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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
J. MALCOLM FRASER, M.P.  
PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

THE ROSE GARDEN

10:25 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Fraser, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a very special pleasure for me to welcome you tonight, the Prime Minister of one of America's closest friends, one of our closest allies, Australia.

Americans and Australians have traditionally enjoyed a very special and a very natural rapport but this year, the government and the people of Australia have gone to extraordinary lengths to demonstrate their friendship in helping us celebrate in America our Bicentennial.

Let me say without hesitation or qualification, we, as Americans, are most appreciative of your many gestures of goodwill and generosity toward us.

Mr. Prime Minister, though the United States is 200 years old this year, it is still a new country in spirit, in outlook and aspirations. And it would be my observation, so is Australia. Both Australia and the United States were frontier countries with vast open spaces, abundant natural resources. These factors influenced the way our nations developed and the way we moved in similar directions.

We also share important values and vital institutions. The British traditions of individual civil liberties and the rule of law were ingrained in both your people as well as in ours. Each of us created our own governmental institutions, influenced by the British parliamentary system.

The United States and Australia are both federations of states founded originally as separate colonies. Each recognizes the limits of power of the central government. Such close parallels in the development of our two countries have made Americans think of Australians as being like us and we hope that this feeling is reciprocated.

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Obviously, Americans feel very much at home in Australia and with Australians. Nonetheless, Mr. Prime Minister, we fully recognize that Australia has its own interests, its own perceptions of the world and its own role to play.

Our relations with your country have matured over the years to a new partnership of mutual respect. World War II brought both of us together in a time of trial. In 1951, we joined with New Zealand and signed the ANZUS Pact, or treaty. That treaty symbolizes the fundamental interests that we share. Since World War II, our cooperation in defense, in international affairs, has been unusually close. We have reinforced each other's security. We have promoted regional stability and we have solidified the strength of the free world.

Mr. Prime Minister, your public statements and your conversations with me this morning made it very obvious that Australia and the United States are closer together than ever before. We understand, we respect, your independent voice in world affairs and we applaud you for it. On this basis, our collaboration has even a greater meaning and a greater value. We both recognize that peace in this interdependent world will require even greater cooperation on economic and social questions.

Advanced democracies, such as our two countries, have crucial roles to play in strengthening the global economy and in creating healthy, long-term relations between developed countries and the developing countries. We consider Australia an important partner in all common endeavors in this free world.

Mr. Prime Minister, our talks have enhanced the natural partnership between Australia and the United States. In the coming years, this partnership will make an ever-expanding contribution to peace and progress. I am absolutely certain that our governments will continue to work closely, to meet the complex challenges our two nations will face inevitably in the years ahead.

Mr. Prime Minister, I raise my glass to the Queen, to the health of the Prime Minister of Australia, and to the continuation of Australian-American friendship.

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PRIME MINISTER FRASER: Mr. President, thank you very much indeed for your invitation to my wife and myself and the Australian party to join you on this occasion. Thank you for your generous hospitality and for the opportunity that it has given us to see America celebrating her Bicentennial.

We were delighted to have your Vice President and his wife in Australia a short while ago. During his visit, we reaffirmed the friendship that has long existed between our peoples, and I would like to say, Mr. President, that your Vice President was a warm and gifted Ambassador for your country and the discussions we had were constructive and useful.

Australians were delighted to have him amongst us, even though it was for a short while.

Earlier this year we were also delighted to welcome Mrs. Kissinger, and I would like also to express our appreciation to the Secretary for making himself so frequently and readily available -- on one occasion at least I know at an inconvenient hour of the night -- for discussions between my Foreign Minister and myself. Thank you very much, Doctor, for that.

I have noticed here and have been glad to see there are other people with associations with Australia and there are Australians who are on your guest list, and I thank you for that. But, there is one in particular, whom I won't name, who reminds me of a story once when somebody who is not here won the hearts of everyone who lives in Sydney when she said that Melbourne was the best possible place to make a film about the end of the world. (Laughter) Nothing could have done more for Sydney. I come from Melbourne. (Laughter)

Australians probably have more cause to celebrate the Bicentennial with you than any other country, Mr. President. If it had not been for your successful war of independence against the English, it is most unlikely that they would have settled in Australia in the way that they did. (Laughter)

That story is not quite finished because, Mr. President, while we have many things in common -- and you have referred to a number of them -- there is one thing which we have in common to which you did not refer. There were a certain number of citizens before your war of independence, undesirable citizens, who were sent to your shores.

After your war of independence a much larger number were sent to ours, but what we both need to remember -- and this is the real bond perhaps that we have in friendship -- is the great majority of those undesirable citizens remain to this day in England. (Laughter) My wife is under a pledge to prevent me telling that story in England. (Laughter)

Mr. President, I know I speak for many Australians here when I say how pleased we have been to make some contribution to your Bicentennial celebration. We did have cause to be grateful to the United States, even in earlier days.

There are many who think that our beef trade is a recent development and something to our advantage, but in 1792 the struggling colony of Port Jackson near Sidney received an important shipment from the American ship Philadelphia. The local crops had failed and I think they were nearly starving. The voyage took nine months and by the time it arrived, the cargo of barrels of American beef were well cured. (Laughter)

I can only assure you, Mr. President, that that is a trade that we wish to repay a thousand, a millionfold in the other direction, and I don't know if there are any members of the Cattlemen's Association here tonight. (Laughter)

Mr. President, Australia and the United States have many things in common -- our frontier experience and the fact we are both migrant nations. We both value our independence and our democratic institutions, our ideals of freedom and opportunity.

Our histories have taught us both that we have our freedom, not as a right, but only so long as we remain vigilant and resourceful. I know that in support of our ideals we will work together in the future as we have in the past.

In our countries the State is regarded as the servant of its people. In some others these values are set aside and the State is paramount. In the past, differences in values of these kinds have often led to conflict. The great challenge of the rest of this century will be whether or not countries with differing social systems can learn to live together and resolve their international differences by negotiation.

In the uncertain world that faces us, the need for cooperation is strong, and this is especially so because over recent years there has been criticism where I believe there ought to have been understanding. We are aware that there has been vigorous debate within the United States itself on her world role, but we believe that out of such debate emerges a stronger and a freer nation, one more able to provide the leadership that the world requires.

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We appreciate the manner in which the United States has persisted. In future years the resolution of the American people is, in our view, going to be more important for securing the peace of the world than it has ever been. That is by no means to suggest that countries such as mine don't have their own responsibilities. Whatever some others, may feel, I don't believe any Australian assumes that we are entitled to a free ride, not even on the sheep's back.

But, your efforts are no reason why we should be complacent or negligent about our responsibilities. This is merely recognition that as the world's greatest free power there are many things that only the United States can do. If the United States does not do them, they will remain undone. Others may contribute, but your strength is indispensable in the supporting of the diplomacy and negotiation essential for the building of peace.

The fact that your nation attracts criticism at times in its international role is in the Australian view much less important than the fact that the task is done.

Mr. President, over the last 200 years there have been many revolutions, but whatever some other ideologies may claim from their revolution, yours is distinguished by its unequalled democratic character, by its purpose and by its morality. The ideas contained in the Declaration of Independence still stir the hearts of men and women around the world.

We can find in that declaration of many years ago the philosophy of the best social reforms that have taken place in all the years since.

Mr. President, we know the great responsibility that rests on democratic leadership. That is one of the reasons why meeting the demands of the office you hold must be the most difficult but, at the same time, Mr. President, the most rewarding task in the world.

Your country has made an immeasurable contribution to world peace and to the ideal of liberty. There has never been a time when support of these ideals has required more dedication, greater commitment, more persistence than in the present.

My wife and I are honored to be here, and I ask you now to rise and drink the toast to the President of the United States.

END (AT 10:40 P.M. EDT)