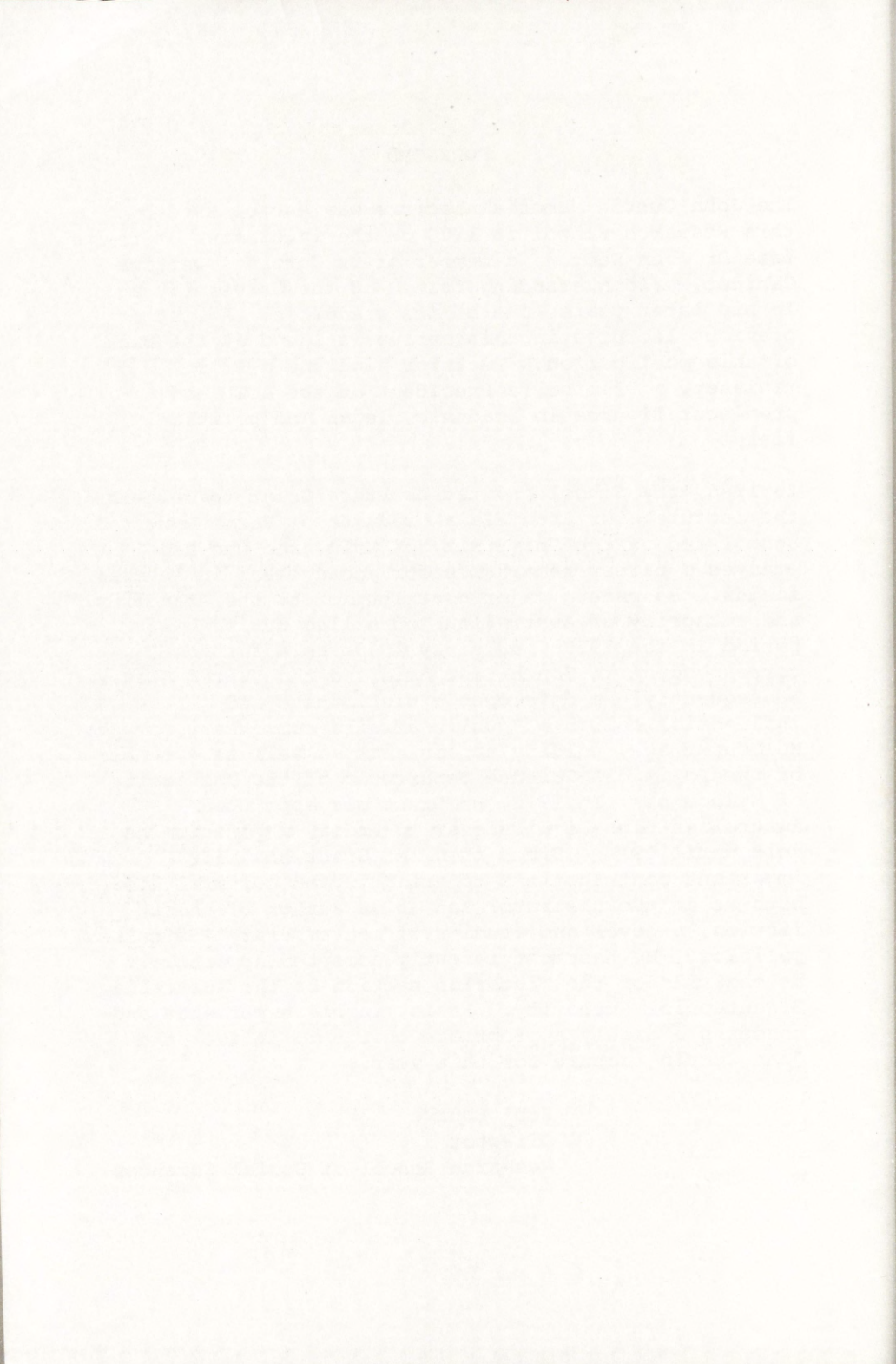


## FOREWORD

The John Curtin Memorial Lecture was established by this Research School in 1970 on the initiative of the late Dr John Dedman, a member of Mr Curtin's wartime Cabinet, a long standing friend of the University and, in his later years, one of its graduates. A list of previous lectures in this series is found at the back of this publication. Lecturers include a Prime Minister, a Premier, a President of the ACTU and prominent figures in academic, legal and political fields.

In 1985, the School invited Mr Bruce Grant to deliver the lecture. Mr Grant is a graduate of Perth Modern School and of the University of Melbourne who has enjoyed a career remarkable for achievement in several fields. He made a major contribution to the standards and authority of Australian journalism during his period in the 1950s and early 1960s as a foreign correspondent in South-East Asia and the United States. Subsequently, he developed a distinctive and influential column of public affairs commentary for the Melbourne Age, holding appointment as well as a member of the Political Science Department of the University of Melbourne. In 1973, Mr Grant was appointed Australian High Commissioner to India, a position he held until 1976. Since then, Mr Grant has made important contributions to artistic and cultural life both as an administrator and as an author of short fiction, a novel and studies of contemporary Australian politics. He has most recently accepted appointment as chairman of the Victorian section of the Australian Bicentennial Authority. He is, in his experience and concerns a highly appropriate choice to deliver the John Curtin Lecture for this year.

Paul Bourke  
Director  
Research School of Social Sciences





## AUSTRALIA AND THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Bruce Grant  
23 October 1985

Why did Australia fail in the twentieth century to live up to the expectation of those Australians who in the nineteenth century saw their country becoming one of the great progressive forces of history?

'The dream that failed' has caught the imagination of many thoughtful Australians, especially as the bicentenary approaches. Is it a celebration or an occasion for repentance?

In this lecture tonight I wish to concentrate first on two staples of nationhood - defence and the economy - without which a nation's vision becomes a mirage. In these two areas changes are slow. What we order now for our defence, what we undertake now in the way of any structural readjustment to our economy, will not begin to show until the 1990s.

Thus, the choice of topic - and especially of title - for this lecture was intended to provide an opportunity to discuss the present in Australia rather than the future, drawing attention to the possibility that in the broad terms in which these developments can be considered in a lecture, the twenty-first century is almost here.

Indeed, if we tonight take a moment to imagine ourselves in the beginning of the twenty-first century, we could easily convince ourselves that it will not be much different from now; perhaps scarcely different at all. Our population in 2,000 will be 19-20 million. We will still have, in other words, too small a market, without tariffs or subsidies of some kind, to sustain a motor car industry or a film industry, unless we seek a different motor car or film industry.

The skyline of Sydney and Melbourne will have a few more tall, thin buildings, but still about the same as medium size cities in the south and mid-west of the United States. The gentrification of inner suburbs may slow, as middle class families move back to the familiarity of the middle suburbs, but the move towards inner city living will probably go on for reasons of work and play.

There will be a new Parliament House in Canberra, just as, eventually, there was a lake. So Canberra continues to grow and take settled shape and begin to look like a capital city, but the change is slow and easily accommodated.

The States of Australia will be no different except that the Northern Territory will be added to the list. They will be no different in character nor in their physical appearance. New money will continue to emerge in Queensland or Western Australia, but Sydney and Melbourne will remain in control, because it is in Sydney and Melbourne that the international economy is plugged into Australia.

Party politics will be the same, a contest between Labor and variations in the Liberal-National alliance. We may have another university, a private one, but probably not. The media, dress, eating habits - it seems to me likely that when Australia enters the twenty-first century, nothing familiar to us now will have disappeared, and nothing unfamiliar appeared.

In other words, no future shock!



Someone will say, 'This is excessively pragmatic'; and it is. No doubt a more imaginative person could paint a different picture, and it might be more exciting, although it might also be terrifying. Nevertheless, my own experience and current instinct lead me in the direction of an Australia relatively unchanged.

In one sense, this is a leap of faith, because nuclear war threatens us all with a transformed landscape, urban and rural. After the hullabaloo of the twentieth century, such pragmatism may even seem utopian.

The twentieth century has been a violent century for everyone, not just for emerging Australia. From the Treaty of Vienna in 1815 to the outbreak of World War I stretched one hundred years of relative peace, in the sense of absence of major wars. From 1914 until now has been a succession of conflict and upheaval - war, revolution, depression, war, revolution, nationalist turmoil, the nuclear age, terrorism.

Twentieth century Australians reacted by hanging on to what they had - the Empire, colonialism, western civilisation - rather than searching for a new society.

The expectations of the early Australian nationalists were probably unrealistically high, nurtured by all the progressive assumptions of the nineteenth century, arraigned against the solid conservative assumptions of the same century. Isolated from competitive military and economic forces, Australia grew to nationhood in a benign atmosphere of peace and prosperity.

Those who became spokespeople for nationalism believed in the inevitability of progress and Australia's equally inevitable role in its vanguard. They assumed British military control of their region, economic development linked to the metropolitan power, and European world dominance.

Even before the full violence of the twentieth century erupted, the kind of society that the bush culture of nineteenth century Australia nourished as a nationalist ideal - of mateship and calling no biper 'Sir' - was being eroded by material progress, especially the railway which broke down the isolation of the bush balladists. As Lawson wrote of the vanished 'golden days':

'The flaunting flag of progress  
Is in the West unfurled,  
The mighty bush with iron rails  
Is tethered to the world.'

If one seeks a turning point, when the promise of Australian nationhood wilted, it would be World War I, when it also incautiously flowered. The nineteenth century nationalist vision was beginning in the period just before the war to be put in place, as we say now. The Australian Navy, the Commonwealth Bank, the planning of Canberra, the BHP iron and steel works: these were some crucial instruments of a developing nation.

However, the war gave us Gallipoli and a romantic myth about nationhood being forged on a foreign battlefield; it killed off our future leaders in the trenches and popped fields of France and Belgium;



it produced the conscription for overseas service issue, which split the Labor Party, losing Hughes and later Lyons, and ushered in the enormously Anglophile figure of Bruce; it gave Hughes as 'the Little Digger' the opportunity at Versailles to restate in its most popular and self-destructive form the Australian world view that it was a country for white people only.

And, of course, World War I brought communism as a national political force into the world, with the revolution in Russia in 1917. From that point, communism as a practical proposition for Australia became a political issue of the Left, and some of Labor's reforming zeal leached or bled to the Communist Party.

Another depression, preparations for another war, and Australia's dependence on Britain for military protection and for development capital remained no less than it had been after World War I. By the time of Curtin's death, we were nearly mid-way through the twentieth century, and there was more turmoil to come: the Cold War, while in the Asia-Pacific region nationalism and communism combined or competed to get rid of European colonialism.

John Curtin, whether he would have liked it or not, is seen as the Australian political leader responsible for the close military relationship with the United States since the Second World War, symbolised by the ANZAAS Treaty, signed at the half-way mark of this century.

I say 'whether he would have liked it or not', because Curtin did not himself see military power as a determinant of history. He took the underdog view that truth and justice would prevail over might. He was probably a pacifist by inclination and conviction. When he became Prime Minister, however, he had to deal with a pressing military situation and all the history behind it: our association with the British on far-flung battlefields always chosen by them or their adversaries and accepted by us with cries of duty and excitement; the mythical Asiatic hordes at last materialising in a recognisable powerful form and apparently intent on invading us; the Americans, representing the industrial and democratic twentieth century, available as an alternative to both.

When he turned to the United States for military assistance to protect us from Japan, offering them at the same time food and shelter and a base from which to launch the counter-attack, it was a decision without a choice, forced on him at the time by the total defencelessness of Australia. We now know that the Japanese military command was divided about the wisdom of continuing their spectacular drive southwards to the great island continent. They had captured South-east Asia, the archipelago linking the Indian and Pacific oceans, and, it was eventually decided, that was enough. It did not look like that to Australians at the time, however. When Darwin was bombed in February 1942, just a few days after Singapore fell, the exodus south, including military personnel, was a dramatic example of how ill prepared, disorganised, and, indeed, scared, we were.



For the next quarter of a century, until Saigon fell to the Vietcong in April 1975, and the Americans and their South Vietnamese allies scrambled for the helicopters and the evacuation ships waiting offshore, Australia followed a refinement of its expeditionary policy called 'forward defence'. This meant a concentration of Australian forces in the Asia-Pacific area, especially South-east Asia, alongside bigger British or American forces, and, in the case of SEATO and the various Commonwealth military arrangements relating to Malaya and Singapore, others as well.

Since Vietnam, and indeed before the fall of Saigon, because from the late 1960s the Americans were trying to withdraw, Australian governments have not been able to follow as clear and distinctive a defence policy as they did in the past. This is because they have been forced to come to terms with two profound questions which were never answered, or only superficially answered, previously.

One is whether Australia is capable of self-defence, not defence of our 'interests' or those of an ally in some situation outside this continent and its territorial waters, but actual defence of Australian territory by Australians. The other is our role in a nuclear age.

There was a time in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when some influential Australians proposed that Australia should have its own bomb. Only with a bomb of our own, they said, could we be truly independent in a nuclear age. And, incidentally, with a bomb of

our own, the mystery of the identity of those who threatened us would be solved, because an Australian bomb would no doubt have quickly produced its regional counterpart.

- Hardly a voice is now raised for an Australian bomb, and today we can argue that our responsibilities in hosting American facilities which could involve us in nuclear war entitle us to speak out on arms control and disarmament questions, sometimes not entirely to the liking of the United States, not to mention the French. In other words, we can concern ourselves with these great issues without being a party principal, as it were, by possessing nuclear weapons ourselves.
  
  - At the same time, a growing number of responsible voices are raised in asserting that the Australian continent is defensible by Australians and that there is no need to defend it by darting as spear-carrier to the chief at some potential adversary abroad. Australia's distance from major strategic events in the northern hemisphere, formerly seen as a kind of 'tyranny', is now an advantage, in that a modest defence effort, readily expandable in view of likely forewarning, offers a deterrent to actual attack on faraway Australia, and also is sufficient to give the public confidence that the country is secured. The latter is perhaps as important as the former.
- Each of these developments is encouraging.



If a break with the alliance is to be a realistic option, at some time in the future, the capacity to replace it must be there, not by seeking some other ally, like Japan or the Soviet Union, or even a lot of little allies, like our ASEAN neighbours, but, at least in the first instance, by having a singular capacity to meet the minimum demands of self-defence.

A capacity for self-defence is the minimum required of a nation which seeks a peaceful role of significance among other nations.

The danger of nuclear war has increased recently, because of the irresistible urge of military and political leaders to tamper with the sound notion that a nuclear war is unwinnable. Military establishments are now beginning to wonder whether their task is to prepare to avoid war or to prepare to win it.

As a nation whose time has yet to come, Australia must accept that it has a role to play in returning the minds of those in control of nuclear weapons, especially the two superpowers, to their central, peaceful task, which is to ensure that war, as a global conflict, never occurs again.

Were we in New Zealand's position, we might wish to pursue the option they have taken. The difference between Australia and New Zealand on the question of porting for nuclear warships is really the difference between a country which has a realistic option of not being involved in an exchange of nuclear weapons, and another, Australia, where the

option is a good deal less realistic. We already have facilities on our soil which could be targets in a nuclear exchange, and the addition of ships in our harbours adds less relatively to our vulnerability to attack than it does to New Zealand's.

Nevertheless, our political and strategic situation is quite different from that in Europe, where the lines are drawn and the pressures intense. There is greater autonomy in our region, and Australia as an American ally has more freedom than we would as a member of NATO.

In short, Australia has no need of nuclear military power and no pressure to acquire it. Our need is for a sophisticated national defence system of conventional arms, and for a foreign and economic policy directed at keeping the Asia-Pacific region as strategically relaxed and as politically dispersed as possible.

The public debate over what kind of economic system can deliver the dream of a new Australian society has shifted away from socialism in the twentieth century, as capitalism has demonstrated its powers of survival and regeneration.

When John Curtin was active in politics, nationalisation was the issue between those on the left, who believed in public enterprise, and those on the right, who believed in private enterprise. Today the issue between these two political groups is not nationalisation, but privatisation. The debate is no longer about government raiding the private sector, but about the private sector expanding into the domain of government.



It is fair comment - and many are making it - that this shift reflects a significant change in politics in those forty years. Nationalisation to privatisation means an 180 degree swing in political debate. But it is also possible to say that these two issues are part of the same debate, two sides of the same coin. The debate in Curtin's day was not really about whether or not to keep the system, but about how to make it work. The debate in Hawke's day is also not about the system, but about how to make it work. Nationalisation may have been an article of faith for some in John Curtin's Labor Party, but it arose as an issue because the private sector was not working well. The privatisation debate has arisen now because the public sector is not working well.

Privatisation may be an article of faith for some in John Howard's Liberal Party, but the issue has come to the forefront of debate today because the demands of the welfare state on government have become unbearable, in the sense that even maintaining the system has become difficult without increased revenue, and expanding it further has become impossible, because while the voting public may be pleased to accept benefits, it is not prepared to pay the price in taxes.

This problem remains for governments whether in America, where nationalisation has never been an issue, or in Britain, where it has been and privatisation is currently pushed most vigorously, or in France, where nationalisation is still an issue, or Sweden, Italy, India - indeed, in all those political and economic systems where private and

public enterprise coexist. What succeeds or fails, where and how interaction and mutual support occur, what the elements of stalemate are - these vary greatly from country to country, without endangering the general condition of coexistence.

In the Australian experience, nationalisation as a takeover of the private sector made more of an impact within the Labor Party than on the country itself, but public enterprise has a long and generally meritorious history. It is part of the Australian way of doing things, especially at the State level. Public enterprise has been responsible for major domestic services, like gas, electricity, water, sewerage, roads, railways. Monopolies exist which the private sector has shown no interest in trying to break. In banking and insurance, the State competes with private enterprise, as it does at federal level with air transport, radio and television.

Like deregulation, privatisation is an argument for risk capital and private entrepreneurship. But, like nationalisation, it has an obsessive, sloganistic quality about it, and a logical flaw. Do you take over public enterprises which are doing well, or which are doing badly? Do you privatise public monopolies only, turning them into private monopolies, or are competitive public enterprises on your list?

Telecom seems to be the target of most privatisation talk in federal politics, but when you look carefully at Telecom's operating budget, where it spent something like \$500 million last year in cross-subsidies to unprofitable services, one realises why much of the privatisation talk about Telecom has begun



to focus on particular functions - the profitable ones - rather than on the whole operation.

Privateers say the onus is on government to show that a public service is necessary. If a public service is doing well, however, the public may prefer the onus to be on those who want to take over. Philosophically, the two sides are poles apart. Public enterprise has social goals, which private enterprise does not claim for itself, and is accountable to a Minister or to Parliament. The takeover threat and the shareholders' meeting keep private enterprise on its toes.

It is a lively political debate which will do us all good. However, unless Australian history is a poor guide, it will get no further than the nationalisation debate. The effect of it will be to improve the efficiency of public enterprises with more interchange between managers from the private and public sectors. Without deregulation of the labour market, privatisation will only affect the margin of the economy, although it will no doubt penetrate the Liberal Party deeply.

It is a consideration for anyone contemplating Australia's future whether the capitalist system is on the verge of another breakdown or breakthrough, or both, to a new form. No one seems able to answer that question, least of all this lecturer. But we can say with some certainty that if Australia is to be an important part of the economy of the Asia-Pacific region, as so many are now saying it must, the role of government will be not weaker, but stronger. The notion of Australia as a small, free and dependent economy does not fit in with a future role in this region.

This is a region where government-to-government relations are primary, where economic relations, while predominantly private, must fit within overall government-devised plans and objectives, and often, carefully framed regulations. It is amusing to find South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore represented as power points of free market forces. They are the result rather of tight cooperation between autocratic government and controlled private sector, with trade union organisation and bargaining power being also tightly controlled. Their role in the international market is to contribute cheaply and efficiently to it according to priorities determined by government. In this they have followed the example of Japan.

Australia's private sector is not strong enough to compete in this kind of world without the backing of government. Our 'robber barons' can occasionally raid the stock exchange of the United States or Europe, but they will not be allowed to conquer Asia.

Government, at both Federal and State level, will need to work closely with the private sector and with the trade unions if the wide range of opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region are to be accepted. Public money up front, actual government participation in international consortia, the terms of foreign investment, the prices and incomes accord in Australia's case, not to mention considerations of foreign policy, immigration, defence, economic aid - these are the province of government.

In summary, if Australia is to avoid repeating the mistakes of the twentieth century, it needs to build up its own non-nuclear defence capacity as an



option to be available should the alliance with the United States become untenable, but not as a rejection of a deep and broad-based friendship with the United States. Alliances come and go. The closeness of Australians and Americans in so many respects will continue. Australia also needs to ensure that its economy is not deflected from its future task of finding markets and reciprocal financial and commercial benefits from arrangements with the countries of the Asia-Pacific. To do this, Australia cannot rely with confidence on small government and big market forces. Governments, whether Federal or State, must decide the priorities, help with the arrangements, and even sometimes provide part of the capital.

I have laid stress on the Australian experience and the Asia-Pacific region as nationalist and internationalist themes because each has had to struggle for recognition against the strong military, economic and cultural influence which Britain and now America have exercised over the emerging Australian nation and what it defines as security and prosperity, indeed, civilisation. An inordinate sense of alienation, first from the Australian continent itself and then from the geo-political regional environment, pervades our history.

The social critic and architect Robin Boyd expressed this in his own terms: 'The Australian ugliness begins with fear of reality, denial of the need for the everyday environment to reflect the heart of the human problem, satisfaction with veneer and cosmetic effects. It ends in betrayal of the element of love and a chill near the root of national self-respect.'

An acceptance of the Australian experience as more valid than any other in deciding our future direction, and an acceptance also that the region in which we live can be accommodated within this experience is the key to this elusive reality.

May I suggest that, if the staples of Australian nationhood need strengthening, our symbols need to be clarified before the twenty-first century.

It is now ten years since the Whitlam government was dismissed by the Governor General, and if you wish to find another example of how slowly change occurs, you might like to consider the case of constitutional reform. Except for the replacement of Senators who leave in mid-term with someone acceptable to their Party, nothing has been done to prevent a recurrence of the crisis of 1975. Of course, in a sense, it cannot happen again. There is only one first time. The shock of 1975 had the force of originality in the script, and the presence of strong actors, doing Othello, Macbeth and Richard III in their own interpretations. But in another sense, it will be easier the next time.

Opposition parties know that, provided they can create a sense of crisis, even a synthetic one, and force an election, they are likely to win that election if there is, at the time, broad dissatisfaction with the government, especially on economic grounds. The possibility that they can stop money bills twice a year creates a permanent sense of crisis in government, trade-offs against that possibility, and a potential source of tension between Prime Minister and Governor-General, Premier and Governor.



In Victoria this month the Governor resigned over a mundane matter in a situation where the non-Labor Opposition controlled the Legislative Council, where the Government, on empirical grounds, could never fully accept the Opposition's declaration that it would not stop Supply (whatever Supply is), and where relations between Government and Governor become formal and sensitive.

I remember the Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, saying at lunch, before leaving for Parliament on the day he was to announce the appointment of Sir John Kerr as Governor-General, that he was pleased Kerr had agreed, and then pausing reflectively. 'Of course, one wonders why he would want the job'. Why indeed do people want to be Governors-General or Governors? Of course, like Everest, the job is there, and, especially if you can arrange good terms of severance, it is better paid, better housed and better recompensed than most public appointments. It also provides pomp and ceremony, social acceptance and proximity to the Royal Family for those who appreciate these things. You see official visitors and official papers and you can, if you wish, lift the routine of small engagements into a kind of social service. But do you accept the position because the job is essentially a public relations task? Since 1975 this must always be a question a government has in mind when it examines candidates for the position.

Before Kerr gave his interpretation of the role, a process was underway to give the Governor-General a real part of play. It arose from foreign policy considerations mainly, because it was soon discovered as we developed our own diplomacy in the

Asian region that our Head of State happened to be an English person living thousands of miles away who, when she went abroad, did so in pursuit of British interests, not ours. It was just not possible for the Queen, or the Duke of Edinburgh, or Prince Charles, or any other member of the Royal Family, to visit, say Indonesia, pretending that they were expressing an Australian interest. Indeed, this view of a possible role for the Governor-general emerged at a time when our interests and Britain's in South-east Asia were sometimes different. Gradually, through Casey and Hasluck, both of whom had a strong interest in foreign policy, the process developed. Kerr, who made a lengthy tour of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal and Iran in 1974, carried it on until 1975. Then the process stopped. Cowan did not, as far as I am aware, make any such visits abroad as an Australian Head of State. I notice that Sir Ninian Stephen has begun to travel abroad, but in what capacity is unclear.

This points to the first decision for Australians looking to the future. If the Governor-General is to remain a part of our system of government, the role must be clear. There is a role, it would appear, as a symbolic Head of State, but not if this role also provides the incumbent with the power to cut down a Prime Minister, as occurred in 1975, and not if this role also provides a source of continuous tension between Upper Houses and Lower Houses, forcing synthetic crises and frequent elections. There is enough tension in politics, inter-Party and intra-Party, without an appointed official entering the fray. It is for this reason that I have always supposed, since 1975, that until the power of second



Houses, Federal and State, to stop supply is removed, and until the mysterious 'reserve' powers of Vice-Regal figures is clarified, this trivial, yet politically unanswerable, tension will continue, and a proper role for the Governor-General - and Governors - will not be found.

A second Constitutional problem for Australia in the future is the nature of the Constitution itself. It does not reflect democratic values. It reflects autocracy, and an outmoded one at that. The Governor-General is given a couple of pages. He rules on behalf of the Monarch. He can appoint and dismiss Ministers. He can even appoint as a Minister for three months someone who is not a Member of Parliament. He is Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The Prime Minister and Cabinet, the core of responsible government, are not mentioned.

So the Australian Constitution does not reflect our system of democracy, nor its values. The sovereignty of the people is not mentioned. It is the sovereignty of the Monarch, expressed by the Governor-General, which gives the Constitution its authority. The central practice and key figures of our democratic system are ignored.

What are young Australians to make of this? What hope is there of bringing into the twenty-first century Australians who understand their democratic system, value it and exercise it to the full, when the Constitution is gobbledegook? Or, more sinister, what hope for understanding when the Constitution throws over reality a veil of pomp and ceremony which we are not supposed to take seriously, until we are suddenly told that the words mean what they say? The

lasting shock wave of 1975 is not the dramatic ambitions and deceits of that time, but that what Kerr did was apparently constitutional. His defence that his hands were tied by the Constitution may acquit him, but it condemns us, as does the defence of the former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, that he had to act to block (or, to retain the elegant distinction, refuse to pass) Supply, because the country was sliding down hill and he felt duty bound to rescue it. Destabilising governments, as we know in these volatile times, is not difficult, and there is no lack of aspirants in the wings who believe they have been destined by fortune or breeding or some higher power, to save the country from itself.

1975 was a setback to the development of Australian democracy because it set back the clock of an evolving constitutional role for the Governor-General and Governors. It remains a setback because reform of the Constitution has become 'controversial', so that even the most reasoned voices raised in the hope that something can be done to prevent a recurrence of 1975 are drowned in a chorus of concern about God, the Monarch and the Flag.

Australia's role in the twenty-first century is that of a democracy in a part of the world which, while relatively open to the West, and not necessarily threatening to Australia, is nevertheless not one in which democracy flourishes.

Our position is unlike that of Canada, which is intrinsically part of the great North American and European democratic system, and unlike that of South Africa, whose present leadership cannot accept the honest import of democracy without destroying



itself. We need to strengthen our Australian democracy by lifting the veil of Constitutional obscurantism from our established practices and principles so that all know, including ourselves, what kind of people we are.

I have dealt out of duty rather than from pleasure with what might be attainable for Australia, because it is possible that the false starts and failures of the 20th century will be repeated.

Mild as the reforming process might be - a more austere and far-sighted management of the alliance with the United States rather than an exuberant dedication to it; an active government role in an essentially capitalist economy; the expressive voice of a modern constitutional democracy rather than that of a tattered relic of autocracy - we cannot be sure of acceptance, because politics, whether local or global is currently volatile.

Where it is accepted, the process of consensus through a network of interest groups and decision makers is slow.

There is a danger that Australians will come to believe that the dream of equity and justice is over and that the honour of demonstrating that from the humblest of beginnings the highest of human aspirations naturally arise is no longer available to Australia, and that there will not be an ideology of conscience and fairness to guide the Australian people.

But there is another side to contemporary Australia, in which groups previously undetected in the nationalist

vision are coming to the surface of public life; women, aborigines, people from all over the world who are learning that to be Australian they do not have to renounce their past.

What can only be described as a cultural renaissance has also taken place in Australia since Curtin's day, when the Australian film industry had been allowed to die, when writers had to live abroad, when actors survived on ABC radio plays, and walk-on parts in imported shows from Broadway and the West End, when opera and ballet productions in this country was for amateurs only.

A more complex, tolerant, flexible and inherently less fragile Australian society is emerging, with an element of professional and business competence and of trade union sophistication which was not present before.

This is probably a more sustainably humane society than the prickly pear of nationalism would have produced, growing rampant from the fragment of English society which landed on our shores nearly 200 years ago. It is just possible that the people of Australia are now better able to express the Australian dream, given the kind of government I have described.

I hope and believe that this would have pleased John Curtin. It has been an honour to speak about these matters in the 15th Annual lecture in his memory.



JOHN CURTIN MEMORIAL LECTURES

- 1970 - Dr L. Ross - 'John Curtin for Labor and for Australia'
- 1971 - Mr K.E. Beazley - 'John Curtin - an Atypical Australian Labor Leader'
- 1972 - The Hon D.A. Dunstan - 'Curtin, Australia and Now'
- 1973 - Mr R.J. Hawke - 'Economic Policies of Curtin and Beyond'
- 1974 - Professor L.F. Crisp - 'Grave Diggers and Undertakers - Then and Now'
- 1975 - The Hon E.G. Whitlam - 'Government of the People for the People - by the People's House'
- 1976 - Professor R.A. Gollan - 'The Labor Movement and Equality: 1890 and 1980'
- 1977 - Mr T.M. Fitzgerald - 'An Education for Labor Leadership: the Case of Curtin'
- 1979 - Mr Alan Reid - 'Government, Employer and Trade Unions: The Shift of Power'
- 1980 - Senator Gareth Evans - 'The Politics of Justice'
- 1981 - Justice J.F. Staples - 'Courts, Convicts and Labor Governments in NSW: From Cable to Dugan and Beyond'
- 1982 - Professor G. Harcourt - 'Making Socialism in Your Own Country'

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JOHN CURTIN MEMORIAL LECTURES

- 1983 - Dr Neal Blewett - 'Getting it Right - Some Thoughts on the Politics of Consensus'
- 1984 - Dr H.C. Coombs - 'John Curtin - A Consensus Prime Minister?'

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