

THE 2001 SIR EDWARD 'WEARY' DUNLOP ASIA MEDAL

RECIPIENTS:

The HON Gough Whitlam AC QC

and

Mrs Margaret Whitlam AO

**SIDNEY MYER ASIA CENTRE, BASEMENT THEATRE,
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WEDNESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2002

In his gracious letter informing Margaret and me that we had been jointly awarded the 2001 Dunlop Asia Medal, Sir Ninian described your committee's decision as "unusual but splendid". I concur and would add, at least in respect of the partner, thoroughly appropriate.

The medal is awarded in recognition of long-term commitment to improving Australia-Asia relations and enhancing the quality of life in the region. In no commitment during nearly 60 years together have we shared deeper hopes and closer endeavours than in our visits to India, Indonesia, China and Japan and the islands between.

We have even shared the perils. It is barely a quarter of a century since Margaret and I had to evacuate our hotel room at 4 a.m. during the great earthquake in Tianjin. *The Age* published a Nicholson cartoon depicting us shivering in our bed, not even wrapped in a sheepskin rug. The caption was: 'Did the earth move for you, dear?' The good citizens of Melbourne were appalled by the vulgarity. *The Age* mischievously published their letters and messages of protest alongside my cable requesting the original.

Margaret and I are especially honoured to be joined in this Award with the name and memory of Sir Edward Dunlop. Again, it is the appropriateness which is so gratifying. Weary Dunlop's place in the hearts of his countrymen and women was earned first by his selflessness and self-sacrifice as a doctor and a prisoner-of-war during the war against Japan. This medal, however, commemorates his post-war work in building friendships and rebuilding relationships throughout Asia, not least with Japan itself. It is impossible to overstate the importance of Australia's post-war reconciliation with Japan; and it is impossible to overstate the importance of men like Weary Dunlop in achieving that reconciliation. He could speak with unimpeachable moral authority.

We usually choose to forget that the United States gave us the ANZUS Treaty as a solatium for its soft Treaty of Peace with Japan in 1951. Amnesia is even more complete about the nature of Australian opposition to the Peace Treaty, not least in the ranks of the Australian Labor Party. I quote Volume One of *Facing North, A Century of Australian Engagement With Asia*, edited by David Goldsworthy and just published by Melbourne University Press and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. On page 226 Roderic Pitty discusses the Peace Treaty debate in the House of Representatives in February 1952, exactly 50 years ago:

Les Haylen was one of several Labor speakers whose opposition to trade with Japan was linked with anxiety that the Peace Treaty 'will write finis to the experiment which has been called White Australia.' For Haylen 'the point of the matter is that if we are to preserve this

white bastion in the Pacific we must be realistic to the point of cruelty and not be fantastically generous.'

"We must be realistic to the point of cruelty". Where have I heard that sort of thing recently? Haylen was a better playwright than politician. Somebody seems to be dusting off his 50-year-old scripts. Alexander Downer senior, another prisoner of war, crossed the floor to vote against the Peace Treaty.

From the viewpoint of the United States, of course, the Japanese Peace Treaty was essentially a deck-clearing operation, made urgent by the war in Korea. Nevertheless, our relations with Japan remain the outstanding post-war example of adherence to American initiatives, American concerns and, let it be said, American foresight and generosity bringing great benefits to Australia.

Australia ratified the Treaty of Peace with Japan on 10 April 1952. I was elected to the Parliament seven months later. In August 1957 John McEwen tabled the Agreement on Commerce with Japan and H.V. Evatt moved an amendment expressing disapproval of the Agreement. Many years later McEwen told me that, in preparing an assault on my credibility, he had looked up what I had to say on the 1957 motion. To his surprise he found that I had not spoken.

In his invitation to us Sir Ninian said that Asialink would like to present our Medal on 11 December 2001 but, if this date was not suitable, we could discuss an alternative date. I was committed to give an address in December at University College, London, on the restitution of the Parthenon Sculptures. I trust that to-day has been as suitable for all of you as it is for the two of us.

American and Australian parallel policies have not been so commendable and consistent on China as on Japan. My service in the Pacific War ended as the navigator of the only British Empire aircraft stationed in the Philippines. I learned the geography and topography of Australia's neighbours. I realised the fragility of the Atlantic empires in our region.

In August 1954 I became the first member of the Parliament to urge Australian recognition of the Government in China:

The current Australian policy is to say ... not only that the Communist Government in China is not, and should not be, the government of that country but also that the Nationalist Government in Formosa is, and should be, the government of China. We must realise that the government installed in Formosa has no chance of ever again becoming the government of China unless it is enabled to do so as a result of a third world war

If I had addressed you last December I could not have spoken on China with as much knowledge as I can to-day. The 1971 Cabinet papers, just released under the 30-year rule, show that in February 1955 R.G. Menzies expressed views similar to the views I had expressed in August 1954. I quote from a Cabinet submission on 9 February 1971 by William McMahon, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Gorton Government, with the title 'Australian policy towards the People's Republic of China 1949-70':

In one other respect, Australian policy has consistently diverged from United States policy, namely towards the Nationalist-held offshore islands (principally Quemoy and Matsu). The

islands have been regarded for all their alleged psychological value to the ROC as logically forming part of the mainland and as a particularly dangerous trip-wire for active United States military involvement against Peking.

In 1955, Prime Minister Menzies dismissed them as "not worth a great war", and in that year, as well as earlier and later, the Government urged restraint on the Americans and expressed concern about the United States tendency to drift into wider military obligations to the ROC which could involve the United States, and possibly Australia, in war over these islands.

Australia's immediate objective in the early and middle 1950's was to find a means by which the Nationalists could withdraw from the islands and the Americans disentangle themselves without seriously affecting anti-Communist morale in Taiwan and the rest of Asia; in short, as Mr Menzies told the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting in London in February, 1955, 'to get a sheet of water between the two opposing sides'.

1971 was the year when the Deputy Prime Minister, Doug Anthony, declared that the Country Party would never sell its soul for a mess of pottage, by which he meant wheat sales to China; that B.A. Santamaria denounced me as the Manchurian candidate after my first visit to Beijing in July; that McMahon said that Zhou Enlai had played me like a trout in the Great Hall of the People; and that President Nixon announced that he too would go to China following Henry Kissinger's secret meeting with Zhou Enlai four days after my very public one. Cabinet decided that 'our diplomatic policy should not deviate from that of the United States' and, specifically, 'that no steps should be taken in the direction of or leading towards recognition of Peking.'

Our Vietnam commitment was sold at home wholly in terms of resistance to 'the downward thrust of China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans'. As Nixon withdrew from Vietnam and drew towards China the Australian Government was left floundering. As late as September 1971, Australia supported the United States in the last failed bid to keep Taiwan as the representative of China in the United Nations. On 26 October, I said in the House of Representatives:

If Australia is now to have relations with China ... she will have to follow the United Nations; she will have to recognise the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government of China ... If we are to pursue a dialogue with the People's Republic and if we are to normalise our relations with Peking, we must now do so on the terms overwhelmingly accorded by the United Nations, including most of those countries in the Commonwealth, in our region and in Europe with which we have been associated. Let us do it with as good grace as we can.

The McMahon Government's failure to adopt this approach delayed Australia's recognition of one China and the transfer of our Embassy from Taipei to Beijing until the election of my government in December 1972. The real obstacle was not McMahon's incompetence, as commentators glibly asserted this January, but the deadweight of 23 years of Australian and U.S. policy. The policy was blighted by DLP blackmail. It was not the first time, nor the last, that domestic pressures shaped Australian policy on China. (McMahon's old colleagues should acknowledge that he was supported by two powerful Liberal supporters. Sir Frank Packer was his backer before and after he replaced John Gorton in 1971 and Sir Ian Potter chose him as his best man in 1975.)

I stress the contractual nature of our relations with China and the importance that China places on the mutual honouring of contracts. How else can we explain Beijing's acceptance of Britain's Hong Kong lease to the last hour and its replacement with the 'One China, two systems' arrangement for the 50 years after 1997? Further, the massive penetration of American capital into China's economy proceeds by a series of individual contracts guaranteed only by continuing compliance with the over-arching contract, the recognition of One China.

Jimmy Carter was elected four years after I was and established diplomatic relations with China six years after I did. In our relations with China and the United States, Australia must always insist upon honouring the premise and the promise on which all our relations with China have been based since 1972. We must resist any policy which purports to make Australia choose between China and the United States. We must resist any policy which purports to make Australian Chinese choose between Taiwan and China.

We should seek to extend the concept of contractual obligations across the range of international affairs. In this age of globalisation the most secure, consistent and constructive principle for individual States and the community of nations is to honour contracts, adhere to international conventions and uphold covenants. Without this principle and its active pursuit, our professions about free trade, human rights and self-determination wither in a welter of moral confusion, self-serving selectivity and hypocrisy. To be specific, there are four human rights conventions relevant to current events in Australia. They are the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees. Coalition Governments in 1954 acceded to the 1951 convention with reservations and in 1967 and 1971 withdrew the reservations. In 1973 the new New Zealand and Australian Labor Governments acceded to the 1967 Protocol and the 1954 and 1961 Conventions. If subsequent Australian Governments had worked in our region to achieve a wider membership, implementation and modernisation of the instruments on refugees and if the major Australian parties had promoted within Australia a proper understanding of our covenanted obligations, we would not be trapped in our present untenable, costly and brutal arrangements.

Nearly forty years ago, shortly after the French veto on Britain's first application to join the European Economic Community, I said in the Roy Milne Lecture of July 1963:

The captains and kings of Europe have departed from our area. Britain is being drawn closer and closer to Europe. Forces very largely outside our control are forcing us into a fundamental re-examination of our position as an isolated and European community. We are being driven rapidly to making adjustments from the familiar European world to an unfamiliar Afro-Asian world.

In a period of our nation's affairs when I am less confident than at any time in the past 30 years that Australia is progressing purposefully towards that objective, I am nevertheless encouraged by the knowledge that, within the great University of Melbourne, the Asialink Centre exists to advance the objective, to support sustained, constructive relationships between Australia and Asia and to counter the raucous and rancorous voices of fear, hate and ignorance. That is the chief reason among many why Margaret and I are honoured to accept the 2001 Dunlop Asia Medal. If we cannot wear it simultaneously, we shall certainly treasure it jointly and severally, and do so with immense pride **(Gough Whitlam 06/02/02)**