

*Mr Hayden's Speech in Reply to Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach**

I am just worried that it may take you five years from now when I raise questions with you today, to reply to them. I hope you work more efficiently than our system does. But I am very pleased to join you. I am only the third Minister from Australia to visit Hanoi. The others were Dr Jim Cairns and Lionel Bowen. They both came here in 1973. I mention very quickly the very warm regard that I have had, and continue to have, for Dr Jim Cairns. You may recall he was active in opposition in Australia, and America, to the American involvement in the conflict in Vietnam and wrote many books on the subject. He was a very important figure in that period. I think it is also significant to recall that all visits, albeit only two, and now the third one to Hanoi have been done by Ministers of a Labor Government. There are a number of things I would like to mention to you in relation to this visit, in relation to our past. The first thing is that within the Labor Party there is a very deep concern about Vietnam, about its future, not an uncritical one. I am sure you wouldn't want it that way. But nonetheless a very genuine one because of our commitment in the 1950's very later, as the war in Vietnam started to develop. In the 1960's it became quite obvious that it was a major superpower conflict involved in this region. We did not flinch once and decided that it was an issue of great moral concern criticising the involvement of Western influences in that war. For my part of course, there is a very special relationship. I like to pride myself that I was one of the first three in the National Parliament of Australia in the very very early 1960's in expressing that opposition. So in that sense Vietnam, Australia's association with Vietnam, occupies a special place. But I would be less than mature and balanced if I didn't also acknowledge that as a Government we discharge responsibilities to our allies, and we have a treaty association with the United States of America. We have a very close association with the Peoples' Republic of China.

In the early 1970's, even before we became the Government in Australia, our then leader Gough Whitlam, went into China, when it was unpopular, breaking up a log-jam in recognition for China in establishing something which in our view should have been established a long time before. We have never believed that there is a productive outcome for policies in foreign relations to isolate and punish particular countries of the world. We have extended in the case of China. We extend that in the case of Vietnam, Kampuchea, all of the other countries of the world. It is not to say that certain processes shouldn't be gone through. And as a Democratic Socialist Party we

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have a more expansive view of our obligations to the nation states of the world than perhaps applies with Conservative Governments. We have a very special relationship with the ASEAN countries. They are close to us in terms of trade. We are increasingly involved in their development and we see ourselves as part of the South-East Asian region of the world. We may be on the ridge of it. Nevertheless what happens in this part of the world is important to us. And accordingly — although some might wish to present us as outsiders in recent developments taking place in this part of the world which have profound consequences especially for future generations of Australians — we feel, we have an obligation to make some sort of contribution. So, my visit today is an expression of that genuine concern that we have. We want to see established progressively, as quickly as is practically and properly so, a mature and balanced bilateral relationship with Vietnam, and indeed to develop that relationship which we have with the countries of the Indochina peninsula. But most of all my colleagues and I have come here in the cause of peace. We have a very healthy respect for the limitations of the contribution we can make. At the same time we believe we have an obligation to try to make contribution. I have consistently said that the prospects for us making some sort of substantial impact on this impasse which exists in this area are, if not limited, probably worse than that, non-existent. But we have an obligation. So I have been encouraged as a result of my discussions over the last two days with ASEAN countries. It seems to me that there is a possibility, slender, but existing, for some progress to be made. It is important however that if progress is to be made that it is recognised that concessions on accommodation, however we describe it, is not just a responsibility for one party. It is a responsibility for Vietnam, for Kampuchea. It is a responsibility for all parties. The final result we want to see is stability, peace, harmony and cooperation in our area. It has been the basis of our approach today. It will be the basis of our discussions tomorrow. I trust that no matter how small, we will make some progress from this meeting. Finally, for me it is a very important experience to be here. It is a sentimental experience, and it is an emotional experience. As you rightly recall my interest in Vietnam extends over two decades. Parliamentary record shows beyond any dispute the views that I have expressed in support of the Vietnamese peoples' right to have an independent country of their own, to develop their own sense of nationalism and carve out their own destiny. Within proper parameters I will do all I can to promote that objective.

Thank you for your hospitality tonight. May I propose a toast to the President of Vietnam, the Prime Minister of Vietnam and the people of Vietnam.