

Chapter 6 Mutual Understanding

The relationships between Australia and Japan have been almost exclusively in the area of trade in recent years. While these developments have been mutually advantageous and contributed to the prosperity of both countries, what has emerged most strongly from the Committee's inquiry is the need to foster greater understanding—a broad and difficult term to define—between people at all levels in both countries. Commercial relations alone will not achieve this objective although it has been from commercial associations that the first moves have emerged. The Australia-Japan Business Co-operation Committee and its counterpart in Japan have not confined their activities to trade matters alone, but have been active in sponsoring a significant if necessarily limited number of scholarships and exchanges of personnel. Academics and service organisations such as Rotary and Lions Clubs have also been in the vanguard of moves to contribute to understanding at the personal level. In science, the Committee was informed of the co-operation extended to scientists of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation to visit kindred organisations in Japan and of the highly satisfactory arrangements existing for the exchange of scientific information. Another important measure of co-operation is the extension of facilities to Japanese nationals to further their studies in Australia, including at the post graduate level. It is significant to note that, arising from this, the nephew of the Emperor of Japan, His Royal Highness Prince Yoshihito Mikasa, has chosen to further his studies at the post-graduate level at the Australian National University in Canberra. A small but important group of senior medical practitioners from Japan has attended the Australian National University to gain doctorates of philosophy. Businessmen engaged in business relationships with Japan have also advised of arrangements made within their organisations for members of their staffs to undertake exchange duty, and others have mentioned the co-operation extended to them by Japanese industrial organisations in making available technicians in specialist fields to impart their knowledge to Australian organisations. All these are valuable moves in the right direction.

On the scale needed to achieve lasting and personal relationships between the peoples of two countries, it is difficult to see how more can be achieved without substantial participation by governments, and this area is one in which the Australian Government should take the initiative. In such initiatives Australia must be able to explain clearly to the Japanese the role it sees for itself in relations with Japan, with Asia and with the rest of the world. At present this is not understood

in Japan. One experienced observer answered the question 'Where does Australia see itself?' in these terms:

If we seriously tell the Japanese that we see ourselves as an insignificant nation, we are not merely confusing them, we are simply asking to be treated that way.

The plain fact is that as far as Japan is concerned Australia should not be an insignificant nation and in fact is not. It is not merely that we supply more of Japan's basic raw materials than any single independent country has ever done before—although the implications of this have important ramifications—it is also the undeniable fact that Australia still looms, despite its many mistakes, as an important influence in South East Asia.

In Japan's view, our influence there can be friendly and co-operative, hostile and competitive or utterly negative, but it cannot be insignificant.

I don't think anyone who has visited Indonesia, to take just one example, in the past few years could have failed to notice that many influential people in that country would like Australia, within the limits of its capabilities, to act economically, entrepreneurially and diplomatically as some kind of counterbalance to Japan.

My own view is that we should adopt a fairly independent stance in South East Asia, both as far as our relationship with Japan is concerned and our older relationship with Britain and the United States. I believe that in the medium to long term this will be in everyone's best interests, and particularly in the interest of developing a meaningful relationship of mutual self-respect with Japan.

There is evidence to show that a great deal of mutual goodwill exists at the present time arising largely from satisfactory trading, but goodwill alone is no substitute for understanding and if not nurtured by deeper understanding could wither, particularly if economic circumstances were to change. It cannot be denied that the obstacles to reaching full understanding are great—the two countries are the antithesis of each other in history, geography, language and culture. However, the Committee believes that it may be in this context that there lies the hope that the natural inquisitiveness of people may lead to opportunities being provided to study another civilisation and, given these opportunities, greater numbers will be encouraged to take advantage of them. At the same time it would be wrong to concentrate entirely on distinctiveness and ignore areas where similarities exist. Already, contact and observation between people of the East and West have shown areas of common interest evolving, as evidenced by the acceptance of words of one language into common usage in the other.

Language Barrier

A great deal of expert evidence was tendered to the Committee on the absence of adequate facilities in Australia for the teaching of the Japanese language; that problems exist in making the best use of those having the skill to teach the language; that mastering the language in its spoken and written form involves a long period of study; that understanding and appreciation of the Japanese people and their culture can be achieved without a high degree of competence in the Japanese language. This is published in the transcript of evidence and the Committee would not wish to traverse it in detail in the report but rather to make some observations on aspects of the evidence and to draw conclusions from it.

- Insufficient opportunities exist for the study of Asian languages in

Australia, and in the present-day situation the Committee believes it is unrealistic for the ratio of pupils studying European to Asian languages to continue at sixty as to one.

- Promotional opportunities for Asian language teachers should be equal to those in other specialised fields.
- At the tertiary level there is a need for two streams of Japanese teaching. The first would be in a limited number of institutions providing excellence in staff and facilities to produce specialists in Japanese—mastery of the Japanese written and spoken language and culture. The second is one in which Japanese studies could be undertaken in association with other disciplines more directly related to the needs of industry.
- For commercial enterprise there is a need for graduates skilled in the Japanese language to be qualified in an additional discipline, such as economics.
- Absence of skills in the Japanese language does not debar understanding of Japan and its people.
- Complete mastery of spoken and written Japanese can take up to ten years, involving a period of residence in Japan.

The Committee is aware of recent announcements by the Australian Government of the steps to be taken following the report of the Advisory Committee on the Teaching of Asian Languages and Cultures in Australia (the Auchmuty Report)—that Commonwealth funds are now being provided in co-operation with State education authorities for the provision of textbooks, teaching laboratories and for financial assistance by way of travel grants to teachers wishing to further their knowledge of Asian languages. It is therefore recommended that there should be well directed programmes provided in two areas—firstly towards the younger generation as a long term objective and secondly for adults wishing to gain a broad appreciation of Japan and its people. Programmes for young people could well commence with the first recommendation of the Auchmuty Report, which is strongly supported by this Committee:

That it is through the social studies course in primary schools and in the core studies undertaken by all students at secondary level that Australian students may be given an opportunity to learn about Asia.

This, in the Committee's view, does not mean an exclusive emphasis on language teaching—and, indeed, at this level need not necessarily include the study of language—but rather in the imparting of knowledge of the Japanese people, their ways and their country. While supporting the emphasis on social studies at primary school level, the Committee is also aware of such initiatives as have been undertaken in the Glamorgan part of Geelong Grammar School, where the Japanese language is taught by 'open plan' methods to very young primary school children. It is from the primary school background that the future specialists will emerge—a limited number who will be needed to undertake highly skilled tasks of interpreting or who will require knowledge of the language in both its written and spoken forms in technical fields. For the majority of people, particularly adults, it is desirable to

encourage and provide facilities for learning more of the culture of the country in its widest sense, and the Committee feels that greater opportunity and encouragement should be given to those prepared to undertake a broad appreciation of Japan. It believes that this opportunity could be provided through the adult education services throughout Australia. Therefore the Committee's conclusions on the question of language suggest the following objectives to provide for:

- a study of Japan in social studies at the primary level, not necessarily incorporating language training;
- a wider opportunity for the Japanese language to be studied in secondary schools;
- specialised teaching in Japanese language to interpreter or equivalent level at a limited number of tertiary institutions, with more general courses available to those studying Japanese in association with another discipline; and
- adult education opportunities covering the broad spectrum of Japan and its culture.

By contrast, the study of English as a second language is compulsory for Japanese students from the age of twelve years through secondary schools and at universities. But even with this advantage fluency in the language needs frequent personal contact with those whose native tongue is English.

Personal Contact

The symbol used by the organisation responsible for Australia's participation in the Japanese 'Expo 70', reproduced on the cover page to Part II of this Report, most appropriately has as its text 'Neighbours on Longitude 135°'. The essence of neighbourliness in any community is personal contact and friendly understanding and these are the two attributes which should be fostered to the greatest extent possible between the Australian and Japanese people. A valuable start has been made at business, academic, scientific, diplomatic and ministerial levels—all areas worthy of further encouragement—but there is a need to go much further than this if 105 million Japanese and 13 million Australians are to be good neighbours.

For long term benefit hope must lie in bringing together the youth of both countries to fraternise in an atmosphere of friendly co-operation—to learn and appreciate those things which are familiar as well as different about each other. Travel, student exchanges and sporting activities all have a place. In this regard the Committee has been impressed by the programme conducted by the Youth Bureau of the Japanese Prime Minister's Office, which since 1968 has sponsored an annual goodwill cruise programme for young people between the ages of twenty and twenty-five years, from all sections of the community and at all levels of educational background. In October 1972 a cruise of 256 young men and women selected from all over Japan travelled by ship specially chartered and paid for by the Prime Minister's Office to the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and New Britain.

The only cost borne by the students participating was that of meals provided during the two-month tour. They were accompanied by a directing, teaching and group leader staff, and participated while at sea in classes on the geography, history, culture, politics and economics of the countries to be visited. As part of this goodwill cruise, ten young people from each of the countries to be visited were invited to participate. The Committee commends this type of programme to foster understanding, and would urge that the Australian Government consider a reciprocal goodwill tour for an Australian youth group.

In the field of adult personal contact, increasing affluence in the two countries has made possible greater opportunities for overseas travel. Japan has become one of the areas having great appeal to Australian tourists, who are visiting that country in increasing numbers. Australia, however, has not yet reached the same level of appeal to Japanese visitors, although the numbers have been constantly increasing. For example, the number of Japanese arriving in Australia during 1971 exceeded 16,000 but over half of this number was visiting for business reasons and only 15 per cent for purely holiday purposes. In the Committee's view there are unwarranted obstacles placed in the way of travel, one of which is the disproportionate cost of travel between Australia and Japan compared with fares to Europe and the United Kingdom. The figures provided to the Committee indicated that the lowest return air fare from Japan to Australia was \$US666, and to the United Kingdom—a far greater distance—\$US528. The Japan-Australia route has not fared so well in the matter of special economy and group travel reduced rates. One other obstacle mentioned to the Committee was that Australia has less appeal because 'it is the end of the line'. The Committee therefore considers that every effort should be made to encourage the introduction of lower air fares for holiday and group travel, including round tours which could incorporate Australia and other destinations in the South West Pacific area. Importantly, the Committee believes that there should be readily available to Australians visiting Japan for the first time simple pamphlets explaining the courtesies and customs observed in the country, for in a country so steeped in tradition and ancient culture as Japan it is a simple matter for foreigners to offend unwittingly and thus lose opportunities for friendly contact. To take a simple example, the Japanese people find it offensive to be referred to as 'Japs' where an Australian would find no offence in being referred to as an 'Aussie'. The Committee would hope that airlines and shipping companies would consider provision of such material as a service to their passengers in the interests of goodwill.

Media

It is through the media that the Committee believes the greatest short term progress can be made towards greater understanding between the peoples of the two countries. It is aware of the limited extent to which Australian and Japanese journalists are posted to the respective countries on a short term basis, and the limited number of exchange visits of groups of journalists. The Committee believes, however, that a need exists in this field for much more to be achieved. In the field of radio

programmes the Committee was informed of Radio Australia daily transmissions to Japan in both the Japanese and English languages which have proved extremely popular, particularly with young people in the 14-21 age group in Japan. A survey of listeners' reasons for listening to these programmes indicates that they do so because of the musical programmes, the opportunity provided to learn more about Australia, the absence of propaganda, variety and uniqueness of the programmes.

Evidence presented during the course of this inquiry has shown that in Japan there is great willingness to accept factual information on Australia for publication and therefore the Committee believes that these openings should be exploited. Television and films are other areas in which exchanges could be expanded with advantage. The Committee is aware that Information Attaches serve in the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, but believes that the task of the dimension envisaged by the Committee may be beyond the capacity of the present limited staff. It would therefore suggest that serious consideration be given to providing whatever support is needed to develop a greatly expanded programme for dissemination of Australian news in Japan.

Cultural Activities

The Committee was pleased to learn that it is proposed to reinstate the appointment of Cultural Counsellor to the Australian Embassy in Japan. It is hoped that this will be a senior appointment and that the range of activities will not be in any way restricted. The Committee believes that the Cultural Counsellor should be able to take initiatives in stimulating cultural exchanges in any area which would assist in fostering understanding between the two nations.

Suggestions have been made that a cultural agreement would be favourably regarded by Japan, a proposal that the Committee heartily endorses. The negotiation of such an agreement would not only formalise the machinery for making a wide range of exchange arrangements, but would importantly stress the willingness of both sides to place considerable emphasis on developing understanding between the people of the two countries.

On a wider basis, the Committee believes that Australia is at a stage where it should consider expanding its cultural activities in foreign countries, and this observation relates not only to Japan. The Committee has in mind that the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Canada and Japan all have established organisations designed to foster relations with other countries. Japan has recently established a Japan Foundation as its central organisation for a broad range of cultural projects. It has been said that this is in recognition that in the past hundred years or so Japan has actively sought to absorb the cultures of foreign countries, but without making adequate effort to cultivate overseas understanding of Japan and its people. The stated main objectives of the Japan Foundation are:

- to dispatch persons overseas and to invite others to Japan with the objective of undertaking international cultural exchange;

- to extend assistance and offer good offices overseas for the study of Japan and to promote the knowledge of the Japanese language;
- to assist in international cultural exchange;
- to prepare, collect, exchange and distribute material presenting Japanese culture abroad and other materials necessary for international cultural exchange; and
- to conduct necessary research and study for international cultural exchange;

and it will appoint overseas delegates and resident representatives in various world capitals.

To date Australia's cultural agreements have been restricted to those with Indonesia and Korea and the Committee considers that it would be to Australia's advantage to establish a cultural foundation to foster cultural relations with other countries. The finance for the operation of such a foundation would need to be substantially derived from the Commonwealth Government, but at the same time the participation of private industry and individuals should be encouraged.