

R.G. Casey:  
Minister for  
External Affairs  
1951-60

Edited by  
Melissa Conley Tyler,  
John Robbins and  
Adrian March

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## **Foreword**

*Bob Carr, Minister for Foreign Affairs*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome this account of the contribution to Australian diplomacy of Australia's second longest serving foreign minister, RG Casey. This publication is the first in a proposed series that will examine the role and influence of various Australian foreign ministers to be produced by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The 1950s were important for the development of Australian foreign policy. Practical in approach, Casey was well suited to preside over a period that required Australia to strike a balance between the perceived exigencies of Cold War alliances and regional politics.

Casey's foreign policy legacy included Australia's efforts at engagement with the newly-independent nations of Asia, recognition of the country's Antarctic interests through the Antarctic Treaty, and Australia's negotiation of critical alliance relationships. A number of significant conflicts occurred during this period, notably the Korean War and Suez crisis – on the latter, Casey advanced the unpopular view that supporting the United Kingdom in the dispute would only alienate Australia in Asia.

On a personal level, Casey's relationship with Prime Minister Robert Menzies and his other Cabinet colleagues was often problematic, not least because as

Minister for External Affairs he promoted new ways of understanding Australia's foreign policy priorities.

This publication presents the proceedings of the forum, entitled *RG Casey as Minister for External Affairs 1951-60: Fifty Years On*, hosted by the Australia Institute of International Affairs at Government House, Canberra, on 9 February 2010 to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Casey's retirement as Minister for External Affairs.

Although much has been written on Australia's approach to foreign policy during the 1950s and Casey himself has a first-class biography – written by former senior departmental historian WJ Hudson – a book focusing exclusively on Casey's record in the External Affairs portfolio has yet to be realised. The forum and this publication are a worthy effort to fill the gap.

I am pleased to acknowledge the contribution of scholarly chapters by Professor James Cotton, Mr Jeremy Hearder, Professor Peter Edwards AM and Dr Diane Langmore AM, which are supplemented with insights and reminiscences from former senior diplomats who knew and worked with Casey.

I commend *RG Casey: Minister for External Affairs 1951-60* to you.



Bob Carr  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

## **Editors' Note**

*Melissa Conley Tyler, John Robbins CSC and  
Adrian March*

This book brings together papers and discussions from the Australian Institute of International Affairs' Forum, 'R.G. Casey as Minister for External Affairs 1951-1960, Fifty Years On.'

It represents the AIIA's strong commitment to publish a record of Australia's foreign policy history. Following are the four papers presented at the event by Professor James Cotton, Jeremy Hearder, Professor Peter Edwards AM and Dr Diane Langmore. At the conclusion of each presentation, there was a short discussion of the major issues addressed by the paper. The insights and reminiscences uncovered during these discussions were deemed extremely valuable and have been reproduced after each paper.

An additional panel discussion of personal reminiscences, with Robert Furlonger CB, Pierre Hutton, James Ingram AO, Alfred Parsons AO, William Pritchett AO, Richard Woolcott AO and Richard Gardner, was also presented.

In editing these discussions, minor edits were made for clarity and ease of reading with all attempts made to ensure that the intent of the speaker was preserved. As such, it should be noted that the discussions do not constitute a 'word-for-word' transcription of proceedings.

On the mechanics of these discussions, changes in the use of quotation marks have been used to denote the intention of speakers. Single quotation marks are used when the speaker is

paraphrasing a source, presenting the essence of what has been said. Double quotation marks are used when the speaker is providing a direct quote.

We would like to thank the National Archives, National Library of Australia and the Australian War Memorial for providing archival photographs interspersed within this publication. We would also like to thank Dr Moreen Dee from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for providing the photographs from the Department's collection.

The AIIA is delighted to be able to record in print the expert reflections on the Casey era, including first-hand reminiscences. We note with sadness the passing of Alfred Parsons, one of the participants in the discussion panel.

The editors would also like to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Historical Publications and Information Section and in particular Dr David Lee for supporting the production of this permanent record.

We hope you enjoy reading it.



## **Welcome Remarks**

*Clive Hildebrand*

The Australian Institute of International Affairs' Forum 'R.G. Casey as Minister for External Affairs 1950-1960, Fifty Years On' reviewed the life of R. G. Casey as foreign minister. His time as Minister for External Affairs mirrors the conscience and purpose of the AIIA; both are responsible for promoting Australia and our involvement in international affairs.

The following papers give a qualified opinion on the significant issues associated with R. G. Casey's time as Minister for External Affairs.

In 1960, I graduated as an engineer, and went overseas for the first time, by ship. Following the timeline of Casey's career, mine may have been the minimum qualifying age for the Forum. However, we were pleased to find a vast spread of ages at the Forum, demonstrating the influence that R. G. Casey still holds in the study of international affairs.

In attendance were a number of eminent academics and former high level policy officials, giving a spread of perspectives and encouraging rigorous debate.

Several attendees had close personal contact with R. G. Casey, particularly two of his private secretaries: Pierre Hutton, private secretary from 1958-1960 and Richard Gardner, private secretary from 1955-1958. Their personal insights were invaluable both to humanise R. G. Casey, and to give a special perspective on the Casey era.

Richard Gardner passed on the apologies of R. G. Casey's daughter, Mrs Jane Macgowan, who deeply considered coming but was unfortunately unable to attend.

A quick note on the practical operation of the Forum. Chatham House Rule was not in effect, as much information on the career of R. G. Casey is already in the public arena. Participants had the option to invoke Chatham House Rule temporarily for sensitive information, but this right was not called upon during the Forum.

## Opening Remarks

### *Garry Woodard FAIA*

Thanks to the Australian Institute of International Affairs, particularly the leadership of the National Office and the organising team, for making it possible to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the political retirement of Australia's longest serving Foreign Minister of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, R. G. Casey. The AIIA is singularly well placed to bring together serving and retired politicians, academics and diplomats, to discuss what lessons the past has for the present.

History has always played an important role in foreign-policy making. Walter Crocker wrote to Arthur Tange on November 3, 1958: "A necessary outlook for a diplomat must be a sense of history."<sup>1</sup>

When I first submitted an article to the *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, the editor kindly said his policy embraced publishing pieces on the history of Australian foreign policy. Professor James Cotton practices what he preaches and delivered the first session of what were five excellent and relevant historical pieces on Casey and the Casey era.

The papers for the R. G. Casey Forum deal with aspects of the relationship between Casey and his advisers and wife. I am sure the example of the last 15 years shows that we need not

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<sup>1</sup> Crocker papers, Barr Smith library, University of Adelaide, available online [http://www.adelaide.edu.au/library/special/mss/crocker/crocker\\_series10.html](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/library/special/mss/crocker/crocker_series10.html) (Accessed 19 December 2011).

question the relevance of the latter, with which Diane Langmore's paper deals.

In relation to the advisers, Paul Hasluck, like Casey a diplomat, writer, Foreign Minister and Governor-General, wrote on the public service in *The Chance of Politics*, that he rejected the theory of 'great men in history'.<sup>2</sup> Hasluck thought that there were more important things, elemental forces that shaped history, and the history of the Casey Ministry is indeed a story of struggling against those forces and against those tides.

In regards to the public service, Hasluck described it as "a desert with range after range after range of red sand hills." Similarly, Alan Gyngell told the Lowy Institute that the public service was "as opaque as the window of a ute on a dusty road in February."<sup>3</sup> The former diplomats and officials seek to sweep away the dust and the cobwebs, and roam the ranges of Australian foreign policy, finding connections between contemporary foreign policy and that of the 1950s.

Unfortunately time has taken two of the original planned participants. Tom Critchley accepted his invitation to the Forum with his usual enthusiasm, which made him the most skilled implementer of Australia's policy of making friends with our neighbours. In the Casey era, he was Head of Mission in Singapore, South Korea, Malaya and of course most famously in Indonesia. He was also with Casey at the Geneva Conference in 1954. When he came back to Canberra

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Hasluck, *The Chance of Politics*, (Melbourne: Text Publishing 1997), 51

<sup>3</sup> Alan Gyngell, *The Role of think tanks in Australia*. Address to the Lowy Institute for International Policy – 28 May 2008, available online: <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=811> (Accessed: 20/12/2011)

Garry Woodard

in 1955, he played a key role in policy advice on China, which will be discussed. He also pushed through reforms on entry and stay for Japanese businessmen, which were a necessary precursor to the Australia-Japan Agreement on Commerce in 1967 (commonly referred to as the Commerce Treaty). Casey always strongly supported the Treaty.

David Hay would have had wonderful first hand reminiscences because of the positions he held while Casey was Foreign Minister. In the first two years of the Casey Foreign Ministry he was head of Political Intelligence/ Defence Liaison, a Branch which did not have an acronym, and from that vantage point he would have been able to recall why Casey met such opposition in trying to persuade the Department of External Affairs to take in ASIS, whose name was conveniently changed from the Australian Secret Service.

Hay then went to Bangkok in the early years of SEATO, which he never regarded as a 'white elephant.' He then came back to be Assistant Secretary Division III for Administration, where he dealt with the Treasury and the Public Service Board. His time there would have allowed him to conjure up figures like Lenny Hewitt and an earlier Thorley, and the legendary linesman from Cobar, whose conditions of service were equated with those in Karachi where officers died and suffered debilitating illnesses.

David Lee and his happy band of historians in DFAT have cause to rue the fact that the Department of External Affairs could never get approval to employ a trained archivist in the 1950s. The task of restoring files plundered by desk officers to keep their own files had to be left to resourceful amateurs Ashley Dorsett and Fred Richer.

The constraints which the Department faces today, budgetary, organisationally and perhaps even more the constraints of the future, were nothing compared with the constraints of the 1950s where every item of expenditure over fifty pounds had to be referred to Treasury.

David Hay, like Casey, and unlike any other member of the Menzies Cabinet, was a devoted member of the Melbourne Club, that outward but not very visible sign of the Melbourne establishment.

Some of you will remember Elizabeth and Phillip Searcy, who finished his time as Consul-General in Los Angeles. Much earlier, while stationed in Singapore, Elizabeth was telling her four young daughters the story of Easter. When she had finished one of the daughters said: "Mummy, Jesus was a very good man wasn't he?" When Elizabeth agreed, she asked: "Mummy, was he a Melbourne man?"

R. G. Casey was indubitably a Melbourne man, though born in Queensland, and he was indubitably a good man.

So let us now begin our journey around Richard Casey, to strive, to seek, to find.

## **R. G. Casey's Writings on Australia's Place in the World**

*Professor James Cotton*

In the literature on Australian diplomacy, R. G. Casey occupies something of an anomalous position. On the one hand, he is associated, not least as a result of his long imperial service and extensive imperial honours, with the cause of maintaining the importance of the British connection and of the role of the Commonwealth in the world. His differences with Menzies over Suez and his insistence that the United Nations be involved in the resolution of the problem stemmed largely from his fear, in the event proven entirely correct, that British intervention would be unsustainable and highly damaging to British prestige. His 1963 book *The Future of the Commonwealth* may be taken as a lament for lost opportunities, with neither many Commonwealth countries nor the British themselves aware of the alleged advantages that greater cooperation and interdependence would bring.

On the other hand, the record of his policy advocacy while Minister for External Affairs suggests a more specifically Australian outlook that was cognisant of the power realities of the immediate region. More particularly, this national outlook was consistent, in his opinion, with instances of disagreement with the United States. Thus, his preference for recognition of the People's Republic of China reflected the facts of Chinese sovereignty and the extinction of the Nationalist claim, while also aligning with the British view. His role in supporting a partition of territory in Vietnam indicated his awareness of the strength and local roots of the Vietnamese communist movement. Similarly, his later caution on involvement in possible coalition operations in Laos was reflective of the

likely costs and unsure benefits of a land war conducted by the West in Asia. Casey's eventual preparedness to accept the Indonesian claim to West Papua derived not from those calculations in Washington that saw Indonesia as a possible makeweight against regional communism but from the view that Indonesia could not ultimately be denied, however disreputable Canberra found the Sukarno government. The only alternative would have been a military conflict for which Australia was utterly unprepared.<sup>1</sup> Nor can these policies be easily situated within a narrow Cold War approach. Recognition of the People's Republic of China was anathema in Washington, the Eisenhower administration only reluctantly accepted the partition of Vietnam and in any case did not associate itself formally with the Geneva accords on Indochina, and at one point there was the real prospect that the United States might seek a SEATO role in an intervention in Laos. On the West Papua issue, by contrast, Casey's position owed little to the negative American assessment of Dutch prospects and the eventual desire of the Americans to win Sukarno's friendship; on this policy he was on the receiving end of criticism from his Australian colleagues (as reflected, notably, in Spender's memoirs) that was consistent with Cold War and even colonial views of Asia.<sup>2</sup>

In endeavouring to resolve some of these anomalies, this paper looks beyond the evidence usually considered. In existing accounts, while inferences have been drawn from the policies Casey pursued or supported as to his essential ideas, less attention has been paid to his published work. This is puzzling given that Casey published more than any other

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<sup>1</sup> Craig McLean, *R.G. Casey and Australian Foreign Policy: Engaging with China and Southeast Asia, 1951-1960*, PhD Thesis (Melbourne: Victoria University, 2008)

<sup>2</sup> Percy Spender, *Politics and a Man* (Sydney: Collins, 1972), 296-9.



Australian Foreign Minister or indeed any major Australian political figure, aside perhaps from Alfred Deakin. Though it must be conceded that some of his works are of indifferent quality, and many of their components had their origins in briefs and summaries provided by his Department, they nevertheless expound a consistent if diffuse view of the world. In this essay the enduring principles of this world view are delineated, and conclusions are drawn regarding the modes of argumentation found in Casey's work.



Group portrait taken during a conference of officials, military leaders and the heads of the governments of the United States, China and United Kingdom. Back, left to right: unidentified; Mr Casey (between Dr Wang and Lord Killearn); Major Morton (looking over Lord Killearn's shoulder), Chief Political Advisor to Mr Churchill; Mr Kirk (on the left of Lord Killearn), unidentified. Middle row: Mr Winant; Dr Wang Chung-Hui; Lord Killearn; Mr Harriman. Front row: President Franklin D. Roosevelt; Mr Winston Churchill; Madame Chiang Kai-shek. (Australian War Memorial: MED2023)

## R. G. Casey on Australia's World

In 1931, seeking to raise his profile on his return to Australia from his position in London as Australian liaison officer, and especially to appeal to the electors of Corio, Casey delivered a series of radio broadcasts in Geelong. These texts, together with some public addresses, he then published as *Australia's Place in the World*. Though they were occasional and often brief pieces, as they dealt with many aspects of international politics as well as imperial policy, they provide something of a conspectus of his thinking at that time. The topics considered here will be Casey's approach to Australia's region; his assessment of the situation in Europe; and his views on Australia and Imperial cooperation.

For Casey, the Pacific region was both benign and, in a sense, remote. Australia had little trade or personal contact with the "Oriental countries," and the Netherlands Indies constituted a "permanently neutral" screen – the ultimate security guarantor of which was the British Singapore base.<sup>3</sup> While Casey registers some awareness of recent events in Asia, including the activities of the 'so-called' Congress Party in India, and the agitation against the extra-territorial rights of the Western powers in China for which he has some sympathy, he is far from regarding the anti-colonial currents in the continent as portending a new era. Of the Chinese he is particularly dismissive: they possess "no national spirit and no genius for government."<sup>4</sup> However he sees prospects in China for the Australian trade in wheat since "the taste for bread, when

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<sup>3</sup> R. G. Casey, *Australia's Place in the World* (Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens, 1931), 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

once on the palate of a race, is liable to supplant the rather flat and insipid taste of rice.”<sup>5</sup>

In Europe, Casey views several dynamics at work. He sees a tide of nationalism – “narrow and provincial patriotism” – abroad which, in the context of the mistaken view that armaments promote security, is a destabilising force. On relations between the European powers, Casey finds France to be driven by a “persecution mania” and is consistently sympathetic with attempts by Germany to achieve the status of a normal power. Aside from Britain’s role as “the greatest peace maker,” Casey sees the improvement of relations between states resting upon the functioning of the League of Nations, “the only organisation for promoting better understanding and generally improving international relations.”<sup>6</sup> The latter sentiment no doubt reflects Casey’s experience at the League Assembly where he was present on four occasions between 1925 and 1930. Nevertheless, he notes that the League may pose a threat to some measures, regarded by Australians as vital, such as tariff and immigration control, policies that in the future may come to be regarded no longer as entirely domestic matters. White Australia, in particular, he emphasises as “the heart of our being.”<sup>7</sup>

The most important theme in this material relates to the Empire-Commonwealth and Australia’s role within it. Casey takes a critical view of the dissolution of the former imperial bonds: dominion nationalism had been “carried too far” and the post-war Imperial Conferences have “torn down a castle to build a row of villas.”<sup>8</sup> In Casey’s view, the Empire

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 43, 58, 31.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 17, 9.

unfortunately lacks a 'Secretariat' to coordinate its policies, yet even in this current uncertain stage of evolution, the countries of the Empire-Commonwealth, if they act in concert, have the greatest impact in world affairs. Casey sees this unity has great advantages for Australia: for example, he identifies the availability of loans on the London market, the fact that 42% of the nation's exports are sold in Great Britain, the protection that is afforded by the British fleet, and the availability to the Australian government of the diplomatic resources of the Empire. He notes an appropriate system of imperial preferences could further increase trade within the Empire, a measure that would provide "safe and sure markets" for Australian produce.<sup>9</sup> Given that Casey would soon be Assistant Treasurer, it is noteworthy that he did not consider that such measures might diminish world trade, neither did he find their prospect inconsistent with his complaints regarding the spread of exclusivist nationalist sentiment. Beyond the Empire, Casey sees hope for a stable and prosperous world lying with "the English speaking nations of the world" and Anglo-American "friendship and cooperation."<sup>10</sup> According to Casey, past sources of mistrust have been largely superseded, though America still needs to overcome its fear of 'foreign entanglements' and to take an appropriate place in the world, fully through joining the League of Nations.

Having entered Federal Parliament, and having begun to win a reputation as an informed commentator on finance as well as on international affairs, Casey published a further collection of speeches and addresses in 1933.<sup>11</sup> Many of the same themes recur. His sympathy for Germany and his view that

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>11</sup> R. G. Casey, *The World We Live In* (Melbourne: The Specialty Press, 1993).

French nationalism had long obstructed a rapprochement with that country extended even to an impatience with the manifest imperfections of the German political system: "I would rather see a strong dictatorship in Germany than a weak Parliamentary Government."<sup>12</sup> He sees it as fortunate that the settlement at Lausanne marks the 'end point' in the process of liquidating Germany's war reparations debt. On the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, Casey is prepared to concede that Japan was merely acting as other colonial powers have done in the past, even while he finds that the rules of the League and undertakings of the Kellogg Pact have been thereby broken without "adequate excuse."<sup>13</sup> A consideration of the forces at work in Europe and beyond leads to the conclusion that there are important systemic "anomalies and contradictions" in evidence: these include the fact of economic interdependence along with the recrudescence of nationalism, and the existence of global armaments held by nations simultaneously committed to the conciliatory practices of the League of Nations..<sup>14</sup>

Many similar observations were made at the time by Australian writers, including W. Harrison Moore and F. W. Eggleston. While well aware of the limitations of nationalism, Casey is clearly unsure as to how far it may in practice be superseded. On the one hand he is prepared to express, in remarks originally to the United Services Institution, a strong plea for internationalism in economics as much as in politics:

"I think Nationalism is one of the chief devils in the piece, and unless it can be tempered with a positive degree of internationalism, then it seems to me that a

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 113

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.,14.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 38.

good many of the next generation or so are not going to die in their beds. National decisions in respect of tariffs, armaments, and currencies affect practically all other nations. There is no high authority that can compel restraint and moderation and decency in these matters of universal concern. But I think that this depression will help in this regard. The nations of the world have looked over the edge into the pit, and they realise that next time we may go over the edge. I think that, slowly and grudgingly, the area of international law and of the pacific settlement of contentious questions will be widened – and that the arrogance of Nationalism will be slowly diminished in favour of international compromise.”<sup>15</sup>

Specifically on the question of armaments, Casey restates the key proposition of Norman Angell: “no one gains anything through war. Modern war is a highly destructive process and the nation that is nominally beaten is so impoverished that she cannot be made to pay damages.”<sup>16</sup> Here a direct influence may be detected. W. J. Hudson records that Casey knew Angell in London, and even organised a group to play Angell's board game based on the financial markets which included Angell himself.”<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, Casey finds no inconsistency in praising and even hoping to extend the Empire trading arrangements negotiated at Ottawa, which are indicative of the “desire to increase and to cement the economic solidarity of the British Empire group.”<sup>18</sup> To the advantages that accrue through the

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>17</sup> W. J. Hudson, *Casey* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 71.

<sup>18</sup> Casey, *The World We Live In*, 51.

British connection, Casey explicitly adds the capability to defend the White Australia policy which he describes as “our most cherished Australian ideal.”<sup>19</sup> Once again he laments the poor state of the imperial machinery, in contrast with the regular meetings and efficient secretarial management of the League.

Nor is Casey himself entirely free of nationalist sentiment, though what might be seen as an advance in his thinking as compared to his earlier views is not expressed without some contortions. Having described himself as “an Imperialist,” Casey several times observes that Australian interests are “not always exactly parallel with those of Great Britain.”<sup>20</sup> What practical inferences should be drawn from this emerging distinctiveness of interest? While, at this stage in his career Casey did not want to be type cast as an international specialist, seeking prominence instead as a commentator on national finance, he is sufficiently forthright as to describe the nation’s external effort as suffering from “lethargy” and warns that Australia must “not continue the Crown Colony mentality” – Australia must be equipped “to make up our own minds on world problems.”<sup>21</sup> Whereas in 1931 the British diplomatic machine was sufficient, he now advocates a cautious beginning to Australian representation abroad, though confined to the other dominions in order to enhance imperial cooperation.<sup>22</sup> He concludes his argument by stating the claim that ‘a good Imperialist’ is “a good Australian” though this sentiment seems partly for rhetorical effect.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 116

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 117, 74.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 40, 73.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 115.

Many of these ideas were brought together in an address Casey gave at Chatham House in 1937, its publication in *International Affairs* being the fourth appearance by an Australian in the RIIA house journal (after William Harrison Moore, Douglas Copland and Robert Menzies). Casey is concerned to emphasise Australia's geographic remoteness and the nation's lack of real interest in the evolution of the Commonwealth; he also warns of the limits to Australia's development even while taking pride in the fact that "a mere handful of people has developed Australia from a black-fellows' country to the state that it is to-day."<sup>24</sup> On British policy Casey expresses a preference, which he believes is shared by most of his countrymen, for Britain not to 'embroil herself in Europe', though he adds, paradoxically, that "it is your affair" – as though it would have little consequence for Australia or the other dominions. While the best that can be said for the League is that its revival may yet be achieved, the real hope of the world is for "the English-speaking countries" to act in concert to impose "peace upon the world."<sup>25</sup>

Australia's 'own special interests' extend to the Pacific, to the maintenance of imperial communications, and to the prospect that in the event of trouble the British fleet can be despatched to the East. A number of Casey's remarks are in the mould of the 'men, money and markets' discourse. For the British audience, Casey seeks to explain the rationale for Australia's attempts to broaden its industrial base, even though the resulting products may diminish the market for goods from Britain. He notes that industrialisation must be seen also, from the Australian point of view, as a defence and a population issue. Yet Casey is very cautious about any notion of a

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<sup>24</sup> R. G. Casey, 'Australia in World Affairs,' *International Affairs* (vol. 16, no. 5, 1937), 698.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 703, 704.



separate identity: Australia is a 'loyal' country and content to manage its external concerns 'through your British Diplomatic Service;' though he adds that in matters of commerce, and given Australia's need to find new markets, direct contact with foreign countries is now pursued. Casey's latter point reflects the passage of federal legislation in 1933 to create Trade Commissioners.

In an address to the Australian Institute of Political Science in the following year, Casey offers a spirited defence of the existing arrangements for intra-imperial consultation.<sup>26</sup> Australia, he asserts was fully informed and customarily consulted on vital matters of foreign policy; for example particular Australian interests have been embraced by the Empire as a whole, as shown by the adoption of the proposal for a Pacific pact of 'regional understanding' and 'non-aggression' by the 1937 Imperial Conference.<sup>27</sup> He concedes that Britain's interests in Europe are primary, though British decisions in this sphere will necessarily impinge upon the interests of the dominions. He asserts that given this habitual consultation and having at our disposal the "entire diplomatic and consular organisation" of the Empire, "British foreign policy may accordingly be regarded in a very real sense as Australian foreign policy."<sup>28</sup> Casey sees "practice, custom and common sense" and "common interest" rather than a "legalist formalism" as the bonds of the Empire.

In response to some vigorous questioning, he introduces a rationale for Australia's commitment to the Empire which is

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<sup>26</sup> R. G. Casey, 'Australia's Voice in Imperial Affairs,' in W. G. K. Duncan (Ed.), *Australia's Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson/Australian Institute of Political Science, 1938).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 57, 51.

at once realist and might even be interpreted (paradoxically, given its conclusions) as nationalist:<sup>29</sup>

“We are in the last resort dependent on the British Fleet. On the trade side, we do more than half our total trade in and out with Britain. Who would say that we could maintain our White Australia Policy on our own strength? We lean back and are dependent on the diplomatic and military strength of Great Britain in order to oblige the world to accept this policy of ours. Therefore between Australia and Great Britain there is a community of interest that probably does not exist with equal force as between any other two countries in the world. On those very material grounds we are in a unique degree dependent on the continued existence of Great Britain as a great power. I believe that the future and the fortunes of Australia are bound up indissolubly with those of Great Britain, and that is why I say I am an Imperialist as well as an Australian.”<sup>30</sup>

This reasoning suggests, recalling his expressed sentiment noted above, that because he is an Australian, Casey is an Imperialist. It is therefore noteworthy that when members of the Cabinet considered in January 1939 on the urging of A. C. V. Melbourne the appointment of diplomatic representatives in Tokyo and Washington, while Menzies was not in favour on the grounds that it might undermine “British unity,” Casey had come to support this innovation.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 67.

<sup>31</sup>A document entitled *Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Australia* presents the United States State Department's view of the development of official relations with Australia, which culminated in Casey's posting as first minister to Washington. It is marked 701/4711/4-2242 and is held by the

In many respects, Casey's subsequent role in Washington was his finest hour; this experience further enhanced his estimation of the Americans as is apparent in his later writings.<sup>32</sup>

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National Archives and Records Administration of the United States (State Department Records, Central File Division, Record Group 59). Casey's appointment was the culmination of a process which had started with the appointment of Sir Henry Braddon as Trade Commissioner to the USA in 1918. The Americans were acutely aware that Australian representatives, though they did discharge some consular functions, had no official diplomatic standing. While American authorities were always favourably disposed to accepting dominion representation, 'The peculiar conditions of Australian politics and foreign policy combined continued to prevent that Commonwealth from breaking away from imperial tradition.' Franklin D. Roosevelt took the initiative in proposing directly to Prime Minister Joseph Lyons that ministers should be exchanged, though Lyons was apparently not receptive to the suggestion. Stanley Melbourne Bruce was surprised to learn, in December 1938, of this initiative and pronounced in favour of finding an appropriate national figure to represent Australia directly in Washington. Even after Menzies declared that Australian missions would be established in Washington and Tokyo, the delay in realising this policy, in the context of growing regional security uncertainties, received adverse press comment, as the Americans were well aware. It was therefore the perception in Washington that Casey's appearance in 1940 marked the end of a protracted and somewhat reluctant process of diplomatic maturation.

See also R.G. Neale (Ed.) 'Casey to Lyons, 3 January 1939' and 'Menzies to Lyons, 5 January 1939,' *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy II 1939* (Canberra: AGPS, 1976), 3-5.

<sup>32</sup> Carl Bridge, 'R. G. Casey, Australia's Washington Legation, and the Origins of the Pacific War,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (vol. 28, no. 2, 1982), 181-188; R. G. Casey, (Ed. Carl Bridge), *A Delicate Mission: The Washington Diaries of R. G. Casey*, (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2008).



Prime Minister Robert Menzies (centre) addresses US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (left) and R. G. Casey (right) at the SEATO Conference, Canberra, March 1957. (National Archives of Australia: A1675, SEATO5/8)

### **Double and Quit**

Returning to Australia after his service in Washington, the Middle East and Bengal, Casey had again to restore his prominence in the public awareness. He replicated his strategy of the 1930s by contributing extensively to the press and radio, and in due course published a selection of his media pieces.<sup>33</sup>

Though the volume is an uneven collection with little in the way of sustained argument, it is possible nonetheless to distil

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<sup>33</sup> R. G. Casey, *Double or Quit: Some Views on Australian Development and Relations*, (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1949).

from it several claims regarding international affairs. The first concerns the Cold War, the central concern in the longest of the essays, 'Australia's place in the world.' Casey viewed the Cold War as "the most important factor in world affairs;" arising from "Russia's hostility to the democracies and her lust to communise the world."<sup>34</sup> Its outcome will depend on the acquisition by Soviet Russia of nuclear weapons, on whether the United States can continue to shoulder the burden of assisting those countries opposed to communism, on developments within the satellite countries, and on the success or otherwise of the "fifth column" inside the democracies. In the face of this ideological as much as military challenge, the solidarity of "the English speaking peoples" is required.

In explaining Australia's role in the 'core' British-American relationship, Casey states that "our first link in matters of commerce, finance, defence and much else, is with Britain and the other British countries" with Australia's relations with the United States coming "next" in importance; an ordering which he believes entails no inconsistency of policy. Casey notes that in cooperating with the United States, the preponderance of American power in the Pacific must be acknowledged and thus any attempt to erect an "Australian Monroe Doctrine" would be inappropriate, thereby registering his disapproval of Evatt's 1944 ANZAC Agreement. Significantly, given that the essay offers an international *tour d'horizon*, though Casey touches briefly on events in the Middle East, India and China, he does not deal at all with Southeast Asia nor does he discuss the phenomenon of decolonisation. Casey was yet to grasp the strategic significance of Australia's immediate region and of its contemporary transformation.

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 99.

A second theme of 'Double or Quit' is the place of Australia in the Commonwealth. The 'double' in the title relates to the need to increase the Australian population especially through immigration; Casey referring to the almost empty Northern Territory as "an open invitation to the Asiatic races."<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that, in the essay that discusses these proposals which is the first essay in the book, the text begins with the assertion that it is time for "we, the British" to consider future policy and is then devoted to an analysis of the problems faced by Britain, impoverished by the war effort and unable to pay her way. Casey maintains that there is an imbalance in the distribution of people, resources and capital in the Commonwealth. Australia requires more capital to develop her resources and more people to carry out that development, *ergo* there should be a transfer of both. This was not a novel suggestion at that time, Casey articulating an argument developed in the 1920s and 1930s by authors as various as A. C. V. Melbourne and F. W. Eggleston. Quite how a drain of population and scarce capital would assist a straitened Britain is far from clear, though Casey apparently believes that a more developed Commonwealth would ultimately provide a more extensive range of goods which could be purchased within the sterling area. To be entirely fair, Casey also addresses the more general question of making Australia attractive to foreign capital, especially American, pointing out that American experience in such schemes as the Tennessee Valley Authority showed that governments could act "in the stimulation of private enterprise." In these and similar passages, his enthusiasm for American techniques and ideas, which had its origins in his first visit to the USA in 1913, is readily apparent.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 23.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the key concepts in this argument. The “maldistribution” of which Casey speaks is of the “people of British race,” and in characterising this condition he uses one of his favourite metaphors, “congestion at the centre – and anaemia at the extremes.” The prescription seems clear: “common sense seems to dictate a considerable re-distribution of our British people, capital investment and equipment.” So far Casey might be seen as a latter day exponent of the ideas behind the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, but what begins seemingly as a discourse on racial redistribution transforms into a plea for a new basis for imperial power. Casey speaks specifically of “the undeveloped outer reaches of the British *Empire* and Commonwealth” and advocates “an appreciable migration of people and capital from Britain to the Dominions *and Colonies* [emphases added].”<sup>36</sup>

The circumstances of the Empire and Commonwealth in 1948 should now be recalled. Setting aside India (which had become independent, and in any case was hardly short of people), for every self-governing British subject there was one colonial subject, living under political arrangements more or less determined by the Colonial Office. This situation was to change rapidly in the next decade, but there was even some advocacy in the early 1950s of a new ‘fourth’ Empire that included notions of settling people from Britain in colonial regions deemed suitable, notably Kenya.<sup>37</sup> Casey is clearly a contributor to this discourse which proceeds on the assumption, however unreflective, that ‘the British’, who for Casey include the Australians, retain the right to develop the

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>37</sup> W. Reynolds, ‘Loyal to the end: the fourth British Empire, Australia and the bomb, 1943-57,’ *Australian Historical Studies* (vol. 33, no. 119, 2002), 38-54.

Commonwealth in ways that maximise their particular advantage. So while Casey states in the concluding reflections on his subsequently published diary that his wartime experiences "enabled me to get the myth of racial superiority out of my system," in the 1940s he was still able to grant a pre-eminent role to the British over subject peoples.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, Casey's broader view of the foundation for cooperation between the British and the Americans deserves some attention. He believed that the "two great English speaking Democracies of the British Empire and the American Union," confronted by threats from "alien ideologies," were in danger of taking their democratic freedoms for granted and that only the closest and most harmonious collective effort of both parties would make the defence of those freedoms possible. However in the exposition of this claim the somewhat vexing concept of race reappears. On this occasion Casey refers to the British and Americans as 'two races,' though he also contends that, given that their historical experiences have led them to value the same goals of increasing prosperity and personal liberty of belief and action, the mutuality of their understanding and of their interests are without parallel.

From the perspective of the 1940s, then, the guarantee for Australia's security and prosperity lay in the nation's place in two communities: the Empire-Commonwealth and the Anglo-American condominium. By implication, neither international institutions nor initiatives in the immediate geographic region could secure these goals. Yet in retrospect it can be seen that Casey's desire to double the population and intensify industrialisation would have a paradoxical result. For neither

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<sup>38</sup> R. G. Casey, *Personal Experience 1939-46* (London: Constable, 1962).



the men, nor the money, nor the markets would continue to be Anglo-American, as was early foreshadowed in the trade diversion dispute with Japan while Casey was Treasurer. With the diversification in the sources of all three, that quasi-racial identity of which Casey was so proud and so sure was bound to become increasingly evanescent.



R. G. Casey chats with Indonesian Students at a cocktail party presented by the National Conference of Women. From left to right: R.G. Casey; Misses M. Sigar; R.L.K. Atmada; E.N. Lie and M.S. Kresno. (National Archives of Australia: A1501, A87/1)

## Friends or Neighbours

R. G. Casey became Minister for External Affairs in 1951. Though assiduous in mastering his brief, a tireless traveller, and a shrewd encourager of talent in his Department, according to W. J. Hudson and Peter Edwards he was a poor cabinet performer.<sup>39</sup> As Minister he was not afraid, however, to put his views on record. He considered one of his duties to be providing the public, including people overseas, with some explanation for Australian policies and to this end delivered many speeches and addresses, some of which were collected and published as *Friends and Neighbours* in 1954.<sup>40</sup> Later, in 1955, an American edition was released that included some different material, which particularly took into account the creation of SEATO in the interim.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike earlier works, these publications largely deal with Australia's immediate region. Alan Watt, then Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, persuaded Casey that his first overseas visit as Minister for External Affairs should be to East and Southeast Asia, a part of the world beyond his experience to that date.<sup>42</sup> Thereafter Casey played close attention to events in this region, cultivating political leaders and playing a direct role in the Geneva negotiations on Indochina, in the formation of SEATO, in the debates on policy in Laos, and regarding the dispute over West Papua. Analysis of these published works will here be supplemented

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<sup>39</sup> Hudson, *Casey*, 234-5; Peter Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2006), 76.

<sup>40</sup> R.G Casey, *Friends and Neighbours. Australia and the World* (Melbourne: F W Cheshire, 1954)

<sup>41</sup> R. G. Casey, *Friends and Neighbors. Australia, the U.S. and the World* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1955)

<sup>42</sup> Alan Watt, *Australian Diplomat: Memoirs of Sir Alan Watt*, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972), 185-7.

by references to Casey's diary while Minister. The diary though not written for publication, nevertheless offers some insights on his private views at that time.

In *Friends and Neighbours*, Casey is aware that the appearance of a 'new Asia' and the transformation of international politics, with new patterns of independence, had rendered Australia's 'isolation,' once a security asset, now a liability:

“We have come to regard it as one of our important tasks to develop close and friendly relations with the new and independent states that have lately come into existence throughout South and South-East Asia. We have set up diplomatic posts in all these countries. The growth in Australia of a conscious desire to get to know and understand the countries to the north and north-west of us is a product of the past seven years.”<sup>43</sup>

Casey continues the theme of the overall importance of the Cold War, maintaining that Australia has a particular responsibility to participate in the struggle for Southeast Asia; his analysis of the communist threat in the region develops an early version of what came to be known as the domino theory, as scholars of this period have pointed out.<sup>44</sup> He instances the commitments in Malaya, Korea and through the Colombo Plan as examples of Australian efforts to repel communist aggression and subversion. Indeed, he took a close personal

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<sup>43</sup> R. G. Casey, *Friends and Neighbours: Australia and the World*, 26.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Edwards with Greg Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-1965* (Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1992), 107-8; David Lowe, *Menzies and 'the Great World Struggle': Australia's Cold War 1948-1954* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999), 84.

interest in developing techniques to counter subversion.<sup>45</sup> He saw the successful negotiation of ANZUS as the most important development in enhancing Australia's security, describing the Treaty as "the greatest step forward that Australia has made for many years in the field of international relations."<sup>46</sup>

Unlike *Double or Quit* in the 1940s, Casey deals directly with colonialism. He defends the record of the colonial epoch as bringing "to the less developed peoples of the world the financial and technical resources of more advanced Western countries."<sup>47</sup> He is even prepared to include Indonesia, Korea, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in his list of those new nations the formation of which has demonstrated the 'good faith' of the colonial powers. Neither the Netherlands nor France can be adjudged willing decolonisers, and Japan only departed Korea as a result of catastrophic defeat in war. But his main concern with the topic lies in the use that is made of it at the United Nations "as a gambit for international tail-twisting" and the consequent manipulation of the issue by the communist bloc for its propaganda value.<sup>48</sup> Elsewhere he does mention decolonisation briefly, its significance being that it has presented Australia with a demanding task, which is to understand the newly independent nations of Asia.<sup>49</sup> But though the decolonisation of Asia is, as Waters (2009: 89) observes a major preoccupation, he does not engage with the

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<sup>45</sup>Christopher Waters, 'A failure of imagination: R.G. Casey and Australian plans for counter-subversion in Asia, 1954-1956', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (vol. 45, no. 3, 1999), 347-361.

<sup>46</sup>Casey, *Friends and Neighbours: Australia and the World*, 86.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20

phenomenon itself in the manner of his predecessor as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Percy Spender.<sup>50</sup>

Spender was aware of the immense historical importance of decolonisation in Asia, and was convinced that the West “must associate itself with the dynamics of Asia” lest the communist movement exploit the demand in Asian countries for economic improvement and political respect.<sup>51</sup> By contrast Casey, writing of his direct experience of India, states that to the Indian mind dominion status “has the taint of subservience” and consequently “nothing one can say made any impression on this fallacy.”<sup>52</sup> It is noteworthy that, outside of the political sphere, contemporary Australian scholars such as W. Macmahon Ball were also developing the argument that decolonisation represented a major new phase in regional relations.<sup>53</sup> As the literature indicates, Casey was a strong critic of what he regarded as Ball’s leftist ideas, on one occasion alleging that his criticism of American policy in Korea served communist purposes.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, in Casey’s chapter on West Papua, he shows little sympathy for the Indonesian claim which he regards as “not well founded” though he is also at pains to point out that Australia seeks Indonesian friendship.<sup>55</sup> Significantly, in the chapter that

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<sup>50</sup>Waters, ‘A failure of imagination: R.G. Casey and Australian plans for counter-subversion in Asia, 1954-1956’, 89.

<sup>51</sup>Percy Spender, ‘Partnership with Asia,’ *Foreign Affairs* 29, no. 2 (January, 1951), 206.

<sup>52</sup> R. G. Casey, *An Australian in India*, (London: Hollis & Carter, 1947), 110.

<sup>53</sup>W. Macmahon Ball, *National and Communism in East Asia*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1952).

<sup>54</sup> Hudson, *Casey*, 243-4; K. S. Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932-1983*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 172-3.

<sup>55</sup> Casey, *Friends and Neighbours: Australia and the World*, 101.

depicts the vigorous record of Australian activities in Antarctica, and dwells on the ways that activity has been managed in order to support claims to territorial possession (in which he had played a personal role), Casey defends this latter day colonial expansion. He poses the rhetorical question, "with the world rapidly contracting, and with science overcoming obstacles so fast, can we contemplate some other country getting in ahead of us on this great land mass so close to our south?"<sup>56</sup>

Following the formation of SEATO, Casey turned his attention to dealing in greater detail with the communist threat in Asia. The American edition of the book contains four substantial chapters that provide a published account of Casey's view of the regional manifestations of the Cold War and of the Australian response. In their preparation, perhaps, James Plimsoll's steady hand can be detected.

On communism, Casey contrasts the communist record in Asia with Europe. While a communist regime was established in North Korea as a result of occupation by the Red Army, and in China communists were assisted militarily by Russia at an important phase of their expansion, in the remainder of Asia Casey sees communist successes should be seen in the context of the region's poor economic conditions, internal national divisions, and the lack of a clear alternative. Nevertheless, Casey did not see communism as a popular movement: "Communism has never spontaneously arisen in any country by the expressed will of the people. It has always been imposed from the top by a coup d'état or by force of arms."<sup>57</sup> However, due to low standards of living and poor literacy, and given the "techniques of subversion" employed

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.,124.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.,78

by the movement, “the vulnerability of South-East Asia to Communism is probably greater than in other parts of the world.”<sup>58</sup> Having first competed openly in politics immediately following the war, then having resorted to organised uprisings (as in Madiun, Burma, and the Malayan emergency), he sees the chief communist tactic then as subversion. Casey notes that, despite the apparent threat, Asian nations had been reluctant to enter collective security arrangements due to sensitivities derived from colonial experience. Nevertheless, the Indo-China crisis had shocked some regional states into action with the result being the negotiation of the SEATO arrangements. The participation system of some of the democratic states of the region in a collective security, albeit in partnership with extra-regional powers, marks a great advance since, as Casey observes, “it would be anomalous if the integrity of the small Asian States that stood in the path of Communism were to be guaranteed largely by Western powers.”<sup>59</sup>

Regarding the Indo-China crisis, Casey in his version of events, attributes the success of the communists to their mastery of nationalist rhetoric, while reluctantly conceding that by 1951 “the Viet Minh were in varying degrees of control of a large proportion of Viet Nam.”<sup>60</sup> No legitimacy is accorded to Ho Chi Minh’s declaration of independence, the French are described as attempting ‘to reach an accommodation’ and the resulting conflict is attributed to a Viet Minh decision to resort to armed force. With hindsight, none of these judgements appear to have been accurate. Nevertheless, Casey sees the Geneva accords, including the provision for the partition of Vietnam as “the best terms

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 114

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

possible.”<sup>61</sup> The neutralisation of Laos and Cambodia, a measure he personally advocated at the conference, represented an outcome both sides could accept. Casey defends this expedient in the following terms:

“it may be that the Communists will see that it suits them no less than us for the States of Indo-China to be genuinely neutral and to be an area geographically separating the Communist and non-Communist worlds. If so, the settlement in Indo-China could turn out to be a substantial contribution to achieving the security of the South-East Asian region – but only if a collective defense is built up in South-East Asia to balance the Communist military potential to the north of Indo-China.”<sup>62</sup>

The context for these remarks should be recalled. The events in question occurred at the height of the Cold War, yet at Geneva Casey himself was impressed with Zhou Enlai after their bilateral meeting and formed the view that the traditional methods of diplomacy were still not entirely out of place with such an interlocutor.<sup>63</sup> It is surely noteworthy that despite his agreement with John Foster Dulles that the struggle with communism would not abate until one or the other party was forced to accept fundamental change, and bearing in mind that these words were written very soon after the Petrov case and the breaking of diplomatic relations between Australia and Soviet Russia, Casey would not rule out the possibility that there could be some fruitful agreement with the communists. For that reason he was reluctant to support American action in

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 96

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>63</sup> R. G. Casey, T. B. Millar (Ed.), *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey*, (London Collins, 1972), 160-63.



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Indochina as it would be in contravention of the foundation principles for the United Nations; similarly he believed that it would be prudent to admit Beijing to full membership provided some satisfactory position could be negotiated for Formosa.



R. G. Casey addressing the plenary meeting of the seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly on 17 October 1952. Seated, left to right: Trygve Lie, UN Secretary-General, Lester B Pearson, Canada, Assembly President and Andrew W Cordier, Executive Assistant to the Secretary-General. (UN Photo/MB: 63020)

From the material in his diary as well as these chapters it is clear that Casey was of two minds on the nature of the Vietnamese communist movement. While he emphasises its manipulative nature and especially its cynical use of nationalism, he is dismissive of French attempts to mobilise their local allies and indeed hardly mentions any other indigenous political movements amongst the 'free Vietnamese'. In his diary in April 1954 he records the estimate that "of the 5,000 villages in the Tonkin Delta area [that is, the most populous region of Viet Nam], half are Viet Minh, a quarter are pro-French, and a quarter neutral or dubious."<sup>64</sup>

The relationship (or antinomy) between the 'friends' and 'neighbours' in the work's title bears some consideration. Casey believes that history has rendered Australia part of the British world, as his use of the expression "we, the British" clearly indicates.<sup>65</sup> Casey's established view, as Waters points out, is that Anglo-American cooperation is fundamental.<sup>66</sup> Casey believes that Australia's friendship with the United States as the product of the partnership forged during the Pacific War subsequently was reinforced by an awareness of the US role as the 'rescuer' of democracy, and the common experience of the two nations in response to the threat of communism in Asia; this was, in effect, codified in the provisions of the ANZUS Treaty. Behind these events lies a similarity of institutions and beliefs, nevertheless the

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<sup>64</sup> Casey, *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey*, 130.

<sup>65</sup> Casey, *Friends and Neighbours: Australia and the World*, 41.

<sup>66</sup> Christopher Waters, 'Cold War Liberals: Richard Casey and the Department of External Affairs, 1951-60' in Joan Beaumont et al (Eds.), *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making 1941-1969* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 91.

partnership with the US is something that we must continuously “seek” and thus cannot be taken for granted, unlike our ties of kinship and allegiance to the Commonwealth.<sup>67</sup>

Australia’s neighbours, however, are generally characterised in a different way. Casey believes that Australia had been set a great task in understanding the newly independent nations of Asia, with a start has been made in this understanding through the opening of diplomatic missions. Privately, Casey recorded a more pessimistic view in 1952, perhaps with some of his Cabinet colleagues in mind, that “we, in Australia, are living in a fool’s paradise of ignorance about the East.”<sup>68</sup> Casey also saw that Australia had a duty to assist its neighbours in combating what Casey conceives of the common threat of communist subversion. He instances the Australian role in Korea, Malaya and in the formation of the Colombo Plan: “prosperity and security of our neighbours are of concern to us... because of the danger from the north which threatens us all in common.”<sup>69</sup> In a passage added to the later American edition Casey characterises the neighbourhood in especially stark terms: Australia lives “now on the verge of the most unsettled region in the world.”<sup>70</sup>

At one point, however, Casey suggests that the newly independent South Asian members of the Commonwealth “have taken their place in our friendly company,” though the company he has in mind is the Commonwealth as a whole and

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<sup>67</sup> Casey, *Friends and Neighbours: Australia and the World*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Casey, *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey*, 82.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

<sup>70</sup> Casey, *Friends and Neighbors. Australia, the U.S. and the World*, 87.

its internal deliberations.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile there are many obstacles to the rendering of neighbours into friends. Notably, though “we want to live in friendship with Japan” a difficult legacy must first be resolved.<sup>72</sup> Neighbours, then, are the product of geography whereas friends are the product of history; the durability of this contrast may be judged by the fact that it was this duality to which Prime Minister John Howard often referred even as he asserted there was no necessary contradiction between their respective claims.

The contrast between Australia and the ‘neighbours’ can also be seen from the propositions Casey develops about Australia itself. On several occasions, Casey refers to Australia as “homogeneous.” The maintenance of that homogeneity remains an important national goal and “minorities... that do not fit” must be discouraged through policies consistent with the principle that Australia retains the right to determine who shall come to live within the national borders.<sup>73</sup> He does allow that ‘new immigrants from Europe’ have been permitted to migrate, but in his chapter on race and immigration he emphasises repeatedly the importance of assimilation. Not only should numbers of immigrants be limited, but an immigrant has the best chance of assimilation “if he comes from a country which has substantially the same political, social, and economic background as Australia.”<sup>74</sup> While eschewing notions of racial superiority, Casey’s text then specifically mentions ‘Asians’ but only in connection with the provisions that exist for foreign students and businessmen to take up residence. Thus, when he states that “we are a European community living alongside and working with Asia,” there is

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<sup>71</sup> Casey, *Friends and Neighbours: Australia and the World*, 10.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>73</sup> Casey, *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey*, 109.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

no question of a shared identity (and most certainly no racial affinity). Europe and Asia are this an implied antinomy, an 'inside' and an 'outside.'<sup>75</sup>

Something of a coda to Casey's later views is provided in his final work of diplomatic analysis, *The Future of the Commonwealth*, published in 1963.<sup>76</sup> It is perhaps his least impressive work in style and argument, but though W. J. Hudson records that it was rejected by two publishers before it was accepted by Frederick Muller, once it appeared it went through multiple printings.

Casey directs his message principally to the people of Britain, and expresses his disappointment that so little emphasis is given to the Commonwealth despite its potential for influence in world affairs. Casey wants to see the Commonwealth, restored as an actor in international politics, bridging as it does differences of culture, level of development, and even constitutional character. In retrospect, his argument can be seen to constitute a last ditch attempt to persuade the British that there was an alternative to membership of the European Common Market, negotiations for entry to which were under way as he wrote. However the nature of the coherence of the revived Commonwealth that Casey would wish to engineer presents a puzzle. The Commonwealth is now divided into an 'old' and a 'new'. The 'old' Commonwealth is animated by "tribal instinct," whereas the new share some historical experience, institutional forms, and the use of the English language.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, he cannot refrain from criticising India as the cause of the unfortunate republicanism which now

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>76</sup>R. G. Casey, *The Future of the Commonwealth*, (London: Frederick Muller, 1963).

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 49.

threatens to become the norm amongst the newer members, a sentiment which suggests that the 'new' are somewhat lesser members than the old. His suggestions regarding a series of proposed functional arrangements that would revive cooperation between the members of the Commonwealth in the areas of aid, trade, education and cultural matters are practical and even ingenious, but even their full operation would hardly impel the major change that he longs to see come about. 'New' and 'Old' no longer constitute an organic community.

### **Characterising Casey's International Outlook**

The grounds for considering Casey an imperialist are almost self-evident. Quite apart from his personal record, the fact that, as W. J. Hudson notes, by the time of his retirement as Governor-General he had "virtually exhausted the imperial honours system," demonstrates his strong sense of identification with the imperial elite.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, his fascination with imperial honours seems to have been a life-long quest. Diane Langmore refers to Menzies meeting Casey in the United States en route to Australia in May 1941. According to Menzies' diary, Casey sought a new "roving" position and the award of a CH for his work so far.<sup>79</sup> He was later, of course, to be so honoured. But such biographical information undoubtedly provides no more than incidental clues to the outlook of an historical individual.

In the period between the wars, much Australian international thought was concerned with reconciling the claims of the empire with those generated by the nation's emerging and

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<sup>78</sup> Hudson, *Casey*, 317.

<sup>79</sup> Diane Langmore, *Glittering Surfaces: A Life of Maie Casey* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 83.

distinct international personality, as reflected principally in membership of the League of Nations. Unlike some of his countrymen, the internationalist strand in Casey's thinking was always subordinate. Though, for example, he was vastly impressed with Sir William Harrison Moore's command of international legal precedents, unlike Moore he never came to see the Empire-Commonwealth as in any sense embedded within the more comprehensive structure of the League of Nations.<sup>80</sup> His references to the League are respectful, and even in 1937 he still hopes for its reconstruction, but there is no sign of the standard internationalist argument of the era, that Britain and the dominions were increasingly reliant upon their parallel obligations to the League for the ultimate grounding of their common policies.

There are many expressions, however, of a firm Australian nationalism in Casey's writing. By the standards of the 1950s, Casey's interest in Asia was more sustained than was the case for most of his countrymen and certainly for his peers in the Federal Cabinet. He could see that events in the region were of direct and even urgent relevance to Australia, and that as the interests of no other friendly power were affected to anything near the same degree, Australia would have to take its own counsel and, where it was feasible, advance policies accordingly. But if regional power realities had to be taken seriously and consequently the United States accorded pre-eminence, Australia's most important connection remained that with Great Britain.

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<sup>80</sup> R. G. Casey (Eds. W. J. Hudson & Jane North), *My Dear PM: R.G. Casey's Letters to R. G. Casey's Letters to S. M. Bruce 1924-1929*, (Canberra: AGPS, 1980), 559. James Cotton, 'Imperialism and internationalism in early Australian international relations: the contribution of W. Harrison Moore,' *Australian Journal of Political Science* (vol. 44, no. 4, 2009), 639-57.

How is Casey's enduring commitment to the Empire-Commonwealth, then, to be understood? First, despite the inevitability of some differences emerging between the interests of Australia and those of Great Britain, Casey was clearly confident that these differences could be reconciled with the appropriate machinery. Even in the early 1960s, Casey appealed for a reworking of intra-Commonwealth functional mechanisms as a way of keeping the Commonwealth in being. Second, Casey's singular understanding of the term 'British' must also be taken into account. He was adamant that the term had an extended meaning, including the people and polity of Australia as much as those of Great Britain. In these senses, then, Casey's Australian nationalism was nested within a wider notion of community. And for this usage of 'British' to be fully understood, the issue of 'race' must be addressed, bearing in mind that the term was a common feature of the discourse of the time and that its loose usage included features that might now be regarded as relatively benign. Although Casey uses 'race' in varying ways, it is nonetheless "a category which influenced [his] vision of the world."<sup>81</sup> The term is an enduring feature of his vocabulary, even being found in his 1963 book on the Commonwealth. In essence Casey was therefore neither an imperialist nor a nationalist as much as he was a believer in a transnational British identity. This issue leads to a consideration of the form and character of Casey's political argument.

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<sup>81</sup> Christopher Waters, 'Casey: Four Decades in the Making of Australian Foreign Policy,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (vol. 51, no. 3, 2005), 380-88.



How, then, is the mode of argumentation in Casey's international thought to be categorised?<sup>82</sup> Prior to World War II he was clearly prepared to see Germany restored to its former role in Europe, and even to regard with some leniency Japanese conduct in Manchuria, both 'realist' positions. As Waters points out, there is a considerable realist strain also in his post World War II writings.<sup>83</sup> Casey views communism as an implacable foe, in a material as much as in an ideological sense, and considers that material and especially military means must be available to meet this challenge. World leadership in the struggle with communism has passed to the Americans, and therefore their lead must be followed, albeit not necessarily in every particular. Yet while he saw the contest with communism was the main characteristic of global politics, this did not displace the claims of the Commonwealth. To be sure, Commonwealth solidarity, not least through the embrace of newly independent members, could assist in the defence against communism, but there were other and different grounds for maintaining the Commonwealth as a viable identity in the international sphere. Casey's exposition of these grounds is diffuse, but it includes reference to shared institutions and even to a common way of life. That he believed in the viability of such transnational ties, having indeed defended the League on similar grounds in an earlier phase of his career, suggests there was a 'rationalist' strain in his thinking that survived through to the end of his career and which was never entirely eclipsed by his realist inclinations.

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<sup>82</sup> James Cotton, 'Realism, Rationalism, Race: on the early International Relations discipline in Australia,' *International Studies Quarterly* (vol. 53, no. 3, 2005), 627-47.

<sup>83</sup> Christopher, Waters, 'Casey: Four Decades in the Making of Australian Foreign Policy.'

However, despite his expression of other sentiments, Casey's strongest and most durable idea was that Australia possessed a British identity and was part of a transnational British community. How is this idea to be interpreted? The term, 'Anglo-Australian' does not capture this position, since it suggests that the Australian identity is lightweight if not counterfeit, and that the real standards and beliefs are those of the British Isles. Casey once complained that the term 'British Council' was a misnomer, as presently constituted it was the 'UK Council.' Its business should be to promote Britishness, an attribute which belonged as much to Australians and Canadians as to the inhabitants of the island in the North Sea, only then would its current name be appropriate.<sup>84</sup> Neville Meaney characterises the era in Australian national thinking from the 1870s to the 1950s as "the British national or race patriot era."<sup>85</sup> Meaney's student, Stuart Ward, employs this term to describe the world view of Casey's generation, arguing that this attitude was still strongly in evidence at the time of the first attempts of Britain to enter the European Common Market.<sup>86</sup> Having become accustomed to defending the importance of particular and separate Australian interests while continuing to regard Australia as enjoying an organic relationship with Great Britain, conservative Australian politicians were in general reluctant to accept that that relationship was passing into history. Casey's fondness for imperial honours and his great faith in the historical role of the English speaking peoples can thus be understood as not inconsistent with his inclination to defend the distinctness of national Australian interests, initially in relation to the

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<sup>84</sup> Casey, *Personal Experience*, 161.

<sup>85</sup> Neville Meaney, "In History's Page: Identity and Myth" in Deryck M. Schreuder and S. Ward (Eds.), *Australia's Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 364.

<sup>86</sup> Stuart Ward, *Australia in the British Embrace. The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

leadership of Great Britain and later with respect to the United States. As Neville Meaney observes, “from a contemporary perspective what surprises is the strength with which Australians clung to [the] dream of the unity of the British peoples.”<sup>87</sup> W. J. Hudson records Casey’s disillusion, towards the end of his life, with conditions and attitudes in contemporary Britain. Behind the repellent hair styles and fashions on which he remarks may be detected a despair for the erosion of that community of which he had for so long been proud to be a part.

The realist mode of argumentation, then, is well represented in Casey’s writings but his thinking is not exclusively realist; his positive references to the League, to the United Nations, and especially to the transnational claims of the institutions of the Empire-Commonwealth may be regarded as rationalist. However, if racial solidarity was foundational for his thinking, then such argument is based neither on considerations of power nor on the claims of transnational institutions but on grounds of sentiment and identity.<sup>88</sup> The fact that Australian governments in recent times have appealed to shared values and beliefs in accounting for their close security cooperation with the United States and Great Britain is a reminder that while the former two modes of argument are found in contemporary discourse, the last is by no means a purely historical artefact.

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<sup>87</sup> Neville Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian identity: The problem of nationalism in Australian history and historiography,’ *Australian Historical Studies* (vol. 32, no. 116, 2001), 89.

<sup>88</sup> R. G. Menzies, ‘Australia’s Place in the Empire,’ *International Affairs*, (vol. 14, no. 4, 1935)

## R. G. Casey's Writings on Australia's Place in the World



Professor James Cotton (right) delivers his paper on the writings of R. G. Casey. From left to right: Melissa Conley Tyler, Garry Woodard FAIIA and Clive Hildebrand listen to Professor Cotton's presentation. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)

## **Discussion:**

### **John Robbins:**

I was musing on Lord Casey's use of the concept of race and it's interesting to note that Casey is on the record as having reproached his Cabinet colleagues about their loose use of the term "race," noting that no Minister of the Crown should be using race in a derogatory manner. That led me to wonder whether, taking account of Casey's very broad acquaintance globally of people from all sorts of races, whether his utterances could in any way be looked upon as racism as we now understand it or whether he was 'bigger' than that.

### **Professor James Cotton:**

In this respect, the past is another country. Our use of the term "race," is virtually a forbidden term: you can't refer to people's race without offence. But in Casey's day this was not necessarily the case and Casey himself believed that his use of the term "race," certainly even towards the later period of his life, was not in any sense pejorative. But the point that I'm making in this paper is that this is a really important animating idea. This is not something, when we read it now that we can set that aside because 'that's an obsolete term, he obviously meant something else.' This is one of his animating ideas. He himself firmly believed, I'm sure, that he wasn't using the in any pejorative sense.

My suggestion in the paper, though, is that sometimes the usage strays, if you read the words and you see what suggestions are being made. Again, this is simply because this an artefact of that era. But I think it's just a measure of the amount of time that's elapsed since that period, that this now forbidden term, should have been in those days so prominent. If you read Australian international relations writing between the wars, this would be one of the most common terms, it's not just used by this or that

person, it is used extremely broadly. For example in Menzies' article in *International Affairs*, in 1935, he proudly talks about the British race, what the British race have done, what their mission is, what their values are.<sup>89</sup> Again it's not just an occasional usage, it's absolutely central to his writing. It's a factor of that period.

But I think it's important to understand what kind of thinking have we got here? Is it realist or is it some other thing? A conception of the world in terms of realism says, 'The world is made of states, states are vehicles of convenience to protect the interests of the inhabitants and further their prosperity and that's all there is to be said about them.' Of course if you see the world in terms of races and one's own membership of a race and one's own country as being part of a bigger racial story, then your view of the international system is going to be very different. It's not something that current thinking captures very well because current thinking, often unconsciously, is applying some very contemporary status to the ideas of people enmeshed in this very different intellectual environment.

**Professor Joan Beaumont:**

I have comment and then a question. On this notion of Britishness, you may be interested to know I recently bought a series of *Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopaedia* that I found at a school fete. There are four colour plates of beetles. The first three colour plates are called 'British Beetles' and the last one is 'Other Beetles.'

I also wanted to probe this question of race. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds' book about whiteness looks at the concept of this international, intellectual community that defined itself by

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<sup>89</sup> R. G. Menzies, 'Australia's Place in the Empire.' *International Affairs* (vol. 14, no. 4, 1935)

its interests in whiteness.<sup>90</sup> Whiteness is a variant on race but I don't think is absolutely the same as race. I was just wondering whether that concept came through in Casey's work. If you put that together with the English-speaking peoples of the world, I mean, presumably that's a white community. How did Casey view the English-speaking non-white colonies and new independent states of the world?

**Professor James Cotton:**

I have a couple of points to make. Casey does say in his Chatham House address in 1937: "A mere handful of people have developed Australia from a black-fellow's country."<sup>91</sup> So you do find those kinds of statements from time to time. But maybe the best way to answer the question is to look at his book on the Commonwealth which was published in 1963, written while the first negotiations were occurring regarding the possible entry of Britain into Europe.<sup>92</sup> There he really wrestles with the 'old' and 'new' Commonwealth. The old Commonwealth is the white dominions and the new Commonwealth is the rest. Casey talks about the old Commonwealth in terms of tribal instinct, and he does use the term race in his 1963 book, so he still uses that same vocabulary, which is not all that surprising.

When he is talking about the new Commonwealth, what is it that they represent? What kind of class are we talking about? He's talking about countries that have had similar historical experience, that had been administered in the British way and that share certain kinds of institutions. They'll use the English

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<sup>90</sup> Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>91</sup> Casey, 'Australia in World Affairs,' *International Affairs*

<sup>92</sup> R. G. Casey, *The Future of the Commonwealth*, (London: Frederick Muller, 1963).

language, but he's really hard-pressed to be convincing about what it is that the new Commonwealth and the old Commonwealth have in common. In fact, in part the book is trying to persuade people that there are ways of turning the Commonwealth into a more multi-faceted institution. Casey has ideas about aid, he has ideas about trade, cultural exchange and so forth. But what he's trying to do is to recreate a much more organic entity from what now seems a disparate body of states. The book really does show a kind of strained attempt to describe a common space that the new Commonwealth and the old Commonwealth might occupy.

In some ways, inconsistencies and problems in people's ideas are more interesting than the issues they solve. I think the fact is that this is an issue in his writing is revealing of where that strand of thinking was leading.

**Dr Nicholas Brown:**

You're right to say that "race" is a word that we can't use but, Arnold Toynbee and Samuel Huntington aside, to what extent have the concepts Casey was thinking of in terms of race – institutions, culture and so on – now been replaced by concepts of civilisation or civilisations, which still are quite current in international relations scholarship?<sup>93</sup>

**Professor James Cotton:**

Well, that's another kind of question, even for another time. In my opinion, the term "civilisation" will, in time, be just as disreputable as the term "race." By the way, I think Samuel Huntington wrote some wonderful stuff and he's forgotten more

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<sup>93</sup> Samuel Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilisations,' *Foreign Affairs* (vol. 72, no. 3, 1993), 22-49 and Arthur Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934; 1939; 1954).



than I'll ever know. But when Huntington uses it, you can just imagine him advising an early Roman emperor. You imagine there's a strange eastern religion that's turned up and is going to overturn the old gods: 'Oh, we can't have that, the Roman Empire can't have all these impurities added.' The things that he says about Australia being a torn country, suggests: 'Well Australia doesn't have a civilisation.' Well, that's it; that's code for something that someone of Casey's generation might have referred to as race. I think that would probably be a nice essay for somebody to write.

**Professor Hugh White:**

In the mid-30s, Billy Hughes published a book about international relations and as a consequence had to resign from the Ministry.<sup>94</sup>I'm afraid I've never read that particular book, but I wondered whether there were comparisons and contrasts looking at Casey's writings of the 1930s between the different generations and their very different experiences in life?

**Professor James Cotton:**

Well, Billy Hughes was just a realist. He believed: 'World politics is a struggle for power, basically, and we'd better get on, we'd better make sure that we have the right kinds of alignments that guarantee our security and the only guarantee for our security can be power.' That's his argument. He does have a few nice things to say about the British but actually a lot of this is very critical because he was deeply suspicious of the Singapore Strategy, as he was right to be. That is, unlike Casey who went to London in 1939 and came back and said: 'Well, we think we can have at least seven battleships, two of a modern type, and that'll be enough to hold Singapore.' Hughes was never sympathetic to that strategy. He thought that we ought to

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<sup>94</sup>W M Hughes, *Australia and War Today. The Price of Peace* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935)

do a whole lot more ourselves; he was very interested in air power. So his approach was quite a different kind.

**Professor Michael L'Estrange:**

A few years back, Carl Bridge edited a book on the Washington Diaries, *A Delicate Mission*.<sup>95</sup> I think, reading the diaries, that they were obviously meant for publication and to be circulated widely. One of the things that came out in those writings was this balance between Casey being a child of empire and also having a clear sense of national and self-interest. While I would agree with the broad themes that you articulated today, I think some of those sentiments of national self-interest were apparent quite early. Through those diaries there comes a very strong view about the need for the Australian economy to diversify beyond its primary industry base, to broaden its markets beyond Britain, to institutionalise its defence arrangements with the US and to open up a substantive relationship with India and the Far East. All of these things were fleshed out later in his career but they were there at quite an early stage, even in the period from 1940-42. The other thing I'd say is I fully endorse what you said about his learning from that period about the art of communication. I think he was the first great practitioner of what we now called public diplomacy and, as Carl Bridge said, he thrived on the 'oxygen of publicity.' But I think some of the sentiments that you're expressing are very much there in the period of the early 1940s.

**Professor James Cotton:**

Thank you. May I just say, I was restricting myself to the published record just to see what kind of thing comes out if it but, yes, I agree with all of those ideas.

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<sup>95</sup> R. G. Casey, *A Delicate Mission: The Washington Diaries of R. G. Casey*, ed. Carl Bridge, (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2008)

One of the reasons that Casey did so well in America was because he used academics. First of all, he located an Australian expatriate scholar called Robert C Bald, who was Professor of English at Cornell, he brought him to Washington and he was used as the first person who went out to the American community, found out where the intellectuals were and found out what kinds of issues they were interested in, what they knew about Australia and what they needed to be told. He then recruited Fred Alexander, who was absolutely brilliant, who'd just been all around the United States talking to all the people there were, because that was Fred's style. If you have a look at some of the correspondence, and I've done that, it's quite extraordinary how Casey just soaked this up like a sponge. It was just enough for Alexander to say, 'there's this group of people, they've got these ideas' and Casey had thought of some way of making Australia more interesting to them.

Then, and this something I discovered only very recently, Fred Alexander who was on a Rockefeller Grant, decided that he had good work to do, he needed to go back to Australia. In particular, he needed to convince the Australians of the importance of America and what it is that we needed to do to become of interest to the USA. I think he did a great national service in that regard. Who was the person who Casey then wanted to recruit to run this outfit for him? Keith Hancock. Casey in fact, sends a couple letters to Hancock in Birmingham and says: 'I really need you to come to the Embassy in Washington. You're the man for me; you're the man with the ideas.' Hancock writes back saying, 'Well, bombs are falling on Birmingham. I'm an air raid warden and I'm keeping the university running during the day. I feel that this is my role. I can't just abandon the people I'm helping.' So even though his relationship with academics and intellectuals was not always happy, I think Casey was very smart in being able to use their

talents. The new Washington legation, which I think was an absolute triumph, was partly because he was very clever in using the people who were around him. He had a very small group of people to use, but he used them very well.

## **Casey and Plimsoll: a Close Working Relationship**

*Jeremy Hearder*

In this paper I would like to offer a brief impression of Casey from the perspective of his working relations with one of his principal lieutenants in the Department.

James Plimsoll, one of Australia's most eminent diplomats, from 1953-59 served Casey as an Assistant Secretary in the then Department of External Affairs. He was often Acting Secretary. His normal responsibilities included relations with Asia, the USA, and what was then called Defence Liaison. These were areas of great interest to Casey.

A number of Plimsoll's contemporaries, like Arthur Tange, Keith Waller and Mick Shann also developed close ties with Casey during his tenure as Minister. But there were special features about Casey's collaboration with Plimsoll. It continued for almost seven years, longer than with any other except Tange. Close trust and understanding developed between two very different people: one smartly dressed (need I say which one?), greatly interested in anything mechanical or to do with engineering, and passionate about flying; the other who did not even drive a car, could not change a light bulb, and was devoted to the arts and literature. An unlikely friendship developed and continued in the years that followed.

Casey first met Plimsoll when Casey visited the United Nations Commission in war-torn Korea in 1951. He was impressed by Plimsoll personally – “a useful fellow with

brains and judgment”<sup>1</sup> – and by the way that Plimsoll and his colleagues were uncomplaining about their living quarters, which Casey thought resembled “a cowshed in the Mallee.”<sup>2</sup> Casey knew that Trygvie Lie, the Secretary-General of the UN, wanted Australia to release Plimsoll to take a senior post at the UN Secretariat in New York. He was struck by this, also by the standing that Plimsoll had both among the Koreans and the Americans. The difficult Korean President, Syngman Rhee, was prepared to listen to Plimsoll and sometimes take his advice. This was unusual for an Australian diplomat of 34, in a situation where the dominant foreign power was the USA. The Americans’ high opinion of Plimsoll was confirmed after Plimsoll returned home when, in a possibly unprecedented request, the USA asked Australia to return Plimsoll to Korea.

Later Casey had announced Plimsoll appointment to be Head of Mission in Jakarta, but then acceded to the request of the Department Secretary, Alan Watt, that Plimsoll stay in the Department in Canberra. It proved a wise decision by Casey, both in his own interests as Minister and in the interests of Plimsoll.

Plimsoll’s contribution to Casey was many-sided. Plimsoll was loyal and dedicated to a fault, a human dynamo, once described by the Melbourne *Herald* as “a tiger for work.” “Besides a normal working week,” said the *Herald*, “he regularly spends most of Saturday, a good deal of many Sundays and many nights at his office desk.”<sup>3</sup> Plimsoll, who remained a life-long bachelor, lived at the Hotel Canberra,

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<sup>1</sup>Casey Diary, 9 August 1951. All references to Casey’s Diaries can be found for the relevant date in the Casey Papers in the National Library of Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Tange, personal communication, August 1996.

<sup>3</sup>*The Herald*, 19 March 1959.

just across the road from the Department, then in West Block, and rarely took holidays. Whenever Casey was in Canberra, therefore, Plimsoll was always available. Casey normally saw Plimsoll alone when they met.

For his part, Plimsoll enjoyed the Caseys' hospitality, meals at Casey's club in Melbourne and visits to stay at Berwick. As well, in August 1953 Casey told Plimsoll that he was recommending him for an honour, at what would be a higher level than the normal OBE.<sup>4</sup> It took a while, but two years later the award of CBE for Plimsoll was announced in the 1956 New Year's Honours List. On the other hand, Casey had the wisdom to recognize the special qualities that Arthur Tange had, and to appoint Tange, rather than Jim McIntyre or Plimsoll, as Secretary of the Department in succession to Alan Watt in early 1954.

Plimsoll's manner was quiet and competent without being threatening and he had a particular feel for understanding the needs of a Minister. Plimsoll was always well-informed and up to the minute. In a wider sense, informal contact with people passing through the Hotel Canberra exposed him to broader opinion and developments in Australia perhaps better than most in the small, isolated national capital of the 1950s.

Plimsoll's gifts included a photographic memory and being able to explain complex matters quickly and clearly, both on paper and face-to-face.<sup>5</sup> Casey once phoned Plimsoll, asking for a paper in a hurry about the value of Southeast Asia Treaty

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<sup>4</sup>James Plimsoll, 'Diary 26 August 1953,' Plimsoll Papers. National Library of Australia 8048/3

<sup>5</sup> Casey preferred policy proposals that were 'more concrete' and less intellectual: see Arthur Tange. *Defence-policy making: A close-up view, 1950-1980: A Personal Memoir*, (Ed. Peter Edwards), (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), 133.

Organisation. Plimsoll immediately dictated to a secretary six pages off the top of his head without changing a word.<sup>6</sup>

Amongst other things, Plimsoll rendered invaluable service to Casey in his public communications. He had a significant role in drafting Casey's major speeches. At that time the Minister was expected periodically to make a statement in Parliament about international affairs, and a debate would ensue. Casey was said to have "dreaded" this task.<sup>7</sup> Good speech drafts would have bolstered his confidence. When once Casey was to speak at the University of Sydney, Plimsoll was informed by a friend that it had been decided to close down the School of Oriental Studies. Plimsoll had no difficulty persuading Casey to include in his speech a plea to keep the school going. As a result the decision was reversed.<sup>8</sup> On another matter, Casey was "distressed" about an appearance of "excessive dependence on the US."<sup>9</sup> In a speech to a university audience in the USA in late 1958, Plimsoll's advice helped Casey explain that Australia differed from the USA on two broad approaches: in relation to Asian countries, Australia was more sympathetic both towards neutralism and towards socialism.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Furlonger, personal communication, 15 October 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Professor Peter Boyce, personal communication, 12 May 2007. Boyce served briefly in Casey's office in 1957, while an entrant to the Department of External Affairs that year.

<sup>8</sup> Casey spoke on 07 April 1953 about 'The new Asia in world affairs': see Marjorie Jacobs, personal communication, 06 August 1998 and James Plimsoll. 'Letter to Hudson – 13 January 1987,' Plimsoll Papers. National Library of Australia 8048/21/97.

<sup>9</sup> W. J. Hudson, *Casey* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 245-247.

<sup>10</sup> For Casey's speech see Australian Department of Foreign Affairs. *Current Notes on International Affairs* (Vol. 29, No. 10, October 1958), 658-665. In 1970, Plimsoll still thought this speech important enough to want to send a copy to George Ball, former US Under-





Group photograph taken during a visit by the Minister for External Affairs, R. G. Casey, to the President of South Korea, Syngman Rhee. Left to right: unidentified, Mr James Plimsoll, President of South Korea Syngman Rhee, R. G. Casey, Pote Sarasin of Thailand and Mr Alan Watt.

Plimsoll also had a major role in drafting Casey's book *Friends and Neighbours*, which first appeared in 1954. The book emphasised the importance of Asia to Australia and was an enduring contribution to Casey's effort to draw attention to the region. *Friends and Neighbours* was a notable effort, at a time when there was little public knowledge or understanding

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Secretary of State, who was writing about US-Asia relations: see James Plimsoll. 'Letter to Miss C Hauser – 05 August 1970' Plimsoll Papers. National Library of Australia 8048/1/37; Hudson. Casey and Plimsoll. 'Letter to Hudson – 13 January 1987'

of Asia in Australia, little contact by Australians with the region, and little written information readily available.

There was no public acknowledgment of Plimsoll's assistance. A contemporary recalled that Plimsoll, being very discreet, "would not have let on that he wrote or had a major hand in writing something that came out over Casey's name." But it was "general knowledge around the place that Plimsoll had drafted all or most of the book."<sup>11</sup> It was a remarkable achievement, squeezed in among his other considerable tasks.

Casey, as Minister, was very active with the Australian media, then predominantly print and radio.<sup>12</sup> Plimsoll provided useful support. This was at a time when it was most unusual for public servants to talk to journalists. Plimsoll had had earlier experience with journalists in the USA and then in Korea.<sup>13</sup> He made himself available to journalists in Canberra, on background. A number of journalists, who also stayed in the Hotel Canberra, sometimes shared a table at dinner with Plimsoll. One recalled that when he showed particular interest in something Plimsoll was telling him, Plimsoll left the table and later returned with several paragraphs written out for him.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Rawdon Dalrymple 'Letter – 9 March 2009' and G.J. Price, personal communication, 1997

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, Tange later commented that as a Department, "I doubt that we did enough to persuade him of the need to carry public opinion with him in his endeavours in Asia": see Tange. *Defence-policy making: A close-up view, 1950-1980: A Personal Memoir*, 132.

<sup>13</sup>Plimsoll et al, Plimsoll Papers, National Library of Australia 8048/3/5-6.

<sup>14</sup>Michael McGeorge, personal communication, 16 July 2000 and 27 March 2000.

Creighton Burns was a member of the Radio Australia panel that broadcasted comments on current international developments. He recalled that Plimsoll was very good at explaining current foreign policy to the panel, who were brought up to Canberra for time to time for such briefings; and that Plimsoll would mention alternative policy options, not just the official policy.<sup>15</sup>

There were some frustrations for Plimsoll in working with Casey. Like others, he found it a “disadvantage” that Casey seemed to spend so much time in Melbourne.<sup>16</sup> Casey did not like Canberra – although he had lived there before the War. Thus Plimsoll’s communication was often conducted at a distance and, compared to today, means of communication were primitive. When he came to Canberra, Casey often would arrive at the Hotel Canberra from Melbourne on the latest plane possible the night before cabinet meetings, after 9:30 at night, and Plimsoll would then brief him.

This meant that much of the daily business of foreign affairs in Canberra was handled without the Minister being present, including important matters where the Prime Minister would be involved and want urgent advice from the Department. Casey on average was overseas for three months a year overall, often for more than four weeks at a time, and often unaccompanied by a senior policy officer from Canberra. Plimsoll only accompanied him on four visits.<sup>17</sup> All this made

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<sup>15</sup> C.L. Burns, personal communication, 10 April 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Plimsoll, ‘Letter to Hudson – 13 January 1987’ and Tange, *Defence-policy making: A close-up view, 1950-1980: A Personal Memoir*, 317.

<sup>17</sup> These visits were two in 1956: in April for the SEATO Council and in November to Washington for ANZUS and New York for UNGA; and twice in 1958, in February through March for SEATO in Bangkok and visits to DNG and PNG, and August through

it that much harder to keep in touch with developments at home. Much more responsibility devolved then to the Acting Minister than today.

Casey often returned home after long overseas visits without stopping in Canberra. Tange or Plimsoll would have to go from Canberra to have a quick contact with him at Sir Charles Kingsford Smith Airport in the interval before his onward journey to Melbourne.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand when Casey did come to Canberra, contact was considerable. He would often meet Plimsoll two or more times a day, sometimes sharing a sandwich lunch in the Minister's office in Parliament House. Sometimes Plimsoll would ride with Casey in his car to the airport before leaving. When in Canberra Casey used to spend some time every week in the Department. Plimsoll warmly approved of that, later recalling that most Ministers did not spend enough time in the Department, while "others never ever set foot in it."<sup>19</sup>

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October to New Zealand, the US, the Netherlands, London, Canada, Washington, New York, Michigan, ANZUS. See Plimsoll et al, Plimsoll Papers, National Library of Australia 8048/3/7-12.

<sup>18</sup>Plimsoll et al, Plimsoll Papers, National Library of Australia, 8048/3/7-12

<sup>19</sup>Cam/Plim Vol 1 p233



The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan (far left), with Sir James Plimsoll (far right) in Canberra. Prince Aga Khan visited Victoria, NSW and the ACT on the trip. (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs/National Archives of Australia: A12111, 1/1967/27/21)

Plimsoll admired the way that Casey and Maie Casey, in their travels in Asia, “desired good relations, not simply out of intellectual conviction, but from instinctive understanding and rapport with the people of the region.”<sup>20</sup>Plimsoll recalled that “Casey had great commonsense, which often led him instinctively to the right decision.”<sup>21</sup> The commonsense, however, did not extend to making prudent or thorough

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<sup>20</sup>Plimsoll obit note to Ed London Times 21/1/83 in Plimsoll et al, Plimsoll Papers, National Library of Australia 8048/21/82.

<sup>21</sup> Plimsoll, ‘Letter to Hudson – 13 January 1987’

preparations for meetings. Plimsoll sometimes despaired of Casey's casual attitude in this respect. It seemed that to Casey "a process of constant touring and talk must have some inherent value almost irrespective of what was discussed and with whom."<sup>22</sup>

Plimsoll recalled: "There were always dangers in his urge to go into talks without any clear idea of what he wanted to get out of them or what he was going to say himself." For example, Casey, who talked to Zhou Enlai during the Geneva Conference on Indochina in 1954, later wanted to propose to Zhou that they have talks somewhere in China. Plimsoll recalled that he "had difficulty in dissuading him from proposing this until it was clear what he could say. I thought that Zhou would certainly have expected something other than inconsequential chatter, and that such a meeting would do harm all round."<sup>23</sup> Nothing came of this, of course.

Contemporaries such as Tange and Walter Crocker, as well as his biographer W. J. Hudson, have commented on Casey's disappointing performance in Cabinet.<sup>24</sup> Tange stated in his memoirs: "He lost out on many occasions in Cabinet, which was clinging to the past and containing some racial prejudices."<sup>25</sup> Plimsoll thought that one factor was that Casey "would act more by instinct and could be very fuzzy in his presentation. He often tended to assume that his propositions were self-evident and therefore he did not argue

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<sup>22</sup> Hudson, *Casey*, p.27.

<sup>23</sup> Plimsoll. 'Letter to Hudson – 13 January 1987' and Hudson, *Casey*, 251-2.

<sup>24</sup> Casey Diary, 18 July 1954 and Hudson, *Casey*, 233-35, 245-47

<sup>25</sup> Tange, *Defence-policy making: A close-up view, 1950-1980: A Personal Memoir*, 131.

them. Casey was not able to explain himself, particularly in abstract or sophisticated terms.<sup>26</sup>

For both Casey and Plimsoll of course, their collaboration did not take place in a vacuum. In the Canberra of the 1950s, both for ministers and for senior public servants, Prime Minister Robert Menzies was a dominating figure. Casey's relations with Menzies were often difficult and complex, both at the personal level and in terms of policy. Plimsoll and his colleagues had to navigate possible shoals in this. Suez, of course, was a major point of policy difference.

Plimsoll, who saw a lot of Menzies as well as Casey in the 1950s and kept in touch with each afterwards, thought people had tended to exaggerate the extent of difficulty between them. On the one hand, Casey was still known to harbour ambitions to become Prime Minister. This was although he did not like Parliament much, was on close terms with only a few of his Ministerial colleagues, and lacked support in the Party room.<sup>27</sup>

According to Plimsoll :“Differences in personality and in mind were standing between” Casey and Menzies. Menzies developed the precision and clarity of a lawyer trained to argue cases.” Whereas, as mentioned above, Casey was quite different in that respect. Plimsoll continued that “this meant Casey and Menzies often could not understand each other.” However, “there was a considerable bond between” them, “deriving from the fact that they both had an attachment to a

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<sup>26</sup>Plimsoll et al, Plimsoll Papers, National Library of Australia 8048/21/95

<sup>27</sup> “Clearly he despises most of his Cabinet colleagues as human beings - and with reason. His antipathy to (coloured by a slight jealousy for ) Menzies came out again and again”. See Sir Walter Crocker, Crocker Papers, Barr-Smith Library, Adelaide University.

lot of the same things and had similar codes of conduct and many friends in common.” Plimsoll recalled that he was “often surprised by the degree to which they would consult one another. Menzies sometimes delegated to Casey a degree of responsibility in delicate matters that I doubt he would have delegated to another Minister.”<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps one important service that Casey did for Plimsoll in agreeing to his posting to Canberra and having him there so long, was that as a result Plimsoll was brought into regular contact with Menzies, both officially and socially. He greatly impressed Menzies, which in due course contributed to his elevation in a few years to Secretary of the Department.

Over time mutual respect between Casey and Plimsoll deepened into trust and friendship. Following Casey’s retirement in 1960, Plimsoll sent him a handwritten letter. It was unusual for the feeling expressed:

“I shall miss you enormously. As far as I have been personally concerned, our relationship could not have been more satisfying, and I owe an immense amount to you in so many ways since you became Minister ... It is not easy for one who is naturally reticent, to put in cold words on paper all that I should like to say. I think we understand one another. The Department will miss you, as a human being ... your impetus, and imagination and courage, and you’ve given our foreign policy a wrench that put Australia into a new posture, facing the second part of the twentieth century and our pacific environment.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Plimsoll ‘Letter to Hudson 13 January 1987.’

<sup>29</sup> Plimsoll, ‘Letter to Casey – 25 January 1960,’ Plimsoll Papers, National Library of Australia 8048/1/37



In Casey's equally warm reply, also handwritten, he agreed that they did, indeed, understand each other. He wrote:

“There is no one in a fairly full and long life, who has given me such intelligent, farseeing and thoughtful help – for which I am infinitely grateful. You are probably the most dedicated human being that I've ever known. In a not too easy world you've been a solid rock of character and friendship.”<sup>30</sup>

Yet, like most people who knew Plimsoll, Casey was aware there was much he did not know about that very private, controlled individual. He once wrote to Plimsoll: “Heaven knows, you may be a dyed in the wool dangerous radical, under the guise of a moral, balanced and intelligent individual. I don't think you are – but who really knows?”<sup>31</sup>

They kept in touch by regular letters. Casey's elevation to a life peerage in 1960, about which he had sought advice from Plimsoll, meant that the Caseys often stopped off to stay with Plimsoll abroad, as they had a standing invitation. This was in New York and later New Delhi and on travels to and from London for meetings of the House of Lords. And then in 1965 Casey's appointment as Governor-General happened to coincide almost exactly in time with Plimsoll's appointment as Secretary of the Department in Canberra. Plimsoll visited Government House frequently, including informally – amongst other things an opportunity to be better informed

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<sup>30</sup> Casey, 'Letter to Plimsoll – 11 February 1960,' Plimsoll Papers, National Library of Australia 8048/1/37

<sup>31</sup> Casey, 'Letter to Plimsoll 05 June 1972,' Plimsoll Papers, National Library of Australia 8048/1/38

about vice-regal life and work, not knowing that one day he would be similarly involved.

When Casey died in 1976 Plimsoll was based in Moscow. Later he joined in a private fundraising, organized by Tange, for a bust of Casey which is in the foyer of the Embassy in Washington. Plimsoll personally donated \$1, 000.<sup>32</sup> He shared with Maie Casey a common interest in art and literature, and stayed in touch with her. After Maie died, in January 1983, Plimsoll took it upon himself to write an obituary note and send it to the Editor of the *London Times*. He gave the address at her memorial service in Melbourne, making a special journey from Government House in Tasmania to do so.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

Casey's tenure as Minister was demanding and beset with difficulties. In his sixties he was perhaps past his best years, yet he held on for a remarkable length of time. Partly perhaps it was due to the quality of service and support that he got in the 1950s from a comparatively young and new Department, as External Affairs then was; a Department that was able to produce for Ministers a Plimsoll and a Tange, as well as many other outstanding people.

Since Casey's time some things have changed, such as the way that ministers' private offices are staffed, and the way the Department communicates with the Minister, or rather Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries. Today it would be

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<sup>32</sup>H. Marshall, 'Letter to Plimsoll– 07 July 1982,' Plimsoll Papers, National Library of Australia 8048/1/25.

<sup>33</sup>Jane MacGowan, 'Letter to Plimsoll – 09 January 1983' and Plimsoll. 'Reply to Jane Macgowan - 11 January 1983,' National Library of Australia 8048/21/82.

unusual for a department official to have the degree of personal access that Plimsoll enjoyed.

Finally there are some fitting physical reminders of the significance of the working relationship of these two men, during a critical period of Australia's foreign policy development. Some here will know that in the Casey Building, where Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is housed in Canberra, official functions are held in the Plimsoll room; while in the Canberra suburb of Casey, currently under construction, Plimsoll Drive will be a major thoroughfare.



Belgium Ambassador Joseph de Bruyn presents his credentials at Government House. Left to right: Mr de Bruyn, Governor-General Lord Casey and James Plimsoll, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs. (Department of Foreign Affairs: HIS-0398).

**Discussion:**

**Question:**

One of the things that struck me from your comments was that there wasn't much link with the Department of the Prime Minister becoming involved in the sorts of issues around which External Affairs was giving advice to Casey. Was that because it was not really seen as appropriate for the Prime Minister's Department to involve itself directly in those kinds of operational issues or was it underdeveloped in terms of the staffing? Did they have a relatively strong cohort at the top?

**Jeremy Harder:**

I think maybe other people here might be better able to answer that question but my answer would be that, of course, Prime Ministers' Department in those days used to get copies of almost every cable that External Affairs got. Plimsoll made it his business to get to know everybody when he first came back to Canberra – in some ways I think he treated Canberra like another overseas post but without the allowances. He got to know the archbishops, he got to know all the academics and he certainly got to know all the senior key people in the Prime Minister's Department, in particular John Bunting became one of his closest friends. So there was a very close relationship, which I'm not sure had been there before. But I think that in those days, relationships between departments were in a very early stage, compared with how they are now.

**Question:**

Jeremy, thank you very much. One of the really important areas that needs to grow is not just understanding the ideas and the policy but the work behind government and particularly international relations. When Plimsoll was working late at night and into the weekends, what was he working on? What was the character of the work that most engaged him? I'm interested in

Jeremy Hearder

your reference to Plimsoll being well-informed and seeking other points of view. What's the character of his work, a kind of discretionary work, if you like, the work of his filling those long hours that he was doing?

**Jeremy Hearder:**

Well, with someone like Plimsoll, I wouldn't say it was discretionary. I would say – and not just for Plimsoll but for all sorts of other people who in those days had to engage in long hours and do so today – it's the constant volume of the work that has to be done. Cabinet submissions and things like that; in those days, the procedures were very different. In late 1958 there was an important Cabinet submission that had to be done about Indonesia, before Dr Subandrio's visit. Plimsoll was up all night and then most of the rest of the day working with people like Peter Henderson to get things done. And it was not discretionary, it was work that had to be done. External Affairs was a very small department; it was important to constantly keep up-to-date with what was going on in the outside world, and you had these cables coming in all the time. You've got to keep up with it. And so it was all work that had to be done.

**Question:**

So this work was often crafting policy as you go.

**Jeremy Hearder:**

Yes, or just responding to what the Minister wants or preparing immediate responses that are needed for an Ambassador abroad.

**John Robbins:**

Jeremy, with such an accomplished advisor as Sir James, why was Casey so often unsuccessful in Cabinet?

**Jeremy Hearder:**

Firstly, here's a man who has spent quite a considerable amount of his time abroad and had a considerable sort of feel for international relations. He had got this real missionary zeal, as I would put it, about the importance of Asia. And yet, he found that, amongst his cabinet colleagues, there were very few who were interested. As far as they were concerned, External Affairs was a bit of a 'Johnny-come-lately.' Any extra money that would go to External Affairs might be at the expense of their own portfolios.

Casey felt most of the Cabinet was "hostile to the UN, hostile to the Colombo Plan and unsympathetic with Asia."<sup>34</sup> But the problem was also, that Casey, who Menzies often invited to just give the Cabinet a bit of a run down on what was going on round the world, he went on too long and that bored them. He really did have a problem because there wasn't that kind of sympathy towards what he was trying to do. I think that the efforts that Casey and the Department put in during those days really only bore fruit later.

**Pierre Hutton:**

Jeremy, from my experience, I'm a little surprised that we haven't heard about Sir James's problem with administration because it's a favourite subject of academic writers. I've traced through rumours, which have become established fact, that Jim had a drawer in which he put papers which were too hard; a policy of masterly inactivity. Apart from seeing Plimsoll as Casey's private secretary, I saw him when I succeeded Dick as the Public Information Officer. All I can say is that no one could have given me more support in a very difficult job, despite what Dick had done in founding the job. It was difficult, bearing in mind that a number of our senior colleagues shared the Hasluck

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<sup>34</sup> Casey Diary, 28 July 1954.

Jeremy Hearder

view that having a spokesperson was absolutely unnecessary. But even if sometimes there was a mistake made, he never blew up, so to speak, and he gave loyal support.

Let me tell you, however, one of the few occasions in my time with Casey when I saw him become angry – furious – when he and Jim went off to see the Secretary of State of the United States. The next day Casey said to me: “Have you seen the report going to Canberra?” That is, my report on my interview with Christian Herter the Secretary of State. I said: “No, but I’ll ask Sir James.” When I approached him I said: “The Minister wishes to know has the report gone?” Plimsoll said to me, I assure you: “Now, it’s a funny thing, at the end of the day I dipped into my side pocket and here were some scraps of paper which I couldn’t fathom what they meant, so I tossed them out” – and they were the records of the conversation with the Secretary of State of our great ally! I said, “I’m sorry, but I think that you have to tell the Minister.” This was in the old Commission of the Empire State Building. Suddenly, there was a loud voice and, clearly, the Minister was not happy with that.

Plimsoll has his own style or eccentricity. When I came back from a particular European posting, I went to my native land, Tasmania, and suddenly those avid readers of vice-regal notes would have seen that: “On Tuesday Mr Hutton, Ambassador to ‘X,’ had lunch with the Governor and on Thursday he had dinner with the Governor in the presence of the Premier and one or two other notables.” Of course Jim was just thirsting to know what was going on in Canberra. Thank you for what I think was a very fair presentation, Jeremy.

**Jeremy Hearder:**

Thanks, Pierre. On Plimsoll and his management ability, of course, as Tange said to me, when Plimsoll was in Canberra in the 1950s, his management responsibilities were normally not

## Casey and Plimsoll: a Close Working Relationship

very great, “approximating that of a country solicitor” was the way Tange put it, in charge of that very small division that he had. However, the one thing that he did do in the times that he was Acting Secretary and at other times was to take an enormous interest in the recruitment of new people to the Department, many of whom I am sure here today would have passed through his discerning glance and his examination before they were accepted. I was fortunately in a year when he was overseas, so I got in. But I think that his management really wasn’t quite such an issue when he was there in the 1950s.



Jeremy Hearder relaxes before he presents his paper on James Plimsoll. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)



## **The Minister and the Permanent Head: R.G. Casey and Arthur Tange**

*Professor Peter Edwards AM*

On or soon after 4 February 1960, R.G. Casey visited the office of the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, of which he had been the Minister until 3 February. Arthur Tange welcomed him warmly, making it clear to his secretary and executive assistant that this would be a private meeting, with no need for any official minutes or records. The cordiality of the personal relationship was undisguised, but Tange was stunned when Casey presented him with a magnificent silver cigar box, inscribed:

Sir Arthur Tange  
with appreciation and best wishes  
from R.G. Casey 4-2-60

The date was the day after Casey's retirement, included only to affirm that this was a personal gift. The symbolism was profound, for the cigar box had been given to Casey by his father. Now Casey was handing it on, not to his own son Donn, but to the young man who had been the head of Casey's department for the previous six years. There has been much commentary on the professional relationship between minister and permanent head, one of the most important relationships in Australian public administration at this time. Many have noted the quasi-filial relationship that developed between Dr H.V. Evatt and Dr John Burton in the late 1940s, but few have observed that something similar developed between Casey and Tange. How, then, did this come about?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Much of this paper is drawn from Peter Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins* (Crow's Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006). Where

In the 1950s the Department of External Affairs had an unusual demographic structure as a result of slow and modest development in the 1930s followed by the rapid expansion of the 1940s. In December 1952, for example, of the diplomatic officers of the Department, 52 were in their twenties and 59 in their thirties, but only thirteen in their forties and just three aged 50 or more.<sup>2</sup> So a Minister for External Affairs in the 1950s who wanted to appoint a new departmental secretary essentially faced a choice between one of the small 'old guard' or one of the younger men (there were very few women at a time when the marriage bar applied to female public servants), the most talented of whom were already making an impact in senior policy-advising positions.

This was the choice Percy Spender, the Minister for External Affairs in the new Menzies Government, faced in early 1950, when it became necessary to find a replacement for the youthful Dr John Burton. Spender consulted his ministerial colleague, Paul Hasluck, who had worked in the Department in the 1940s. Hasluck's advice was that Alan Watt was the most able of the senior men, but that he might also look at one of the younger men, Arthur Tange, with whom Hasluck had served in the mission to the United Nations in New York. Spender appointed Watt, on the grounds of seniority and broader experience, but later thanked Hasluck for "a good tip," finding Tange impressive and being sometimes irritated

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not otherwise stated, the primary and secondary sources may be found there, and the acknowledgements made there apply similarly. The paper also owes much to W.J. Hudson, *Casey* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup>Joan Beaumont, Christopher Waters and David Lowe with Garry Woodard, *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making, 1941-1969* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 158.

by Watt's "fidgeting."<sup>3</sup> Seniority was a strong principle in the Public Service at the time, but there were also precedents for young appointees under the Chifley Government, including not only Burton but also L.F. Crisp.



The Instruments of Ratification of the Protocol amending agreement on Commerce between Australia and Japan were exchanged on 27 May in Canberra, by the Secretary of the Australian Department of External Affairs, Sir Arthur Tange (right) and the Ambassador for Japan, His Excellency Mr Saburo Ohta. (Michael Brown/National Archives of Australia: A1501, A5101/2)

Watt was therefore in place as Secretary when Casey became Minister in 1951. On Watt's advice, Casey decided that his first overseas visit as Minister should be, not to his familiar territory of the Middle East, but to South and Southeast Asia,

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<sup>3</sup>Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins*, 54-5.

a tour on which he was accompanied by Watt. It was an early sign that Casey and his Department would give much greater attention to the Asian dimensions of Australian foreign policy than was likely to have emerged under any other Liberal of that period. Casey's second trip, later the same year, included a wide range of Asian, European and North American cities, where he was accompanied by Tange. This was a very important episode in shaping Casey's approach to his new portfolio and his opinions of Watt and Tange.

There is some evidence that Casey, who was hardly a dangerous radical, became increasingly ill-at-ease with Watt's caution and conservatism. Watt's advice was often hedged: 'On the one hand, Minister ... but on the other hand...' By contrast, Tange's advice was more confident and decisive.

Casey accepted the proposal, apparently Watt's own initiative, that Watt should stand down as Secretary and become a sort of co-ordinator of the diplomatic missions in Southeast Asia, along the lines of the British post held by Malcolm MacDonald. Casey thus faced the choice of a new Secretary, a matter which he seems to have considered for well over a year. There is evidence that he thought seriously about, and raised the possibility of the appointment with, two of the 'old guard,' Alfred Stirling and Keith Officer. Stirling seems to have recognised that "running a department is not my line." Officer, as we know from the new biography by Allan Fewster,<sup>4</sup> was proving an able Ambassador in Paris, but he too seems to have recognised that ambassadorship rather than departmental secretaryship was his metier. Walter Crocker later told Stirling that Casey had also approached Allen Brown, then Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department.

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<sup>4</sup>Alan Fewster, *Trusty and Well Beloved: A Life of Keith Officer, Australia's First Diplomat* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2009).

At this distance, of course, it is difficult to know exactly what was in Casey's mind when he made these approaches. We can only speculate on the extent to which the ever-courteous Casey was simply paying due respect to seniority, loyal service and in some cases friendship, while steering the discussion in such a way as to avoid an unsuitable appointment. In 1953, during the discussions over Watt's appointment to Singapore, Watt wrote confidentially to Tange, who was now Deputy Head of Mission in Washington and charged with the unofficial task of trying to keep some rein on Spender, the former minister who was now ambassador to the United States. Watt suggested that thought was still being given to appointing Stirling, with a deputy "who would really run policy," but it was more likely that Casey would choose a younger man, and that Tange was edging ahead of Laurence 'Jim' McIntyre and James Plimsoll in that competition. It is unlikely, then, that Tange was surprised when Casey, during a visit to Washington, offered Tange the post, although both men liked to tell the story that Tange expostulated: "But I'm only 39! What will I do with the rest of my life?" (In one version of this story, Casey retorted that Tange might become a Tibetan monk).<sup>5</sup>

So Tange was far from being an automatic choice as Secretary of External Affairs. He edged over the line just ahead of some seniors and a number of his contemporaries in the emerging younger cohort, particularly Jim McIntyre and the three who would be Tange's assistant secretaries: James Plimsoll, Pat Shaw and Keith Waller. Nor was it at all inevitable that the professional relationship would develop into a warm and enduring personal friendship.

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<sup>5</sup>On the appointment of Tange to succeed Watt, see Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins*, 63-4, and the sources cited there.

In fact what emerges from a study of policy-making in External Affairs from 1954 to 1960 is a number of differences between Casey and his principal official advisers, at home and abroad, up to and including Tange. These can be summarised under the three headings of operational style, policy and departmental structure.

### **Operational Style**

In terms of style, the diplomats of External Affairs – like departmental officials in any area – wanted a minister who would listen to advice and, having considered this advice, would give clear instructions on both crises and longer-term challenges. They also hoped for a minister who could win a substantial percentage of policy battles in Cabinet and with the Prime Minister. In all these respects, Casey was something of a disappointment. He evidently interpreted the role of Minister for External Affairs as being to a considerable extent a sort of ‘ambassador-at-large,’ spending a great proportion of his time in travels abroad, maintaining and developing his contacts with the highest levels of several major countries, Asian as well as those that Menzies called ‘our great and powerful friends.’ But to the officials’ regret, Casey did not direct those travels nor make use of those contacts to advance or defend particular Australian interests or goals. As Casey’s biographer has put it: “His successes as a foreign minister were the successes of a diplomat; his failures were the failures of a politician.”<sup>6</sup>

Casey himself lamented that crises often seemed to occur when he was away. Menzies’ response to an international crisis was often to call meetings in his Parliament House office of himself, the Minister for Defence, the Minister for

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<sup>6</sup>Hudson, *Casey*, 227

External Affairs and the departmental secretaries of their three departments. But as Casey was often abroad, and the Secretary of Defence was in Melbourne, Tange could find himself in these meetings dealing with Menzies, Allan Brown and the Minister for Defence (and often Acting Minister for External Affairs) Phillip McBride, while Casey was somewhere in Asia, Europe or North America.

Casey's ineffectiveness in Cabinet was all too well known. His inability to get increases in the foreign aid program, and his tendency to find himself in a minority of one or two on other issues, undermined his authority, as did his tendency to give rambling travelogues to his Cabinet colleagues.

This was never more dramatically displayed than in one of the defining issues of the decade, the Suez crisis.<sup>7</sup> At this time, Cabinet faced a clear choice between the approaches of Menzies and Casey. It was well known that Casey was disturbed by the policy of British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, to which Menzies was giving unequivocal support. Casey was deeply concerned that this policy was alienating the United States, many Asian countries, and much of the Commonwealth. This opposition was manifest long before there was any knowledge of the extent to which the British, French and Israeli governments had been secretly colluding on their political and military plans. It even appeared that Casey might have committed the political sin of leaking against his own government, although it is not clear that he was in fact guilty.

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<sup>7</sup>The following passage is based on Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins*, 116-23, and the sources cited there. On Australia's policy during the Suez crisis, see W.J. Hudson, *Blind Loyalty* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1989).

In any case, Cabinet overwhelmingly supported the Prime Minister ahead of the Minister for External Affairs, notwithstanding Casey's immense experience of international relations in peace, crisis and war. Although the outcome of the crisis demonstrated the wisdom of Casey's judgement, his political standing was irretrievably damaged, and he was humiliated in a vote for the party's deputy leadership soon afterwards.

The course of the Suez crisis, and especially of Australian policy, was shaped significantly by the fact that Menzies was overseas for much of the crucial period. He summoned Tange to his side in both London and his fruitless mission to Cairo, but prevented the head of his foreign office from even receiving basic information, let alone from giving advice. Tange, it seemed, was seen as Casey's man and that meant exclusion from any role in policy-making.

Another major example concerned recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>8</sup> After the off-shore islands crisis of 1954-55, Tange and his Department prepared a long paper on this issue, which implied that Australia might join Britain and Canada (both of which, unlike the US, recognised the PRC) in diplomatic moves that might include Australian recognition of the PRC as part of a wider regional settlement. It seems that Casey read out the entire 25-page submission to the Cabinet, then described it as an 'information paper' that did not call for any specific action. Not surprisingly, Cabinet opted to take no action in the direction implied, in a way that effectively ruled out movement on this issue for years to come. The blame for this outcome certainly does not lie with Casey alone; but the Minister and the Department had jointly failed to prepare their

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<sup>8</sup>Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins*, 76.



case adequately and to co-ordinate their tactics in a manner that was likely to achieve the desired goal.

Somewhat similarly, Casey, at the ministerial level, and Tange and his colleagues at the official level, worked in parallel ways rather than in a carefully coordinated campaign to liberalise Australia's immigration policy.<sup>9</sup> Casey was non-racist, to a degree that was remarkable for an Anglo-Australian of his time and class. His experience as Governor of Bengal gave him a rare insight, for an Australian, of the views of a major Asian country. Like the External Affairs officials, Casey knew that Asian sensibilities were most offended by Australia's placing "the most educated and advanced Asian individual ... in the same category as unassimilable coolies."<sup>10</sup> But there is little evidence that Casey confronted Menzies or successive Ministers for Immigration on this issue, and Hudson suggests that Casey's own views may have become more conservative in the latter part of his ministerial tenure. There was some chipping away at the White Australia Policy in the 1950s, but for the most part the chisels were wielded by Tange and the departmental officials, dealing with their counterparts in Immigration, rather than by Casey doing battle in Cabinet.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 76 and 100-01.

<sup>10</sup>Meg Gurry and Gwenda Tavan, 'Too soft and long-haired? The Department of External Affairs and the White Australia policy, 1946-1966' *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (vol. 58, no. 1, 2004), 133



During a visit in 1968, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (right) holds a koala under the watchful eye of Sir Arthur Tange. (Australian News and Information Bureau/National Archives of Australia: A1200, L73605)

## **Policy**

As these examples suggest, Casey was generally supportive of the departmental officials' concern to put more emphasis on Australia's regional interests and relations with Asia and slightly less emphasis on the 'great and powerful friends.' Casey was probably much more sympathetic than Menzies towards the policy themes that Tange set out in a 'Policy Critique' he wrote in June 1955, after some eighteen months

as Secretary.<sup>11</sup> In this paper Tange deprecated undue faith in relying on great powers to protect Australian interests, citing “United Kingdom preoccupations with avoiding nuclear warfare, French incompetence and cynicism in Indo-China, [and] American clumsiness in Asia.” Tange referred to the relationship with the US as “supremely important,” and said that Australia should support the US on fundamental issues, but should differ – and be seen to differ – from US policy on other issues. He referred to the major alliance structures, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation and the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty, much extolled by Menzies and his colleagues, only as “handicaps” to Australia’s efforts to establish good neighbourly relations with Asia. Tange also urged the government to set long-term objectives and priorities, rather than simply to respond to immediate crises. The first six topics that he listed for such treatment were policies towards China, Malaya, Indonesia, West New Guinea, SEATO and ANZUS. All of this was much more in tune with the emphases of Labor governments and of a minority of Liberals, notably Garfield Barwick, than of the Menzies and most of his ministers. What is remarkable is that Casey evidently read this document and treated its author with continued respect and support. Casey, it would appear, had many reservations about the Menzies approach to SEATO, ANZUS and ‘great and powerful friends,’ but was not in a position to influence the Prime Minister and Cabinet in the directions that he, and his officials in External Affairs, would have preferred.

It is also worth noting that Casey long pursued the idea that Australia needed to increase its defence expenditure significantly, in order to establish a greater degree of independence in its dealings with those great and powerful

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 72-4.

friends. This was a theme pursued by Tange at External Affairs in the years after Casey's retirement, and then again when Tange was Secretary of the Defence Department in the 1970s; but in the 1950s this was another matter on which Casey was in a Cabinet minority of one.

## **Department Structure**

While on policy Casey and his Department largely were of one mind, and the concern was of effectiveness, on matters of administration and departmental structure there were major differences. Tange's great ambition was to turn a collection of individuals, some highly talented and others less so, into an efficient foreign office and diplomatic service worthy of Australia's standing in international affairs. Casey was broadly sympathetic to this aim, but he left its implementation largely to Tange and his principal lieutenants, including Plimsoll, Waller, Shaw, McIntyre, Ralph Harry and others.

In were three major areas Casey's personal predilections concerning the Department's scope ran counter to those of the young diplomats. One was the Australian Secret Intelligence Service.<sup>12</sup> Casey had been instrumental in the establishment of ASIS. His wartime service in the UK government evidently left him with an admiration of secret organisations such as the British Secret Intelligence Service and Special Operations Executive. When Frederick Shedden sought to remove the fledgling ASIS from its place in the Defence group and to place it in External Affairs, Tange and the professional diplomats resisted, but to no avail. Casey was more than willing to accept ASIS and all Tange could do was to treat it as a fifth division of the Department, and to put it under Ralph

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 104-06.

Harry, who Tange thought was the safest pair of hands for the task (quite unlike the first Director of ASIS, A.D. Brookes).

The second such area was that of overseas aid, which at this time centred on the Colombo Plan.<sup>13</sup> Casey, an engineer by profession, was fascinated by every aspect of the Colombo Plan, both in policy and administration. He was keen to suggest new areas into which Australian technical assistance might move. Tange thought that administering aid programs was not the proper role for professional diplomats, taking up far too much of his officers' time and energies. But in the face of Casey's enthusiasm, Tange and his colleagues simply had to take on the task.

The third such area was the Antarctic.<sup>14</sup> External Affairs had an Antarctic Division, reflecting the longstanding interest that Australian governments had taken in the southern continent. Once again, Tange thought that much of the Antarctic Division's work was outside the proper role of a foreign office. The diplomacy associated with the Antarctic was appropriate: indeed, negotiating the Antarctic Treaty in the late 1950s was an important achievement for Casey and his department; but the scientific endeavours that supported Australia's territorial claim seemed to Tange to be only a distraction from the proper role of a foreign office and diplomatic service. His dissatisfaction was compounded by the semi-autonomous nature of the division and its long-serving Head, Phillip Law, who was something of a 'Law' unto himself. Casey, enthusiastic pilot as well as engineer, was fascinated by many aspects of the division's labours, and because the division was based in Melbourne, where Casey lived, Law had direct access to him there, away from what he

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 106-7.

regarded as the interference of Tange, Waller and the other senior officers of the Department of External Affairs in Canberra.

It is worth noting that, over the decades since Casey's retirement, the structures have evolved in the ways that Tange would have preferred. Both AusAID and ASIS are now separate organisations, within the Foreign Minister's portfolio but not integrated into the Department; while the Antarctic Division, after various peregrinations, is now located in the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

### **Professional Colleagues and Personal Friends**

So there were many reasons, in terms of policy implementation, departmental structure and political style, why Casey and Tange might well have had a testy, if not overtly hostile, relationship. But this was emphatically not the case. Tange and his departmental colleagues admired and cared for Casey as a man, largely because he so clearly admired and cared for them.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes it seemed that Casey was acting more like a senior departmental head than a Minister, but the intentions were so clearly benign that it was hard to object. Throughout his time as Minister, Casey kept up a remarkably extensive personal correspondence with many of the Heads of Mission, and urged Tange to do likewise, so that these distant representatives should not feel neglected or uninformed. Casey supported the claims of Tange and other officers to higher salaries and greater status in the Canberra departmental pecking order. The success was mixed – Treasury had no difficulty in rejecting the idea of an appropriate house in Canberra being reserved for the

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<sup>15</sup>The following passage is based largely on Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins*, 108-10.

Secretary of External Affairs – but the outstanding victory came on Casey's very last day as Minister, 3 February 1960, when the Secretary of External Affairs was elevated to the same salary level as his counterparts in Defence, the Prime Minister's and the Treasury.

Casey's support went beyond such official realms into the personal. He took a personal interest in the health and welfare of departmental officers, on occasion reaching into his own pocket to ensure, for example, that a necessary operation was undertaken.

The relationship with the Tanges became particularly close. Unhappy and lonely in Canberra, where he spent as little time as possible, Casey would sometimes ask Tange if he could visit and persuade Marjorie to cook him a lamb chop. He would read bedtime stories to the Tange children, Chris and Jenny, although when told by Marjorie to kiss Mr Casey goodnight, Jenny demurred on the grounds that she did not like kissing men with moustaches. The Caseys became honorary grandparents to the young Tanges. Maie Casey took a particular interest in Jenny, helping her with her kindergarten-teaching studies and giving her an opal brooch to wear at a formal ball.

The Minister and the Permanent Head: R.G. Casey and Arthur Tange



R. G. Casey, Australian Governor General (left) and Sir Arthur Tange, Australian High Commissioner to India (centre) meet with the Indian Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, in July 1965 (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia: HIS-0315)

Nevertheless, for years Casey could not overcome his Edwardian reluctance to use first names outside his own family. “I say, Tange,” he would say, “you don’t mind if I call you ‘Tange,’ do you, Tange?” Marjorie found that, even in such homely circumstances, when Tange was out of the room Casey would refer awkwardly to ‘him,’ rather than let Arthur’s first name cross his lips. In later years, when the Tanges were in India, the Caseys would visit them as a break during their annual trip to attend the House of Lords in London. Only then did the Tanges and the Caseys become literally on first-name terms.



Tange's own view, supported by much evidence, was that Casey had a strained relationship with his own children, especially his son, and that the department became a substitute family. Casey, born in 1890, was a generation older than Tange and his contemporaries, and many of the young External Affairs officers were precisely the sort of men he would have been delighted to have as sons. There was no doubt who was the favourite son. The gift of the cigar box, on Casey's first day as an ex-Minister, made that abundantly clear.

Around this time one of the best known descriptions of the relationship between ministers and their permanent department heads came from L.F. Crisp. After serving as an extraordinarily young departmental head under Ben Chifley, Crisp became a professor of political science and author of the standard work on Australian governance, *The Parliamentary Government of the Commonwealth of Australia*. He wrote, not a little condescendingly, that:

The relations between the permanent departmental heads and their transient ministerial chiefs, which are crucial to the successful working of the executive branch of government, are usually easy enough and are in some cases even enriched as time goes on by lasting friendship and genuine affection.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship between Casey and Tange, I suggest, transcended whatever frustrations or tension may have existed within the professional relationship of minister and departmental head and became an outstanding, albeit relatively little known, example of that lasting friendship and genuine affection.

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<sup>16</sup>L.F. Crisp, *The Parliamentary Government of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 3rd Edition (London: Longmans, 1961), 246.

The Minister and the Permanent Head: R.G. Casey and Arthur Tange



Professor Peter Edwards AM (right) presents his paper on Arthur Tange to the Forum. Melissa Conley Tyler (left) and Professor Joan Beaumont (centre) prepare to open the floor for discussion. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)

**Discussion:**

**Professor Joan Beaumont:**

Well, thank you very much, Peter, I'm sure you'll all agree with me that that certainly didn't disappoint. I wonder if I could just, as the moderator, exercise the privilege of following up on that point about the generational difference between Casey and particularly Tange, and try and link it to James Cotton's presentation about the 'World of Ideas.' You touched on that briefly, but to what degree were Casey and Tange divided or united by a common understanding of international relations?

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

That's a very interesting question and I was thinking about that myself during James's paper this morning. I think that it's hard to give a clear answer, except by referring to the 'Policy Critique' that Tange wrote.

I think what emerges from that is that they did have very similar ideas in many respects. Not all respects; the professional diplomats I think saw the United Nations as something that you really had to go to and Casey always made a thing about saying: 'Do I have to go to those boring general assemblies again?' He used to describe the UN Charter as a cross between the Lord's Prayer and a telephone directory. So there were some differences, but, broadly speaking, I think Casey had much more in common with the sort of emerging departmental view, more than has probably been realised because Casey was always clearly bound by Cabinet solidarity and Menzies was the dominant figure on the decisions that really mattered, Suez being the most obvious case. I think it probably wasn't always that clear, but it also wasn't obvious to people outside. I have the feeling that Casey and the younger generation of officers were really far closer than has been realised.

**Professor James Cotton:**

Just a footnote on Antarctica. In fact it's my understanding that the connection between External Affairs and Antarctica goes back a long way. My recollection, having gone very quickly through, is that a very extensive file on the background to the BANZARE expedition of 1931 is in box 44 in the Mawson Park House in Adelaide. There are letters from Hodgson, Willis and Casey and the issues are all to do with possession: "We need to acquire title to this land." It's a really interesting, lengthy document marked 'Secret' from the foreign office about the basis of Britain's claim to Antarctica which, of course, we were seeking to inherit. So the connection between External Affairs and Antarctica was actually a very close one and, in my opinion, it's not all that surprising that Antarctica became this responsibility when Casey took over External Affairs.

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

I was rather flippant in my reference there. In fact, I did look very briefly at those Mawson papers when I was doing work on 'Prime Ministers and Diplomats.'<sup>17</sup> I decided to not go into it in great detail because it seemed a bit of a digression. But I think you are right, in fact, there is a longstanding interest arising from that tradition of Australian exploration of the Antarctic, of which Mawson is by far the best known but by no means the only exemplar.

**Garry Woodard FAIIA:**

I just want to make a point of clarification in relation to the Colombo Plan. There were certainly differences between the Department and Casey concerning administration of the Plan, but otherwise there was absolutely no difference. As Alf

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<sup>17</sup>Editors' Note: Peter Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats: The Making of Australian Foreign Policy 1901-1949*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Professor Peter Edwards AM

Parsons and Jim Ingram will recall from the conference you had in the Washington Room with DFAT about 10 years ago now, after it was suggested there was a secret agenda, it was said: “Of course, we shouldn’t have secret agendas.”

However, there was a secret agenda to have as many young Asians as possible in Australia under the Colombo Plan so that the people of Melbourne would get used to the sight of Asian faces in the streets. The other side of that agenda, of course, was that Australia aimed to train the future eligible leaders of Southeast Asia and so show them in their formative years that Australia wasn’t a racist society but was a very friendly state. Now Casey played a full part in co-operating in that venture and frequently put money out of his own pocket.

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

Yes. I think my point was on the administration of the Colombo Plan and the fact that diplomatic officers trained to handle diplomatic work were having to spend so much of their time on the nitty gritty of Colombo Plan programmes instead of having, as we now have, a separate aid agency which handles that. But you are quite right about Tange’s policy goals which, again, is an example of where Tange and Casey and most of the senior officials were of one mind on the desirability of this sort of activity.

**Professor Hugh White:**

I really enjoyed your paper. I wonder if I could ask you to illuminate the paradox, or what seems to me to be a paradox, that emerges from your presentation and also from Jeremy Hearder’s. That is, we see in Casey a person of formidable charm, phenomenal energy and networking. However, he somehow never managed to apply these attributes to the simple business of getting policy wins in Cabinet. Now, why was that? Why was it that a person, whose whole career was built on this

great capacity for networking, on getting on well with people, on sort of work the system, somehow stopped short of managing to work the system that mattered most on policy outcomes? It seems to me to be a contradiction.

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

Well, I think the best thing I can do is recommend reading Bill Hudson's biography because that is central to the whole book.<sup>18</sup> Amongst other things, he refers to Casey building his career on industry and deference. Deference is an interesting one. Hudson points out that Casey was very good at being the 'number two,' – very reliable. We should not forget he was literally a staff officer at Gallipoli and carried that sort of attitude. By the 1950s, yes, he has this amazing list of contacts and so forth – but it comes back to the Menzies/Casey relationship. Menzies was five or six years younger than Casey. Casey was seen as a bit of an old 'fuddy-duddy' by most of the ministers and they don't understand the relevance of a lot of his policies. Casey didn't have a congenial Cabinet framework and he didn't have the ability to work the political framework to his advantage. It's a matter of his personality, and Bill Hudson goes into causes such as his family background and so on. I think that is where you really need venture into a bit of psycho-biography, I think, to understand.

**Professor William Maley**

I wonder whether there is an institutional dimension to this as well. In Sir John Bunting's book about Menzies there was a very interesting chapter which emphasised the Prime Minister's preference for ministerial government as opposed to cabinet government because the ministers were there to do things.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>W.J. Hudson, *Casey* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> Sir John Bunting, *R. G. Menzies: A Portrait* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

Perhaps Casey's problem was that he was taking issues to Cabinet that probably should not have gone to Cabinet, they simply should have been pushed through without necessarily subjecting them to the judgment of a collective which may not have been that sympathetic to the kinds of arguments that were being put up. So maybe it's a combination of a personality disposition and a particular model of what Cabinet should be doing in line with the Prime Minister.

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

I think that's certainly true and you have to wonder why it was that, having had almost humiliating knock-backs, why he kept coming back again and again. There's an article in this morning's *The Australian* saying that Kevin Rudd needs a Graham Richardson to tell him how to fix things.<sup>20</sup> Casey needed somebody to say: "Look, this is not how you get things up in Cabinet" or, "Just do it yourself." Given the system, the way it operated, either have at least three or four people lined up who are going to say "yes" before you even raise the matter or, as you imply, just do it. I suppose the foreign aid thing was slightly different because he had to get money out of Cabinet and therefore approval and this is in the day long before Expenditure Review Committees and all that sort of thing.

**Professor Williams Maley:**

It raises the question, Peter, why didn't Tange do that?

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

Yes, I think that's a fair question and I think that comes down to youthfulness in many ways. Tange had the feeling that the departmental secretary was hugely important but he didn't have the sort of relationship where he thought he could give that sort

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<sup>20</sup>Paul Kelly, 'Labor at crossroads in test of Rudd's character,' *The Australian*, 9 Feb 2010.

of advice. Perhaps it was a reflection on his own relative inexperience at that level.

**Professor Joan Beaumont:**

Presumably, as well, the filial relationship you were talking about.

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

That's right. It's very hard to tell. We should remember that Casey had been a minister in British Government as well as the Australian Government. He had this vast experience. You'd have to be a pretty confident young man. Although Arthur Tange was not lacking in self-confidence, you'd have to be pretty confident to teach any minister, but particularly a minister like Casey, how to do his basic Cabinet business.

**Peter Henderson AC:**

I wondered whether you have any evidence or comment to make on the use Casey made of his diary. I think he may have used writing the diary as a vehicle for justification for himself sometimes. Circulating it round to the other members of the Cabinet didn't do him any good in the opinion of the other members of the Cabinet. Have you got anything you'd like to add to that?

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

I think that's fair comment. I think there was a gulf between his idea of what his role was and what useful work he was doing and the way in which that was understood by probably all of his ministerial colleagues

**Peter Henderson:**

It could have been what pyjamas he was wearing that night.



**Professor Peter Edwards:**

Yes. He did not always write on the one particular issue of the day. So much of it was: "I just read this fascinating book, you know, and it's a very interesting book and you should read it." As Bill Hudson comments: "There's a very good, new type of safety razor out and if you use it in a certain way, you get a lot more shaves than any other."

**Peter Henderson:**

Well, was that the level of it?

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

Yes. So it really didn't help him with his colleagues. He of course circulated the diary widely, not just to ministers but to diplomats and all sorts of people. He thought it was interesting and impressive but, well, we know that his audience often didn't agree.

**Professor Anthony Milner:**

The Arthur Tange 'Policy Critique' sounds a very interesting and perhaps an important document. Can you say a bit more about how that document would relate to dominant views in the Cabinet at the time and also how it would be positioned, say, with respect to John Burton's views or Martin Hall's views?

**Professor Peter Edwards:**

Well, we need to remember that Arthur Tange came into the Department of External Affairs having served in what became the Department of Post-War Reconstruction. He came in there as an economist and then was seconded, first of all half-time and then full-time into External Affairs, in the mid '40s. A lot of his views were formed in the Evatt regime. Like many people, he didn't like Evatt and the way he operated personally but many of the views that were around at that time were 'widely shared.' He certainly admired Ben Chifley and he was one of

the young men in whom Ben Chifley placed a great deal of faith.

So I think Tange saw himself as a public servant able to give frank and fearless advice to governments of whatever persuasion, giving independently formed views. He certainly did not think of himself as a Labor man or a Liberal but as somebody who was concerned to create a professional foreign office and diplomatic service.

However, I think at the same time, a lot of his views were influenced at least by the atmosphere of the 1940s and he carried some of that forward. His only diplomatic postings before becoming Secretary, as it happened, were both in the United States: one to the UN in New York and then to the Embassy in Washington. He'd seen a fair bit of the United States close up and had seen, how, for example, what we would now call a 'Taiwan Lobby' operated and was decidedly unimpressed by that. So he did not have a naive uncritical view of American policy, for example. While he said that ANZUS was extremely important – and of course it's vitally useful for us to have this close relationship with the United States – nevertheless, it wasn't an "All the way with LBJ" type of approach. So I think he did carry a lot of the intellectual shaping, if you like, of the 1940s into the 1950s.

## **Dick and Maie Casey in Partnership**

*Dr Diane Langmore AM*

In her book *Tides and Eddies* Maie Casey wrote of attending the wedding of the diplomat Arthur Yencken in London in the early 1920s. She recalled: “The best man was another Australian, R. G. Casey, whose father... had been a friend of my mother’s. I knew him slightly.” According to Maie, at the reception Casey had remarked to her casually: “When we are married, we won’t have all this shemozzle, will we?” She added “I looked at him sharply but he appeared to be neither facetious, nor pressing. Merely matter-of-fact.”<sup>1</sup>

While there is no reason to doubt the veracity of Maie’s account of the incident, she was deliberately misleading in suggesting that their previous acquaintance had been so slight.

Both had grown up in the small, close-knit world of the Anglo-Australian elite in Melbourne. Maie’s family’s arrival in Australia had preceded the more demotic large-scale immigration of the gold rush era and their roots were in the land. In their imposing houses, their education and their way of life, this group sought to reproduce elements of the society that their forebears had left behind at home. Her father, Charles Snodgrass Ryan, was a romantic figure in Melbourne society. Born in 1853 at Killeen, Longwood, the son of an Irish-born stock and station agent, he had been educated at Melbourne Church of England Grammar School and the universities of Melbourne and Edinburgh, where he completed

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is drawn from Diane Langmore, *Glittering Surfaces: a life of Maie Casey* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1997; copyright held by author). All references can be found within and *Glittering Surfaces* can provide further information of all aspects of this paper.

a degree in medicine. After further studies in Bonn and Vienna, well qualified but penniless, he had responded to an advertisement placed in *The Times* by the Turkish government calling for twenty military surgeons. He had served in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, battled typhoid and typhus in a hospital in Turkish Armenia and been taken prisoner of war by the Russians. On return to Melbourne he had married Alice Sumner, also from a distinguished pastoral and professional family, and set up practice in Collins Street. Maie, born on 13 March 1891 and her brother, Rupert, six years older, grew up in their Collins Street home, in the heart of colonial Melbourne.



R. G. Casey and his wife Maie (nee Ethel Marian Sumner Ryan) on their wedding day in London, 24 June 1926 (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia: HIS-0018)

In this small world, it is likely that Maie knew Dick from childhood: R. G. Casey senior was a close enough friend of Maie's mother, Alice, to have given her a mare from his stable and, moreover, he was Rupert's godfather. Dick is known to have visited Maie's parents' holiday house, *Earimil*, and in 1915 he was treated for war wounds in the Park Lane hospital where Maie was working. Joan Lindsay (then Joan Weigall), who shared a studio in Melbourne with Maie in the 1920s, when they were both aspiring artists, recorded that both Daryl Lindsay and Dick Casey dropped in from time to time.

Richard Casey and Maie Ryan were married at St. James, Piccadilly, on Midsummer's Day, 24 June 1926. It must have appeared a most suitable match. Casey was at the time liaison officer between the British and Australian governments, appointed by the Australian Prime Minister, Stanley Melbourne Bruce. The elder of two sons of a wealthy and domineering pastoralist and investor, whose death in 1919 had freed him from remorseless parental expectations, Casey had been educated at Melbourne and Cambridge universities and had graduated with honours as an engineer. War service had won him the Military Cross and the Distinguished Service Order, and he was gaining approval in his influential public service position.

Despite the obvious suitability of the partnership, neither had been in a hurry to marry; both were thirty-six when the wedding finally took place. After a private education in Melbourne, Maie had been 'finished' at a boarding school at Ascot, England, and in Paris. During the years of World War I Maie's family were in England, her father becoming consulting surgeon at the Australian Infantry Force Headquarters. Maie worked as a housemaid at Sir Douglas Shield's Hospital for Wounded Officers and then at the

Australian Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau run by Vera Deakin, daughter of Australia's second prime minister. After the war, she joined her brother Rupert in Cologne and Coblenz, where he was working with the Rhineland Inter-Allied Commission; then from 1923 she lived the exciting life of a wealthy and independent young woman in post-war London.

Soon after the wedding, Bruce urged Casey to consider returning to Australia to enter politics. A contemporary believes that it was Maie, revelling in London society, who vetoed the idea. Although he was not recalled by the new Labor Prime Minister, James Scullin, in 1929, Casey recognised that under a government grappling with the Depression, the future of his position was tenuous. The family, which now included a two-year-old daughter, Jane, returned to Australia in 1931 and their son Donn was born on Melbourne Cup Day. In December, Casey was elected member for Corio in the House of Representatives.

During the 1930s, when they lived in Canberra, there is little evidence of Maie's involvement in her husband's political career. She had a full life of her own as the mother of two small children, an aspiring artist, an active member of a small, select social circle and, from 1937, like her husband, a passionate aviator. With Rupert, she became co-owner of a family property, Edrington, at Berwick outside Melbourne; she and Dick also owned a town-house in East Melbourne. In Canberra she was involved in planning the ministerial residence into which the family moved in 1938.

But, if she was little involved in the day-to-day political life of her husband, now Treasurer, she had a decisive influence on one of the major turning points of his career at the end of the decade. After Robert Menzies became prime minister in 1939,

he asked Casey to open Australia's first diplomatic post abroad as Australian Minister in Washington. Casey was reluctant to leave Australia but Menzies found an ally in Maie. Contemporaries observed that Dick's own ambition for his career was as nothing compared with that of his wife; Menzies referred to her as 'Lady Macbeth.' Thanking Casey for acquiescing, he wrote: "Have discussed it with Maie, who I think agrees." A friend of the Caseys who was brave enough to ask Menzies whether he was "sending them," was told: "No, Maie asked to go."

We will probably never know whether Menzies flattered Maie into favouring the appointment or whether she herself had decided it would be a step forward in her husband's career. Personal ambition aside, there is no doubt that, sharing Casey's commitment to Australia and Empire, she would have seen it as a job worth doing. What does seem certain is that Maie was influential in overcoming Dick's objections to taking this step, which was to have major repercussions for his future.

Not for the last time, Maie had exerted a powerful influence over Dick's career. In an era when women were expected to be more passive, she embraced life wholeheartedly and shaped it to her own ends. Her close friend Pat Jarrett described her as "powerfully operative." Her ambition, determinations and élan were again and again a spur to the more reticent Casey. Lady Drysdale saw her as 'Napoleonic.'

In Washington, Maie played an active part in establishing the legation, filling it with Australian paintings and soft furnishings, often the work of her talented artistic friends. She gained a reputation as a "friendly, unruffled and frank" chatelaine and hostess. But she used social occasions to further her objectives: to interpret Australia to the Americans

and America to Australia and, as the tragedies of war intensified, to promote the Allied cause to neutral America. The two Caseys travelled, spoke and entertained tirelessly throughout 1940 urging an American commitment, while recognising that in the year of a Presidential election no one was willing to antagonise voters in conservative rural states by advocating an abandonment of neutrality. The Caseys' roles as ambassadors for the Allied cause became even more vital when, on the death of the British ambassador, Lord Lothian, in December, he was succeeded by the aloof and inaccessible Lord Halifax. An American journalist observed: "The English cause in the United States owed more to that gallant and devoted couple than has usually been recognised."

After Pearl Harbour, Casey felt that the main task in the United States was completed. When Menzies visited New York in May 1941, he recorded in his diary: "The Caseys are a great success but once more I am embarrassed. Dick asks for (a) the CH [Order of the Companions of Honour] (b) a roving commission to cover the U.K. and the Middle East!!!" According to Menzies, Casey made these demands "on Maie's pressure." Three months later Menzies was out of office and Casey, experiencing a total lack of trust from Labor's Minister for External Affairs, H. V. Evatt, concluded that his future as Australian Minister was "not very bright." When he shared a train journey with the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, Casey suggested that he might be appointed a liaison officer in the Middle East. Churchill just grunted but two months later offered him the post of United Kingdom Minister of State in Cairo with a seat in the War Cabinet. One British politician at least, Hugh Dalton, believed that it was "Casey's rich and famous wife" who had fascinated Churchill and persuaded him to offer her husband the job.



Dr Diane Langmore AM

In Cairo, Maie flung herself into war work, regularly visiting army hospitals in Cairo and Heliopolis, chairing the St. Dunstan's Unit, which helped and instructed blind servicemen; working with the heads of the women's services; and entertaining the cavalcade of guests who joined them at the Blue House, near Mena. These included General Sir Lesley Morshead, Cecil Beaton, General Auchinleck, Winston Churchill, Noel Coward, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Anthony Eden, General Montgomery and Harold Macmillan. On his first visit, after a long talk with Casey, Macmillan noted in his diary: "He is very pleasant – but not, I think, very clever. Mrs Casey is though."



Maie Casey presents an Australian flag, which she brought as a gift from the Victorian Division of the Australian Comforts Fund to the Anzac Centre. R. G. Casey was Governor of Bengal when this photo was taken, in March 1945. (National Archives of Australia: (Australian War Memorial: SEA0175).

In November 1943, Casey received a telegram from Churchill asking him to become Governor of Bengal. Although both he and Maie had hoped to return to Australia, he accepted, with two provisos: the appointment should only be for the duration of the war against Japan and he should go to India without a title. It was Maie who suggested this latter condition, wisely looking ahead to the time when they would return to Australian politics, where the life peerage that the British government wished to confer could be a handicap. There is no record of Maie's reaction to the appointment but, as in Cairo, she threw herself into her role: entertaining inexhaustibly; visiting schools, hospitals, orphanages, baby clinics, youth organisations and the medical college of Calcutta; supporting women's organisations; refurbishing (with Beaton's help) the palatial but run-down Government House; and encouraging Bengali arts and culture. She was critical of the stuffiness of British protocol and the aloofness and superiority of the traditional memsahib. One Bengali, Shudha Mazumdar, recalled how she had come as "the beautiful Chatelaine of Government House and begun so blithely breaking all the rules." The niece of the poet Rabindraneth Tagore reflected: "Never before had Indian ladies met the governor's wife on equal terms."

She continued to work for the war effort, helping to establish an Anzac Hostel, of which she became first patroness. When a group of Australian airmen, ex-prisoners of war of the Germans, were refused access to the swimming pool at the club where they were billeted, she opened the grounds and the pool at Government House to them, and when more ragged, emaciated POWs arrived from the Burma-Thailand railway, from Rangoon, from the Gobi Desert and from Singapore, Borneo and Hong Kong, some found billets at Government House. In June 1945, Maie was appointed Commander (Sister) of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. That month she

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became chair of the Bengal civilian section of the Red Cross. In the New Year's Honours list of 1946, just before their departure from India, she was awarded by the British Sovereign the Gold Kaisar-i-Hind Medal for Public Service in India. Some years later Casey dedicated his book about his time in the Middle East and India to "my wife, whose name should have been on every page," to which a visitor to Edrington, Richard, Prince of Gloucester, quite legitimately responded: "Why wasn't it?"



The official table at the annual Colombo Plan Ball in Melbourne, attended by students from almost every Asian country and their Australian friends. Left to right: R. G. Casey, Australian Minister for External Affairs; Miss Tefa Elisha and her brother Mr Elisha, President of the Colombo Plan and United Nations Students' Association in Melbourne; Mrs Casey; Sir Ian Clunies Ross and Professor Yusuf Hussain who is on a lecture tour from Osmania University, Hyderabad, India. (Cliff Bottomley/National Archives of Australia: A1501, A859/1).

Maie and Richard Casey were united in their desire to return to Australia for the latter's re-entry into politics, neither making any secret to close friends of his aspiration to become Prime Minister. Both seemed to have operated on the rather arrogant assumption that the Liberal Party would be overwhelmed with gratitude at Casey's offer to stand and would thus find him a seat. When none was forthcoming, Maie expressed her disappointment in letters to friends. While Casey worked indefatigably as Federal President of the Liberal Party, Maie was also in great demand as a public speaker. By mid-1947 she had received over 200 invitations to speak. In her speeches she constantly urged women to take a greater role in public life. She said that she was "not a feminist in the old-fashioned sense of the word," but she believed that women must take a full share of community responsibility. She herself resumed an active role in Melbourne cultural circles, becoming again a patron and encourager of artists, including the young Sidney Nolan. These activities continued after Casey was elected for the new Federal electorate of Latrobe.

The pair had settled into a comfortable partnership. If it was not a passionate relationship, it was one of affection and mutual esteem. "They were warm and loving friends to each other, with deep respect and understanding of the role each has played," observed their close friend Pat Jarrett. To a large extent they lived parallel lives. Casey was much absorbed with his parliamentary and ministerial duties, increasingly so when, after the 1951 election, he was made Minister for External Affairs. Maie's life revolved round her flying, her painting, her public duties and her friends. Both were so busy that they communicated largely through a spate of notes to each other. Yet, those who knew them intimately observed that their partnership was greater than the sum of the parts.

They were “like two blades of a pair of scissors,” wrote Pat Jarrett, “always deeply considerate of one another, rarely apart, and then miserably.” Casey’s biographer, W. J. Hudson, believed that he endured a period of depression before he found his metier as Minister for External Affairs and that, during this transitional period, he was especially dependent on Maie.

Casey’s tenure as Minister for External Affairs gave them ample opportunity for shared activity. Maie relished the travel that the job entailed, convinced that she should share it to pick up “the women’s angle.” Stimulated by this foreign travel, she took on increased responsibilities as Minister’s wife. She held lunches and afternoon teas for the wives of diplomats and gave parties at the Lyceum Club for Asian university students. In 1951 she began a long term as president of the Australian-American Association and she was later president of the Overseas Students’ Co-ordinating Committee. The Sydney *Sun* wrote approvingly in May 1952:

“Australia has never had a woman ambassador with official rank, but for many years Mrs R. G. Casey has been an unofficial ambassadress. The Caseys are an outstanding husband and wife team – their married life has been devoted to service at home and abroad.”

There is no surviving evidence of Maie’s reaction to the turbulent events in Casey’s professional life in 1954, when he disobeyed a Cabinet directive as to the terms of Australia’s participation in the South East Asian security pact or, in 1956, when he fell out with his leader over Suez. Nor is there a record of her reaction to his poor showing in the ballot for the deputy leadership. But it must have been a bitter blow to one who had devoted so much time and energy to his political advancement. Sir Walter Crocker, who knew them at this

time, recalled that “Menzies had to endure on several occasions; he never forgot her masterful interventions on behalf of her Dick.” Even the optimistic, tough and resilient Maie must have now come to realise that the Prime Ministership had eluded them.



R. G. Casey, Minister for External Affairs and his wife Maie Casey speak to the 2000<sup>th</sup> Colombo Plan Student to train in Australia, Che Ummi Kelsom binte Maidin from Malaysia. (National Archives of Australia: A1501, A1056/1)

Maie greeted the announcement of her husband’s life peerage on his retirement from parliament in 1960 with an assumed casualness that would not have fooled those who knew her well. “I am really allergic to titles,” she wrote to a friend, “but the tail goes with the dog... We hope so much this experiment may prove a useful one in a changing Commonwealth.” Both pronounced themselves pleased that the title was only for life. She revelled in the “simple and dignified ceremony that made

her husband Baron Casey of Berwick in the State of Victoria in the Commonwealth of Australia, and of the City of Westminster,” and in her title, *The Lady Casey*. Retirement gave them the opportunity for regular seasons in London and accompanying travel, and when they were at home at their beloved Edrington, Maie developed a new career as a woman of letters, publishing a well received memoir about her forebears, *An Australian Story*, a libretto for an opera, *The Young Kabbarli*, a book of verse and a second volume of memoirs, *Tides and Eddies*.

On 28 July 1965 it was announced that 74-year-old Lord Casey was to become Governor-General of Australia. When the possibility was first mooted, Casey worried about local reaction to an ex-politician taking the post. Since the appointment of the former Labor politician Sir William McKell as Governor-General in 1947, the non-Labor parties had been vociferous in insisting that the incumbent be free of political associations. But once again, Menzies had an ally in Maie, who was in favour of the appointment. Possibly he used his persuasive powers to win her approval; it is more likely that, with her frustrated ambitions for her husband and her undeniable love of status, she needed no persuasion. It is likely too that Maie, who had retained a strong loyalty to the British Commonwealth alongside a passionate love of her own country, saw it as an ideal opportunity to serve both commitments. Whatever the process, in one of her most significant interventions in Casey’s career, she urged him to accept.

The widespread acclamation that greeted the announcement included warm approval of Maie as impending vicereine. She told journalists that she intended to concentrate on small luncheon and dinner parties rather than large formal occasions. She was keen to hang more Australian pictures at

Yarralumla. As was expected of the Governor-General's wife, she was asked to become patron or president of numerous national organisations. Although she could be no more than a figurehead to many of them, she showed that, given the opportunity to speak, she could still challenge and inspire. She participated fully in state and overseas tours and official functions.

Her chief duty as First Lady was to be a hostess. After six months as Governor-General, Casey recorded that they had had well over six hundred people in to meals, many more "for a talk" and a good many to stay. The role of hostess was one that Maie was now superbly equipped to perform. She had developed her own individual style, which one journalist described as "gay but dignified" – a happy blend of her own informality, originality and liveliness with a strong sense of occasion. Although the Caseys were obliged to entertain dutifully a range of people with whom they felt little affinity, Maie also used the opportunity to draw to Yarralumla and Admiralty House those whose talent she admired and whose company she enjoyed. Most were from the world of the arts; Patrick White was one who became a close friend and confidant to Maie at this time.

On 10 February 1969, Casey's retirement was announced together with the news that he had been appointed a Knight of the Order of the Garter. Maie revelled in the ancient ceremony of "impeccable beauty." Back in Australia, they settled into a productive and peaceful retirement that still included 'the Casey season' in London each year, their literary pursuits, and, to the consternation of friends, their flying. They centred their lives increasingly on Edrington, where she was happy to paint, write and entertain and he enjoyed the leisure to attend to the thousand-acre farm. In September 1974, Casey, driving the Bentley from Berwick to Melbourne, ran into the back of a



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parked semitrailer. A long period in hospital ensued, and the following April he was joined there by Maie, who had collided with a taxi on her way back from the hospital to Berwick. They were both released from hospital three months later but it was the beginning of the end for Casey. He died on 17 June 1976.



Maie Casey with her children Donn and Jane on board a ship, around 1940. (National Library of Australia: Album of wartime photographs of R. G. Casey, 1940-1947, Bib ID 4320733)

Maie was devastated by his death. Casey's career had been for so long her *raison d'être* that she was utterly lost without it. Above all, she missed her partner. She wrote to her son Donn three months after his death: "Since your father died, I am bereft of a unique companionship and I find it difficult to want to go on living." Although she picked up the threads of her life, paying particular attention to her vast correspondence with friends throughout the world, the spring was broken. Sir Walter Crocker paints a poignant picture of her:

“absorbed entirely in the memory of the man with whom she had shared a life active, colourful, at times stormy, always interesting, mostly productive...for half a century and whom she had come to adore more and more. In her last years, dressed in a cardigan and trousers, she sat in the cold library of the cold house at Berwick, surrounded by boxes of letters, notebooks, other papers and photos...needing little physical warmth in comparison with the spiritual warmth these memories brought to her.”

She died on 20 January 1983 at the age of ninety-one.

Maie Casey was a complicated and enigmatic woman. Intensely private, she constructed the authorised version of her life and culled her papers to reinforce that interpretation. She even rewrote parts of Casey’s diaries when she was contemplating publishing them. In her own writings there is little introspection, reflection or personal revelation. She looked at the world with the eyes of the artist, revelling in its brilliant surfaces rather than its hidden depths. She revealed little of her feelings for Casey or of their long life together. It was an unusual marriage, each having his or her own passions, activities and interests and, as Sir Walter Crocker remarked, it was at times stormy. During their years in Bengal –when they were plagued by minor illnesses and debilitated by heat, and Casey was depressed by the lack of acceptance of him in some quarters – they quarrelled frequently. Pat Jarrett, who witnessed some of these confrontations, wrote: “She is the stronger character and when roused can give him hell.” Bill Spowers recalled a tense dinner when Casey laid down his knife and fork and addressed his wife: “Maie, you are a millstone round my neck.” But as time went on their mutual interdependence became more marked. Casey seemed to be more conscious of it than his strong, independent wife. When

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he travelled without her in 1963, he concluded a letter to her: “All my love dearest – we mustn’t do these long trips alone again – I’m miserable without you.” Yet Maie’s grief and her decline after his death is testimony to the importance to her of this central relationship of her life. There was an enduring affection, respect and pride in each other’s achievements that had strengthened throughout their long life together.



Dr Shirley Scott (left) introduces Dr Diane Langmore, with Richard Gardner, former Private Secretary to R.G. Casey, 1955-58 (seated, right). Dr Scott holds Dr Langmore's book, *Glittering Surfaces: A Life of Maie Casey* (Allen & Unwin, 1997).

## Discussion

### **Richard Gardner:**<sup>2</sup>

Dr Langmore has stirred some family memories. Mrs Casey, as I will always know her, reminded me that both our fathers had served in Turkey. Her father, Sir Charles Ryan in the Ottoman Empire days and my father in the Red Cross Unit in the First Balkan War in 1913. Also, my father was one of Professor Ryan's favourite students at Melbourne Hospital, as it was then known.

I would just like to make a few remarks as a surrogate member for the Casey family for those two years. I don't need to remind you that the Minister's office was a very small affair in those days, in Parliament Place, with only myself as Private Secretary and a secretary typist, Ms Connie Hauser.

I do not remember Mrs Casey coming to the Parliament Place office, which is a significant indicator of the 'separation of powers.' However, she was not far away, in Gipps Street, where Ms Hauser assisted her with her official correspondence, generally on Monday mornings. Any matters requiring conjugal discussion were put in the weekend's 'Berwick basket.' Similarly, items for a forthcoming overseas visit were destined for the 'trip basket.'

Mrs Casey was a prominent member of the Lyceum Club, which united women with artistic and literary interests and through which she actively supported women authors and artists. She had an active antenna for information gathering. I'd like to cite a personal example. In 1946, Mrs Casey learnt

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<sup>2</sup>Editors' Note: Richard Gardner was Personal Secretary to R.G. Casey 1955-58. These were prepared remarks as a complement to Dr Langmore's paper.

(source unknown) that Tony Street and I had been crewmembers (not officers) on the cruiser *Shropshire*, taking the Australian contingent to the London victory parade in June 1946. As a result, Tony and I, still teenagers, found ourselves at Windsor Castle as lunch guests of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Castle and Lady Gowrie, former residents of Yarralumla while the Caseys lived in Duntroon.<sup>3</sup> Our guided tour included St. Georges Chapel, where R. G. Casey's Garter banner later hung. This episode demonstrates not only her scent for information, but her ability and kindness to use her knowledge to enrich the lives of others.

By contrast, R. G. Casey was reserved and somewhat formal in dealings with his staff and close departmental officers. He was not a natural user of first names, the most likely exceptions being favourite personal secretary Max Loveday and Jim Plimsoll.

“Good man,” was praise indeed from the Minister and you felt as if you were a Subaltern on the Western Front in 1915. Mrs Casey was different: effervescent, enthusiastic, excited to talk to you and with first names no obstacle. However, R. G. Casey had a warm heart, which he showed in his consideration for his staff. On overseas visits he made sure that the personal secretary was included in all major functions. On his visit to old friend Jawaharlal Nehru's house in Delhi, he asked for me to accompany him and seated me next to himself.

He was punctilious in handling letters and representation from his La Trobe constituents. He insisted on correct forms of

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<sup>3</sup>Editors Note: Alexander Hore-Ruthven was Governor-General of Australia from 1936-1945 and was later made Earl of Gowrie upon his return to Britain in 1945.

address, for example: “no ‘PC’ after a Privy Councillor’s name, unless he or she was already styled ‘Right Honourable’ by virtue of being a peer below the rank of Marquis.” I’m sure he could have quoted *Burke’s Peerage* backwards.

Mrs Casey’s special causes during my period were all led by outstanding women, who were household names throughout Australia. And we should not forget that memories of the War were very much in people’s minds. I mention the War Widows, led by Mrs George Vasey; the War Nurses; Matrons Sage and Bullwinkle; the Women Pilots led by Nancy Bird Walton and the Children’s Hospital (one of her father’s) where Dame Hilda Stevenson reigned as honorary secretary and later as a member of the Board of Management for more than thirty years. Mrs Casey also had a voice in suggesting the best candidate to represent women’s interests on the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. These are all causes which R. G. Casey could espouse as his own.

‘Conjugal partnership’ is acceptable, but partnerships do not always have a good success rate. ‘Alliance’ might be more appropriate. I believe that like good allies, they respected each others’ territory and found that they could come into line on most major matters and agree to disagree on some minor ones. The only serious disagreements between the two would have been ‘who drives the Bentley’ or ‘who has first use of the Cessna tomorrow.’

**Garry Woodard FAIA:**

I have a quick question for Richard. How do you think the Caseys would have got on with the modern world and computers?

**Richard Gardner:**

Better than I. Don't forget that R. G. Casey was an inventor: he had patented the Casey computer and aircraft navigational aid. He was also involved in a car engine when he was a member of the family firm at Mount Morgan, which was not a success. He was mad on gadgets and he was also very interested in maps. I think he would have taken to Google quite successfully. As for Facebook, Skype and SMS, he would not be able to cope with that, but Mrs Casey would have quite successfully and very quickly would have had her own website.

**Professor Joan Beaumont:**

Dr Langmore, you've painted a very vivid picture of a woman who had a very active public life, I suppose within certain traditional frameworks. However, it's during Casey's period of Minister of External Affairs that the attempt to recruit women for the diplomatic service finally splutters to a halt. I don't know if you ever came across anything related to that. I think about 1952, which was really his first cohort, the intake becomes almost exclusively male.

**Dr Diane Langmore:**

The most intimate connection that Maie had was to poach Ruth Dobson from External Affairs when she was about to go on an overseas posting and Maie had her as her private secretary for sometime before she went back to the Department. But I don't know that there was any other involvement.

**Professor Joan Beaumont:**

So there's no evidence that she encouraged Casey to do anything about this?

**Dr Diane Langmore:**

No, I don't think so. She did speak often to women's groups. As I said, hundreds and hundreds of public addresses where she always had the same message for women: 'You must take a role in the community too; don't just feel that you should be at home bending over the hot stove.' So she seemed to see her role as really to go talk directly to women and raise their consciousness of their role.

**Professor Shirley Scott:**

In your book, you describe almost 'two lives' of Maie Casey: the very busy life she had with her own interests and particularly the artistic world and then the support for her husband's career. Do you think she saw a tension between them or was that just all part of the person she was?

**Dr Diane Langmore:**

Yes, I think she did see a tension. From time to time she'd make throwaway remarks about 'if only' she'd been able to concentrate on her artistic career. One or two people said that had she been able to concentrate on her artistic career she could have become quite a significant Australian artist. She always said she was very happy to put that aside to support her husband. But one or two of the more perceptive of her friends suggested that in a way she used that commitment as a bit of a pretext for not sort of 'diving in' to the deep waters of artistic endeavour. As long as she could retain the status of the gifted amateur who'd given up her own career to support her husband, she could be completely happy with that.

I don't know, but maybe it was an irreconcilable tension; maybe she couldn't do both. She was obviously, as I've tried to demonstrate, very ambitious for her husband and decided that that was where she was going to pour her energies.



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**Richard Gardner:**

Diane could I ask you about Ellis Rowan? Maie Casey was always talking about Ellis Rowan. Was she a Sumner?

**Dr Diane Langmore:**

She was a Ryan. She was the sister of Maie's father, one of a large family of Ryans, so she would have been an aunt. And yes, Maie was quite proud of her paintings.

**Question:**

You didn't mention the Caseys' children and her role in raising them.

**Diane Langmore:**

Thank you, I'm glad you said that. When I'd written the paper I realised I hadn't said much about the children and I thought: that's very indicative of the life of the two Caseys.

The children, speaking bluntly, were really given a very low priority in their lives and maybe it's just something that has to happen when you've got two busy parents who have very demanding public lives. Both children felt that they suffered badly at the hands of their parents. Dame Elisabeth Murdoch said to me that the Caseys just had no idea at all how to be parents; they just didn't have a clue. She didn't say it too critically but this was just not one of their talents and if you speak to the two children you will feel that they were scarred. Donn, whom I spoke to a lot before he died, felt that they were scarred by having such busy, preoccupied parents.

Another thing is this sort of exclusive relationship that they had with each other cut out almost everyone else, including the children. I think some people have suggested that Jane, who was very fond of her father, became a sort of rival for Maie. She didn't like any of Dick's affections to be diverted

to anyone else so there was a sort of tension there too. But I do think that they had a difficult time being the children of two such high-flying parents.

**Question:**

There was a lot of discussion this morning about R.G Casey's 'Britishness' and what that represented as a kind of transitional concept. If Maie Casey is writing about Daisy Bates or in her diary, if she has got correspondence and is sometimes sharing the table with Patrick White and Sidney Nolan, what's her take on kind of mid-20th century Australian identity?

**Dr Diane Langmore:**

Maie Casey was a passionate nationalist; she really loved her country. I think her book *Tides and Eddies* is a really beautiful evocation of an Australian family and she writes with such sympathy and appreciation, not just of the people, but of the natural environment that she loved growing up as a child. So she was always very strongly Australian.

I thought about this when I was working on the book; there didn't seem to be much tension between her Britishness and her Australianness. I think, like a lot of those people – I've called them Anglo-Australians as a sort of shorthand – there was just this casual assumption that you belonged in Britain just as much as you belonged in Australia. All through their lives there was also this urge to get back to Australia and back into Australian politics. There was no way they were going to be seduced into a long-term overseas appointment.

**Professor Shirley Scott:**

Could I just push you on the 'Lady Macbeth' comment? In your presentation and in your book, you give examples where Maie has been interested and active in her husband's career,

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but none of them seemed to quite capture a Lady Macbeth role. Do you think that was a fair assessment?

**Dr Diane Langmore:**

It might have been a little bit hyperbolic but I think both Menzies and Churchill and probably a number of others were struck by the passion and forcefulness with which she'd argue for her husband's preferment in a way that he wasn't prepared to do himself. I guess that's where the analogy comes from.

**Professor William Maley:**

I can see Sir Robert Menzies calling her 'Lady Macbeth' with a twinkle in his eye. This has been absolutely fascinating because to me it evokes an image of a kind of political elite which has almost entirely disappeared, again for structural reasons. That is, an elite of politicians with tiny personal staffs, with spouses who would often be sounding boards in the communities and with fairly close personal relations with staff within their departments. One of the things that seems to have changed things radically in the period since the Caseys' activity is the growth of the kind of professional political apparatus within the personal offices of ministers. In the light of the picture of intimacy that's come out in the discussion today, I wonder whether we have all lost as a result of the professionalisation through party machines of the management of the offices.

**Diane Langmore:**

Yes, I was reflecting on that listening to the papers this morning and it made me wonder, without knowing anything at all about the Department, whether Casey was an example of an earlier generation in political affairs where a lot more was done face to face and that he never really came to terms with the professionalisation of the trade. So in a way he was sort of

a dinosaur, as the Department became larger and more professionalized. That is just a hypothesis, I don't know.

**The Substance and Relevance of Australia's  
Diplomacy and Foreign Policy in the Casey Era,  
1951-60<sup>1</sup>**

*Robert Furlonger CB, former Director-General,  
Office of National Assessments*

*Pierre Hutton, former Private Secretary to R.G.  
Casey, 1958-60 and Head of Mission to Nigeria,  
Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, The Sudan and  
Switzerland*

*James Ingram AO, former Director, Australian  
Development Assistance Bureau and former  
Executive Director, UN World Food Programme*

*Alfred Parsons AO, former High Commissioner to  
the United Kingdom, Singapore and Malaysia*

*William Pritchett AO, former Secretary, Department  
of Defence, 1979-84*

*Richard Woolcott AC FAIA, former Secretary,  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1988-92*

*Richard Gardner, former Private Secretary to R. G.  
Casey, 1955-58*

*Moderator: Garry Woodard FAIA*

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: No paper was presented for this session. Gary Woodard moderated a discussion of reminiscences of former policy officials who had known R.G. Casey as Minister for Foreign Affairs or had been active in the Department during this time.

The Substance and Relevance of Australia's Diplomacy and Foreign Policy in the Casey Era, 1951-60

**Garry Woodard FAIIA**

We're not very structured for this session. We're going to start with some personal reminiscences and then move to a few of the policy aspects that came up earlier, where we think some more needs to be said. The personal reminiscences will be led by Richard Woolcott. Pierre Hutton, one of two surviving Private Secretaries, will then speak. The other, Richard Gardner, will say a few words in the final session. Then James Ingram will say something also. We may have some discussion leading out of those comments and then we'll get onto a couple of other substantive matters.



An expert panel of former Australian diplomats give their personal reminiscences of Casey and debate his legacy. Left to right, Richard Woolcott AC FAIIA, Robert Furlonger CB, Pierre Hutton, Garry Woodard FAIIA, James Ingram AO, Alfred Parsons AO and William Pritchett AO.

**Richard Woolcott AC:**

My first real contact with Richard Casey took place in 1958 and during that year, I could say that I witnessed changes in his personality, or perhaps more correctly in his policy approach. This was a shift from what was described this morning as the imperial British-focused outlook, to a growing awareness of the emergence of a new and decolonised Asia. I should say that I was a fairly junior officer at that time, a first secretary. I was taken by Jim Plimsoll who was then running Asian Affairs under Arthur Tange in the Department to take the record of the first South East Asian Heads of Missions meeting in Singapore, which Casey chaired. From there I also made a visit to Manila with him, another for the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation conference and also a visit to Kuala Lumpur.

But I think at that particular Heads of Mission conference he was exposed to the views of people like Tom Critchley from Kuala Lumpur, to Jim McIntyre from Jakarta, K. C. O. (Mick) Shann who was then in Manila, I think this obviously had an impact on him. I had always assumed that he was fairly imperial, elegantly dressed and; all the things that have been said this morning very focused on Britain, and I think he included Australia in that fold. But over that period of time I certainly detected what I call a growing awareness of a decolonised Southeast Asia.

Just briefly, I might make a reference to Christmas Island. In 1958 Christmas Island was transferred from being part of the colony of Singapore to Australian sovereignty. I was the desk officer involved in the transfer and I think that Casey was the Minister. The transfer was part of the British mindset. Singapore was going to become fully independent, so it was necessary to keep Christmas Island in good safe British hands by transferring it to Australia.

**Garry Woodard:**

So you were involved in buying that island?

**Richard Woolcott:**

Well I suppose we bought it. We're now paying the consequences right now in terms of refugee problems. But there was really no reason why it should have been transferred to Australia.

However, the transfer was done and I think Casey was very keen on keeping it in safe hands. Logically, of course, Christmas Island was part of the colony of Singapore and more logically could have been transferred to Indonesia, to which it was much closer. But I just mention that in passing.

Mostly it was the Singapore meeting where I think Casey was influenced. I'll just make one point, covered in my book.<sup>2</sup> The incident showed me an aspect of Casey I had not expected: I would have thought as the first secretary and the note-taker in this distinguished group, I would not be asked to say anything to him. But, at this meeting, very strangely I thought, was Lim Yew Hock who was still the Chief Minister of Singapore. The People's Action Party under Lee Kuan Yew had not yet been elected. There was an election coming and I had suggested to Casey that he should call on the Mayor of Singapore, Ong Eng Guan, who I'd known well at Melbourne University and who was then the deputy to Lee Kuan Yew in the People's Action Party but already the Mayor. Casey thought this was a good idea so he went and did that. The wise men were sitting around the

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Woolcott, *The Hot Seat: Reflections on Diplomacy from Stalin's Death to the Bali Bombings*, (Sydney: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003).



table and one of them said: ‘Look, Lim Yew Hock is in danger of losing this election and the government of Singapore might fall into the hands of this dreadful communist, Lee Kuan Yew; and it would be in Australia’s interest to act to stop this happening.’ Casey said, ‘Well, what can we do?’ Then, as it seemed to me as the note-taker, the completely remarkable suggestion was put forward by the then head of Australia Secret Intelligence Service that perhaps we could get into a clandestine vote-buying exercise.

**Garry Woodard:**

You mean the former Commissioner in Singapore.

**Richard Woolcott:**

Yes. That’s right. As a note-taker, I was not to record this part. But when we were having drinks at the end Casey came over and said: ‘Look, I know you’re taking the notes but do you have any opinion on whether this would be a sensible thing to do?’ Casey was ever the responsible minister. I replied: ‘Well, since you’ve asked me, I think it would be very unwise because; firstly it probably wouldn’t work unless you bought an enormous amount of votes; and secondly, if it did work, it almost inevitably would be found out and we would be suffering the consequences of that for some time.’ Anyway, I heard no more about it but as Casey was the minister responsible for ASIS, it wasn’t done. That also showed me that Casey was not as hierarchical in his contacts as you might have expected and also not necessarily influenced by official advice if he had doubts about it.

The one point I was going to make about Antarctica, which came up in several contexts, is that I thought Casey dealt very effectively with the Soviet Union. I was at both ends of that. I was expelled from Moscow at the time of the Petrov Affair in 1954 and I went back in 1959. I’d been posted to the General

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Assembly and was then to go on to Washington in 1959 but unfortunately for me, at that time, Casey met Nicolai Firubin, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister at Broadbeach and negotiated the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. So I had the United Nations and Washington withdrawn and was sent back to Moscow, to re-open the Embassy.

I thought that Casey dealt very effectively with Firubin, which I would not have necessarily expected. Also on the Antarctica, I think that Casey's had an important role in negotiating or helping negotiate Article IV of the Antarctic Treaty, which dealt with further territorial claims by states, and to which the then Soviet Union was very opposed. I think Casey played a major part in persuading the Russians to go along with that and so that was an effective thing that he did, even though I never read much about it. I could give you a few anecdotes in relation to some of these things.

**Garry Woodard:**

You were far too modest to say that Casey was unsure you told him Lee Kuan Yew was the coming man.

**Richard Woolcott:**

Well, I did say that was my expectation. I have to say that David Nichol, who was our High Commissioner at the time, did say to Casey: 'Be very careful about this. I'm not sure, but it's very likely that Lee Kuan Yew will win this election.'

**Garry Woodard:**

We'll ask Pierre Hutton to comment on the same period.

**Pierre Hutton:**

Yes. I was twice asked to be Casey's private secretary. On the first occasion, it seemed to me a good thing to get out of rather than to get into. However, a year later Sir David Hay called me

in and said that, ‘it’s going to be a changed job, he’s not getting any younger, the Minister, and we,’ presumably the Department, ‘feel that he needs to have someone who could help him sort through the papers.’ I thought or dreamt of the role of the private secretary to the Foreign Secretary in London, in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office CO, and thought, ‘Wow, this is something different.’



R. G. Casey (centre) with his wife Maie at the departure from Melbourne of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition in the Danish motor-ship *Kista Dan*, on charter to the Australian Government, which organised the expedition (Cliff Bottomley/National Archives of Australia: A1200, L30265).

Unfortunately, no one had told Casey. I rolled up and the first thing which startled me was that he says: “Well, Hutton.” Coming from Tasmania, I hadn’t been used to being addressed as Hutton. We’ve heard a certain amount about: “Tange, may I call you Tange?” But perhaps personal staff are different

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because within a week or two I was “Pierre,” which was rather gratifying. When he retired I did receive over-generous recognition for my service with him.

I hope it won't be too uproarious if I tell you that Casey was a foreign minister who never swore. He never threw ash trays around his office. I acknowledge he belonged to a different century but there was a correctness about him. I might occasionally be taken to the Melbourne Club, which again may surprise. Maybe I was being looked over. I just sat and listened to these distinguished men, one of them a former general. Casey did, I think, show his years but this didn't prevent him from working through the weekends in London or elsewhere on one of those three-monthly overseas trips. Happily, he didn't expect his private secretary to be there to pick up a telephone for him or phone someone for him. Casey actually knew how to use a London telephone.

I'm going to take one minute on Casey and the Antarctic. I regard it as one of his triumphs. In 1959 he'd gone to Paris and, in what was an unforgettable experience for me, we were invited to the Elysee Palace by President de Gaulle who, like most presidents, wouldn't normally entertain foreign ministers, let alone receive them. Despite their previous meetings in the Middle East when Casey was resident minister and relations with the UK Government being very stormy, it was a very warm occasion. Somewhat to my horror, the dinner table was very narrow. It was horrible to realise that the person opposite me was the 'man of destiny,' and with his size and possibly his facial features, when he leaned forward I found that he was very close. On the other side was the well-known Madame de Gaulle, who I think went through the meal wondering all the time: 'Why does this young person with a French name not seem to speak French very well?' However, it went off famously.

I then went off to Washington with Casey for two weeks. At the very moment when we were about to leave Washington, the French delegation decided that it couldn't support the freezing of territorial claims under Article IV. This would have ruined the conference. Casey immediately sent a message to Sir Ronald Walker in Paris to get in touch with Maurice Couve de Murville. One can only assume that the French Foreign Minister was fully aware of what had taken place in the Elysee Palace and the conviviality. Mysteriously, the French delegation changed its attitude and I think I can say that, for decades the Antarctic Treaty has been rather successful treaty. Our relations with the French over matters like mineral exploration and so on, have never failed to be other than good.

**Garry Woodard:**

That's reminds me to say that Casey's relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru and the calls he made to Nehru before and after the 1954 Geneva Conference were instrumental in persuading a very reluctant Nehru to become the Chairman of the International Commissions for supervision and control in Vietnam.

**James Ingram AO:**

I'm afraid my anecdote is a little bit simpler than the ones than the ones we've been hearing because I didn't have the pleasure of so much acquaintance with Casey. However, I did have one important opportunity to assess him, so to speak, and that was the 1958 Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty council meeting. I was the note taker and report writer at this meeting and it was a very interesting occasion. To start with, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles made a masterful presentation of the issues of the day. At most, there would have been fewer than a dozen people present. We weren't actually sitting around a formal conference table; it was, more or less, a circle. So it was an intimate occasion, quite different from the

way ANZUS council meetings have presumably developed. Dulles's brother was Allen Dulles, who headed CIA, so another important figure.

The main issues at the time included the unresolved business of the Quemoy and Matsu islands off the China coast, so there was a lot of focus on the possibility of war with communist China. We also still had the issue of the Sumatran colonels. With US policy trying to have it a bit both ways by not bringing about the destruction of Indonesia but perhaps the overthrow of Sukarno.

After Dulles, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Sir Walter Nash, spoke and he left a tremendously favourable impression as a man who could articulate New Zealand's interests in these issues and use them, if not to persuade Dulles, to at least make it clear to him that New Zealand did not share Dulles's views. This was particularly so in relation to the offshore islands.

I've had a look at the extract from Casey's diary.<sup>3</sup> He does describe a bit about the off-shore islands and Nash's intervention, but his main focus is on West New Guinea. However, I'd have to say that reading that diary and remembering what actually happened, his attempt to persuade Dulles was really very feeble, very feeble indeed. It had no strength of argument behind it, no sense of conviction. Equally, at no time in the meeting did he ever make me feel, dare I say it, proud to be an Australian. I was a young Australian nationalist under 30 and I would have hoped to find such a well-known foreign minister able to seriously hold his own in this company.

In the diaries I also looked at the year before when Casey visited New Zealand, which is of interest. While he's quite

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<sup>3</sup> R. G. Casey, (Ed. T. B. Millar), *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey* (London: Collins, 1972)

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scathing, or perhaps superior, as Australians often are and were in relation to New Zealand, it's of interest that he actually had very high praise for Nash. Casey singled him out as a person of exceptional quality, understanding and perhaps unique to New Zealand.



Mr Poc Thieun, the first Cambodian Ambassador to Australia presents his credentials at Admiralty House. Left to right: Minister for External Affairs, R. G. Casey, Mr Poc Thieun, the Governor-General, Field Marshal Sir William Slim and the Australian Attorney-General, Sir Garfield Barwick. (W. Brindle/National Archives of Australia: A1501, A1928/3).

In *Friends and Neighbours*, there's a very interesting chapter, the last, entitled 'The Strength and Weakness of Diplomacy.' Casey sees diplomacy as process, which of course it is. But even his ideas about process reflect his own style: his style of cultivating 'top chaps' everywhere, of knowing all his top

chaps. Casey advances the idea that the traditional embassy's day is more or less finished, he only pays lip service to it. He wants to substitute in its place something similar to what happened with Sir Alan Watt in Southeast Asia. Casey wants a core of 'roving' ambassadors of some kind who don't supplant traditional ambassadors but somehow they travel around to the countries they're interested in. These roving ambassadors then come back and tell foreign minister what's really significant. In other words, what he sees as foreign policy are not the kind of basic issues of national interest so much as, 'if there is a problem, so well, we reasonable chaps get together and can fix it up.'

Finally I'll just say something even more provocative. Melissa Conley Tyler reminded me of this at lunchtime. You really can't consider Casey's contribution to foreign policy except in the context of the times. The times, as I see it, the 1950s, were a period of transition for Australia from a sense of being part of the Commonwealth but not the Empire but still hankering for the historic relationship with Britain. The realisation through the period was that this was gone. Suez, in its way, was the cap on this, even though Casey was unsuccessful in Cabinet. In practice, as a result of the Suez debacle, the shift away from Britain to the United States was pretty well complete by the end of the decade. I don't think Casey played an important role in that shift. I think he was a man of the times. The big decisions by Australia – such as the peace treaty with Japan, which was politically very contentious and the ANZUS Treaty – took place before he became Minister for External Affairs. Contrary to some suggestions he really played no part of significance in relation to the trade agreement with Japan. His chapter on Japan



in *Friends and Neighbours* doesn't have a great deal on this for an important issue like that.<sup>4</sup>

Casey had a stellar career, a very fine person of Edwardian vintage, but he wasn't, in my view, a great Foreign Minister. He was the longest-serving foreign minister until Alexander Downer, his heart was absolutely in the right place and he pushed, insofar as one could, for a better and deeper relationship with Asia. But in terms of the major concrete decisions of the era in the foreign affairs field, his role was not central. Menzies clearly was central. Even John McEwen, in my view, was important. I had an interesting experience working with McEwen in Washington.

I'm saying all these things, not because I don't admire all the things about Casey and admire him as a man, but I do think you judge a foreign minister by what he achieves. A foreign minister is more than a diplomat; his real job is getting policies through the government, policies which are meaningful. To a point, yes, the minister is a diplomat, but not really to the extent that Casey saw himself.

**Garry Woodard:**

I'm going to ask somebody now to take an opposite view.

**Robert Furlonger CB:**

Since we're indulging in reminiscences, I'd like to indulge in one or two. The first is when Garry and I were in Singapore together in the mid 1950s, at a time when the British had a missions conference there. Over lunch one day the British representatives discussed what was the collective term for a group of ambassadors, like a 'pride of lions' and a 'pod of

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<sup>4</sup> Editors' Note: R. G. Casey, *Friends and Neighbours: Australia and the World*, (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1954), 67-71.

whales' and so on. They eventually settled on a formula: "An excess of excellencies."

**Garry Woodard:**

We have an excess of excellencies here today.

**Robert Furlonger:**

Having said that, I think we are, very much a 'Second XI.' As Garry reminded us this morning, most of the principals who dealt with Casey in the 1950s are no longer with us, so most of our connections with him are second-hand. My first indirect connection with him was in the London office of the Department of External Affairs. I was posted to London in 1947 when we were still in the Cabinet Office and I was among the last grouping of the Departmental people to be there. That office in London in the Cabinet Office lasted for twenty three years, from 1924 when Casey started it until 1947 when we moved to Australia House.

One thing that Casey did while he was based in the Cabinet Office under the wing of Maurice Hankey, was to set out to provide as much possible material about international affairs that he could channel out. He sent masses of material back on the major issues of the day and of the personalities in the UK Government. I think at the time when Casey was there Australia was the best informed of any of the Dominions because his job was unique. One thing he did in sending this information back was that when he had a little time, he'd round up information on less important countries and less important leaders. This had the effect of providing External Affairs with a ready-made archive, admittedly seen through British eyes. But it provided a factual foundation on which the Department could later build.

From my own experience when I joined the Department in 1945. The cadet course was then for two years and in between

the first and second year we were given the run of the Departmental files and given a project to do. The one I was given was General de Gaulle and the Free French Movement. When I looked at the files I found practically everything there was material which had come from London. So Casey's contribution to the Department, in providing this ready-made archive, was a significant one.

Now, having said that, I do I think disagree a bit with Jim Ingram as to the importance of Casey. I think despite his rather conservative background and his imperialist links, Casey did adapt to the times. He adapted much better, I think, than most of his ministerial colleagues. For example, in 1951 he was saying that fears of Japan were groundless. Remembering the atrocities of the war, I wonder how many other people thought so at the time. That sort of attitude, together with the desire of the Department of Trade to develop new markets, started to develop a new relationship with Japan.

In China, as we heard this morning, Casey tried to open up the question of recognition of China. He failed, but seventeen years later, Australia recognised China. On Indonesia, towards the end of the 1950s, Casey questioned what had been a military cliché in the early part of that decade that West New Guinea was strategically vital to Australia. Casey questioned that and he was right again. On Suez he was right. On racial matters he was right. On the question of defence, I think he was ahead of his times. In the early part of that decade the Department of Defence was very hidebound under Sir Frederick Shedden in Casey's late period. External Affairs was then new boy on the block, but Casey was, even then, advocating that the two departments should work closely together, and they did under Tange's direction.

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Minister for External Affairs R. G. Casey discusses a point with the Australian delegation to the UN General Assembly, October 1952. Back row, left to right: David McNicoll (obscured); Allan Loomes; Roy McCarthy; and Max Loveday. Front, left to right: KCO (Mick) Shann, the Australian Ambassador to the United States, Sir Percy Spender and R. G. Casey. (UN Photo/Leo Rosenthal)

Casey also felt that Australia had to put more substance in the relationship with the USA and he talked about establishing bases there. A lot of these things that Casey advocated at the time became part of our policy, part of our relationship with the world, another ten or fifteen years later. I would say that he was ahead of his times as far as thinking about Australia's position in the world.

People correctly talk about his failure to present his views to Cabinet, to get his way but I wonder whether any foreign minister at the time would have done any better. Given the

mindset of Prime Minister Menzies, his domination of the Cabinet, the ignorance and lack of interest in our neighbours on the part of most of the ministers, would anybody have done any better?

So I disagree with Jim a bit, I think. I think Casey wasn't a failure; he tried, he was forward-looking and he did his best but unfortunately he didn't get all that he wanted.

**Garry Woodard:**

Certainly there was a transformation in relations between the Departments of External Affairs and Defence in the 1950s. By the end of the 1950s we had that ideal tri-factor where diplomacy, defence, and development were working in close concert all round the region. That was a big achievement. Bill Pritchett was a former Secretary of the Department of Defence.

**William Pritchett AO:**

I had very little direct contact with Casey so I have little to say that might enlarge your knowledge and understanding of Casey as a man.

I returned from Germany, I think in 1958, and shortly after I joined the Department again, Casey summoned a Departmental meeting. Casey wanted to talk about business, which he did, which was all beyond my knowledge because I'd been preoccupied with the situation in Europe. On the two things in particular which I ventured to make a comment, a large silence fell upon the general discussion. One was the beginnings of the thought of getting into negotiations in Europe on a common market and the other was the tensions on the border between the Soviet Union and Europe. Both very important matters. After I'd made a few comments on that I thought I'd better shut up. The silence resumed until, finally, some brave chap said something along the lines of" 'Well, there's something in

Borneo that I think we ought to be paying attention to,' and the discussion went back to Asia and the Pacific.

So I have very little to say along the lines of the interesting comments that we have been listening to. That was the only sort of direct contact; while there were other times I was in the same room as Casey, it was the only time there was any policy question that I raised in his presence, and to which no attention was paid.

My other dealings with Casey had much more substance. When I was in Singapore, Casey sent a message to me from London to buy him some shirts, so I bought him some shirts and sent them off. A couple of weeks later he sent them back. So I went out and bought him some more shirts and sent them off and the same thing happened; he sent them back. So I went and sent him some more and he sent them back. I gave up then; I didn't send him anything and that was the end of that contact, I think.

My final contact with him was when I was in London and Casey appeared in my office one day and said: 'I want you to write the last chapter of my book.' I hadn't even heard of the book. He put a manuscript on my desk. I was Acting High Commissioner at this time, and he said: 'Can you let me have something by the end of the week?' So I looked through it and then I dictated about twenty pages of rubbish and gave that to him. He thanked me very much and that was the last I heard of it. When the book appeared, it wasn't my last chapter. So that's about all have to say to you about my dealings with Casey and his with me.

However, I'd just like to add a comment, just as a citizen. I think Casey did extend Australia's perception of its place in the world, with its 'friends and neighbours.' Casey was in the public eye by his own efforts and by his position as foreign minister for a very long time. He was speaking about Asia and I

think that did something; I think that had some impact upon the Australian public's perception, which was useful.

**Alfred Parsons AO:**

I'll try and pick up a few little pieces. My own contact with Casey is, like Bill's, fairly limited. I suppose in 1951 when Casey made one of his first trips over Southeast Asia I was with him and a little later I worked fairly closely in the Colombo Plan work.

Now, we've talked about Southeast Asia a lot; his successes and failures there. Clearly there was a great deal of compassion and understanding and support for the Colombo Plan. Despite all Casey's involvement in tube wells, tractors and mechanical things, he was also very interested in the personal side of things.

There was one particular stage when we were struggling for money from Treasury to look after the welfare of students in Australia. One of the problems was that the scholarship plan was doing well but there was nothing to do with the students at the weekend or for their social activities. We tried to get some money from Treasury to do something about it and we were knocked back. Casey heard about this and immediately sent a personal cheque to say: 'Well, you start the program, you get your Australia-Asia associations going and we'll fight about the money later on.' In fact he had a success there and we got the money in the end from Treasury.

But that showed more his compassion than his political skill. When it came to getting money from Treasury for any substantial matters was pretty much a failure.

I remember, for instance, one night talking to a Treasury fellow in the back-bar of a hotel in Canberra on a Friday night. I was complaining about the latest programme that the Treasury had

knocked back. This chap replied: 'Well, you know, your program's not a bad one; it's all right. The only thing wrong with it is that your minister is too easy to toss. If you're going to get anywhere, you ought to get someone who knows how to fight for what you want.'

This was an opinion from someone as junior as I was at the time. It was widely known through the bureaucracy. It might be, that the atmosphere in Cabinet was such that you couldn't do any better. Well, my response is that no one could do any worse. It just didn't work.

I'd like to pick up something that both Jim and Bob have said and give a bit of support to what Jim has to say. Through that Asian experience and Asian revelation, Casey takes a lot of credit for our 'friends and neighbours.' His opening of missions throughout the area in those early 1950s should be commended. However, I think we have to regard him as a follower of what others had started rather than an innovator. His discovery of Asia began in Indonesia in the early days before and immediately after independence. That was never his initiative. The Colombo Plan was, again, a Percy Spender initiative. ANZUS, a Spender. With the 'white Australia policy,' I think it was the administrative changes brought by others such as Harold Holt, Paul Hasluck and Alec Downer that started that surge. On other race issues, I think Casey's own commitment to anti-racism was high and to be applauded. But I can't find any record of him having done anything about South Africa and apartheid, which would have been a sinner for him to have attempted.

I have the impression that Casey's image as a leader in Asia and even wider politically was stronger in the early part of the decade than in the later period. That's where I think he probably was helped by the initiative and the inertia of the efforts before



him. He seemed to me a fairly tired foreign minister and contributed rather less to our image in Asia, at least.

On Casey's image and the way he was influenced by others I think his capacity to listen and process was questionable. I remember once Jim McIntyre saying of Casey 'yes, he's a great player to work with, he'll listen to anyone, particularly to the last one he spoke to.'

**Richard Gardner:**

On my way here this morning, I stopped at the S.M. Bruce exhibition and had a brief look. The first thing I saw on the wall was a letter to S.M. Bruce from R.G. Casey. I intend to go back because, as many you will know, the Casey's daughter was Lord Bruce's god-daughter. Lord Bruce was also my father's school friend. The exhibition is well worth a visit.

Suez was the debacle of the 1950s and that placed Casey in a rather invidious position; he was British to the bootstraps in many ways and the British establishment was divided. Whenever he visited London he had the same calling list: Michael Dean, the Queen's Private Secretary, Peter Carrington, Selwyn Lloyd and others. Peter Carrington was certainly against the Suez operation.

Then Casey went to Washington as the emissary of the Menzies government to try and persuade General Eisenhower to change his views. At that stage, Percy Spender was on leave and Fred Blakeney was charged with the invidious job of trying to get an appointment at the White House. Well, that was an absolute snub and so we went on back to Australia after that. I wonder what would have happened if Percy had been in charge. Casey had such close relations with both John Foster and Allen Dulles. Incidentally, we carried the advance copy of the Petrov Commission's report to Allen Dulles in 1955, I think. In the

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middle of September, the report of the Royal Commission was presented to Parliament.

Talking about the Casey's diaries, the diaries which are now in the archives, in our day they were very much current. As soon as the trip was finished, there was a great scramble to get the diary completed. I remember on one occasion I was told to rush over to the Windsor Hotel with copy number 1 marked "RGM" in my hand. Luckily, I was invited to stay for drinks and had a very pleasant hour with the Prime Minister and Hugh Dash.

As a final point, please don't forget, Mr. Casey in the Antarctic, what he did for the Antarctic, and the CSIRO with his Foreign Affairs portfolio.



R. G. Casey, Minister for External Affairs and leader of the Australian delegation, with Sir Alan Watt, Australian High Commissioner to Singapore, at the 17 October 1955 opening of the Colombo Plan in Singapore. (Department of Foreign Affairs, Australia: HIS-0205)

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### **Garry Woodard:**

Thank you to all our speakers. There's lots more to say on everything, particularly the Suez crisis and Casey's strong message to Menzies in Cairo on September 7, drafted primarily by ASIS and not by DFAT, with Allen Dulles about to appear on Australia's shores. All of that is history that should be talked about some time. Tange has said that he had a secret agenda for breaking down the White Australia policy by bringing students to Australia and building up friends who would later be very influential in Asia, a policy with which Casey was particularly associated.

Let me close with one little anecdote that has never, to my knowledge been printed: Casey wept for Adlai Stevenson when he lost in 1952.



Attendees of the R.G. Casey pose for a final photograph. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)



## **Closing Remarks**

### *Geoff Miller AO*

It is an honour, but certainly daunting, to be asked to make some concluding comments on the forum: 'R.G. Casey as Minister for External Affairs 1951-1960, Fifty Years On.' I remember seeing R.G. Casey from afar in the then Department of External Affairs when I joined in late 1958, but unfortunately never had the benefit of working closely with him, unlike other Forum participants.

The R.G. Casey Forum provided marvellous discussions on an array of significant topics, including: the intellectual climate of Casey's time as revealed in his writings; his relationship with a young Department of External Affairs and its very able officers; his difficulties in getting his views endorsed by his Cabinet colleagues; and his success in concluding the Antarctic treaty. These were enhanced by first-hand accounts of some of those who worked with him.

There were clearly different views among Forum participants about his stature as foreign minister and the extent of his contribution. This is a subject that clearly could attract further examination. Personally, I side with the admirers of R.G. Casey essentially for the reasons presented by Bob Furlonger. Dr Diane Langmore demonstrated that during his long life of achievement R.G. Casey had the advantage of a wonderful marriage to Maie, who was a valued companion and advisor – and promoter.

R.G. Casey's career was certainly remarkable. He was ideally suited and prepared for his posting to Washington by his time in London in the 1920s. This probably influenced his later advocacy of roving 'super' ambassadors.

Despite the unusual familiarity and access Casey enjoyed in the United States and Great Britain, he later found as much interest in Asia and applied himself as diligently and successfully. Factors that contributed to his Asian success included his time in Bengal where he made many enduring friendships, including with the future leaders of India and Pakistan, and of course the advice he received from departmental advisors including Sir Arthur Tange and Sir James Plimsoll.

The question of race was discussed during the R.G. Casey Forum and in this regard I refer to some remarks made by Casey in 1953:

“Some things a good many people in Australia should learn about Asians. Not to patronise them. Not to believe we’re superior to them. Not to misinterpret their good manners. And not to underrate their ability.”<sup>1</sup>

Another concept discussed at the Forum was the role of realism in approaches to foreign policy. In regard to realism, I refer to the memoirs of Sir Carl Berendsen who was the first New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia during the early years of World War II. Berendsen was devoted to the internationalist principles of the League of Nations and said in a letter to his successor as the Head of the New Zealand Foreign Ministry:

“As to the League, I think Evatt is a League man and wherever I go I find support for League principles,

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<sup>1</sup> R. G. Casey, T. B. Millar (Eds.), *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey*, (London: Collins, 1972), 121.

except – as you might expect – in the Institute of International Affairs. Both in Sydney and Melbourne, I find these people are what are known as ‘realists’ – I mean that portion which does not consist solely of cranks, of which there are a number... But the thinkers of this body seem to me to be working under the impression that Australia will be clever enough to ‘outsmart’ the rest of the world – to maintain all their present advantages and find somebody else to protect them. Of course, I think this is morally wrong and hopeless logically.’<sup>2</sup>

This is certainly a trenchant comment on the role of realism during the time of R.G. Casey.

In regard to the climate of the 1950s, Casey and other ministers including Prime Minister Robert Menzies were conscious of the possibility of a major war involving China and possibly starting in Indochina. For example, see the 1954 plan of US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to relieve Dien Bien Phu via bombing by the US Air Force.

However, Casey thought the enemy in Indochina was the Viet Minh, not China and that the French should give Vietnam independence. Casey was anxious to avoid Australian involvement in Southeast Asia in a long drawn out war with China and he saw admitting Peking to the UN and recognition of China as a better solution.

Although Casey had a deep connection to Asia, he remained strongly pro-American. He saw no contradiction between

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<sup>2</sup> Ian McGibbon, *Undiplomatic Dialogue – Letters between Carl Berendsen and Alistair McIntosh* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993), 37.

encouraging defensive cooperation between Asian and Western countries, for example through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation, and an open attitude to China, which was not shared by the United States or his Cabinet colleagues.

Casey was always most concerned with promoting better and effective Anglo-American relations, which were of course very bad under Prime Minister Eden, but significantly improved under Prime Minister McMillan.

Casey attempted to acquire and maintain US strategic interest in Australia. He was frustrated by Australia's lack of access to US military planning for Southeast Asia.

His opinions on the Suez Crisis were proven totally correct. During the Crisis he showed great foresight and was consulted in his personal capacity by government leaders deeply involved in developments.

In Asia, Casey devoted much attention to relationships and issues effecting Southeast Asia (the SEATO area plus Indonesia). However, Casey also devoted significant time to India-Pakistan relations and the dangers of the Kashmir issue. He drew on his acquaintances with leading personalities on both sides of the dispute in his efforts to promote a solution to it, for example Jawaharlal Nehru.

Casey liked South Asians, saying on one occasion: "Krishna Menon is turning out to be on occasion a very useful fellow."<sup>3</sup> Casey hoped to involve them positively in Southeast Asian issues, for example Nehru on Indochina, and he viewed

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<sup>3</sup> Casey, *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey*, 93



Pakistan as a possible anti-communist Islamic model for Indonesia.

Casey acknowledged that the USA would probably not give military support to the Dutch if Indonesia used force to take West Irian. Australia itself could not take a more militant anti-Indonesian role over West Irian because Casey had never been able to convince his Cabinet colleagues to spend adequate sums on defence or on foreign aid. This is contrasted with his personal devotion to the Colombo Plan and SEATO aid projects.

Regardless of his difficulties within Cabinet Casey's name was well considered internationally and he thought Australia's was as well. In 1959 he wrote:

“Australia has made an impact on Asia in the last ten years that I believe is rather unusual. Australia is trusted and respected in almost every free Asian country. They appreciate our directness and our natural friendliness, and the obvious fact we have no political or territorial axe to grind.”<sup>4</sup>

I find these words an excellent summary of his personal view of his time as Minister for External Affairs, and I believe they provide a fitting summary of his own character and legacy.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 320



## **Concluding Comments**

*Melissa Conley Tyler*

Keeping reflections brief on an event such as the R. G. Casey Forum is a difficult task, with the wealth of information provided not only by prominent academics but also by former policy officials.

As was noted earlier, a trip to the past is a trip to an unknown country. For someone like myself who was not yet born when Richard Gardner Casey retired from public life he can seem rather a mythic figure. Looking back at his career, we journey through momentous events in Australia's history from Gallipoli, to the War Cabinet, to his Asian legacy. His career shows his influence on all aspects of Australian foreign policy from his time as a colonial governor, to treasurer, to foreign minister and finally governor-general.

Casey's personal meetings and correspondence reveal a veritable 'who's who' of remarkable world figures. These factors can intimidate some, and make Casey and his era seem very far away.

The R. G. Casey Forum demonstrated the continuing relevance of Richard Casey and his era to today. While some of the topics of his day, such as decolonisation, do belong to a different time, there are many continuing issues. Some will probably always be issues, such as how Australia deals with great powers or Australia's enduring Antarctica interests. The choices Australia makes as a country – how we deal with powers, alliances, transnational groupings and the aims and the inner workings of foreign policy – remain part of contemporary political debate. The discussions on R. G. Casey were illuminating on how these issues affect us today.

As an organisation founded in 1924, the AIIA has an important role in recording Australia's foreign policy. This publication on 'R.G. Casey as Minister for External Affairs 1951-1960, Fifty Years On' demonstrates the importance of history on Australia's foreign policy.

The AIIA has more than eighty years of involvement in international affairs gives it an interesting perspective on the history of Australia's foreign policy. The R. G. Casey Forum fits within the AIIA's other initiatives to record and analyse Australian foreign policy.

The AIIA publishes *Australia in World Affairs*, the definitive series on Australia's foreign policy. This book series has been published since 1950 and is currently edited by Professors James Cotton and John Ravenhill. The latest volume, *Middle Power Dreaming: Australia in World Affairs 2006-2010*, was released in December 2011.

An initiative of the AIIA ACT Branch brought together some more reminiscences of previous Secretaries of the Dept of Foreign Affairs, and is available as a publication entitled *Steady Hands Needed*.

As well as analysing history, the AIIA is, in some small way, creating history for future generations. Records of the AIIA's day-to-day activities are provided to the National Archives. Perhaps in fifty more years, these will be used for a forum examining the legacies of Alexander Downer or Stephen Smith.

With such a focus on current debate in international affairs, it is important to also look back and make connections with the past.

Melissa Conley Tyler

The AIIA remains a significant institution in providing debate and understanding of international issues. The AIIA currently runs more than 150 events per year across the country through seven state branches. I am proud of their success in encouraging discussion on international affairs. The AIIA produces a range of publications ranging from short-term policy commentary pamphlets to award-winning books, including the highly regarded *Australian Journal of International Affairs*.

The AIIA collaborates with its sister institutes overseas in having a number of joint events and second-track dialogues. The AIIA works to engage young people, through schools programs, internship programs, youth networks and career fairs to build up interest in international affairs in coming generations. Neither of these would be possible without the AIIA's strong federal structure and the support of branches.

It has been a privilege to be able to spend a day in Richard Casey's company and the era that he defined in Australian foreign policy.



## **A Brief Chronological Biography of R.G. Casey**

29 August 1890: Born Richard Gavin Gardiner Casey in Brisbane, Queensland

1893: Moved with his family to Melbourne, Victoria

1906-08: Melbourne Church of England Grammar School

1909: Trinity College, University of Melbourne, enrolled in engineering

1910-13: Trinity College, Cambridge (B.A., 1913; M.A., 1918); second-class honours in the mechanical sciences

1914-19: 1<sup>st</sup> AIF in Gallipoli and France (MC, 1917; DSO, 1918)

1924-31: Australian Liaison Officer in London, reporting to Prime Minister S. M. Bruce

24 June 1926: Married Ethel Marian Sumner (Maie) Ryan

1931-40: Entered Commonwealth Parliament as Member for Corio

1935-39: Treasurer

1939-40: Minister for Supply and Development

1940-42: Australian Minister to the United States of America, based in Washington DC

1942-43: United Kingdom Minister of State in the Middle East, based in Cairo

A Brief Chronological Biography of R. G. Casey

1944-46: Governor of Bengal, based in Calcutta

1947-49: Federal President of the Liberal Party

1949: Re-entered Parliament as Member for La Trobe

1949-50: Minister for Supply and Development

1951-60: Minister for External Affairs

1960: Retired from Parliament; created a Life Peer, Baron Casey of Berwick and Westminster

1965-69: Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

17 June 1976: Died in Melbourne; buried in Mount Macedon Cemetery



## **Contributors' Biographies**

### **Professor James Cotton**

James Cotton is Professor of Politics, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra. He has held visiting positions at the London School of Economics, the University of Hong Kong, and the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, Washington DC. Between 1997 and 2003 James Cotton was a foundation member of the Foreign Minister's Advisory Council. Having previously served as Editor, he is on the Editorial Board of *The Australian Journal of International Affairs*. He is the author of over 200 publications on international relations, Asian politics and political thought. His first book was *Asian Frontier Nationalism*; he has edited with John Ravenhill four of the volumes in the AIIA series 'Australia in World Affairs', most recently *Middle Power Dreaming: Australia in World Affairs 2006-2010*.

### **Jeremy Hearder**

Jeremy Hearder served in the Department from 1959 to 1996. He had nine overseas postings, including being High Commissioner to Zimbabwe and then to Fiji. At home his appointments included being Chief of Protocol. Currently he is a consultant in the Historical Section at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and is also writing a biography of Sir James Plimsoll.

### **Professor Peter Edwards AM FAIIA**

Peter Edwards AM is an historian who has published extensively on Australian defence and foreign policies. He has held academic appointments across Australia and consultancies with several Commonwealth departments and agencies. As the official historian of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts for 1948-75 (Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam), he was author of *Crisis and*

*Commitments* (1992) and *A Nation at War* (1997), and general editor of the nine-volume series. Professor Edwards AM is also the author of *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins* (2006), *Permanent Friends? Historical Reflections on the Australian-American Alliance* (2005) and *Prime Ministers and Diplomats* (1983); and the editor of *Arthur Tange's posthumous, personal memoir, Defence Policy-Making: A Close-up View* (2008) and *Australia through American Eyes 1935-45* (1979).

### **Dr Diane Langmore AM**

Diane Langmore is a biographer, who has written biographies of significant nineteenth and twentieth century Australians. She worked for many years for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and was its General Editor in 2001-8. Publications include *Tamate; A King; James Chalmers in New Guinea* (1974); *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874-1914* (1989) and *Prime Ministers' Wives: The Public and Private Lives of Ten Australian Women* (1992). Dr Langmore has written a biography of Maie Casey, Lord Casey's wife, entitled *Glittering Surfaces: a life of Maie Casey* (1997).

### **Clive Hildebrand**

Clive Hildebrand was National President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs from 2005 to 2010. Clive previously had a long and distinguished career at the highest levels of the Australian mining industry. He held an honorary professorship at the School of International Business and at the Graduate School of Management at Griffith University and has been an advisory member of the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance.

### **Geoffrey Miller AO**

Geoff Miller was the National Vice-President of the Australian Institute for International Affairs from 2005 to 2010. Geoff is a former

## Contributors' Biographies

senior Australian diplomat and Commonwealth public servant. His diplomatic service was mainly in Asia, and included postings in Malaysia, Indonesia, India as Deputy High Commissioner, Papua and South Korea as Ambassador and New Zealand as High Commissioner. He was Deputy Secretary and Acting Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, head of the International Division of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Director-General of the Office of National Assessments. Geoff is also a former President of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Institute of International Affairs.

### **Mr Garry Woodard FAIIA**

Mr Woodard served as the Australian Ambassador to Burma from 1973 and the Australian ambassador to Beijing until 1980. During this time he led the Australian negotiating team responsible for the conclusion of the Japan-Australia Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation. In 1984 Mr Woodard published *Asian Alternatives: Australia's Vietnam Decision and Lessons on Going to War*. In 2002 Woodard was awarded the National Archives of Australia Frederick Watson fellowship. Mr Woodard served as a past National President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs and is currently a Senior Fellow of the School of Political Science, Criminology & Sociology at the University of Melbourne. He has written extensively about Australian foreign policy at the University of Melbourne and currently writes for *The New Matilda*.

### **Melissa Conley Tyler**

Melissa H. Conley Tyler was appointed National Executive Director of the Australian Institute of International Affairs in 2006. She is a lawyer and specialist in conflict resolution, including negotiation, mediation and peace education. She was previously Program Manager of the International Conflict Resolution Centre at the University of Melbourne and Senior Fellow of Melbourne Law School. In 2008 Ms.

Conley Tyler was selected to participate in the Australia 2020 Summit and received the award for most outstanding graduate of the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy under 40. She has edited more than 20 AIIA publications since 2006.

Forum Program

## **Forum Program**

**Australian Institute of International Affairs  
R. G. Casey Forum  
“R.G. Casey as Minister for External Affairs 1951-60,  
Fifty Years On”**

The Sir David Smith Meeting Room, Government  
House, Yarralumla, ACT  
Tuesday 9 February 2010

### **Program**

**Arrival 9.00**

**Welcome to the Forum 9.15-9.30**

Welcoming Remarks:

Clive Hildebrand, National President, Australian  
Institute of International Affairs

Opening Remarks:

Garry Woodard, Senior Fellow, University of Melbourne  
and former National President, Australian Institute of  
International Affairs

**Session 1: R. G. Casey and Australian International  
Thinking 9.30-10.15**

Presenter:

Professor James Cotton, Australian Defence Force  
Academy, University of NSW

Moderator:

Brigadier John Robbins (Rtd), Deputy Director,  
Australian Institute of International Affairs

**Morning Tea**

**10.15-10.45**

**Session 2: R. G. Casey and James Plimsoll: a Close  
Working Relationship**

**10.45-11.30**

Presenter:

Jeremy Hearder, Consultant, Department of Foreign  
Affairs and Trade

Moderator:

Dr Susan Boyd, former senior Australian diplomat and  
President of the Western Australia Branch of the  
Australian Institute of International Affairs

**Session 3: R. G. Casey and Arthur Tange as Minister  
and Permanent Head**

**11.30-12.15**

Presenter:

Professor Peter Edwards AM, Department of American  
Studies, School of International Studies, Flinders  
University

Moderator:

Professor Joan Beaumont, Dean of Arts and Social  
Sciences, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences

**Lunch** **12.15-1.15**

**Session 4: The Substance and Relevance of  
Australia's Diplomacy and Foreign Policy in the  
Casey Era, 1951-60** **1.15-2.15**

Facilitator:

Garry Woodard, Senior Fellow, University of Melbourne  
and former National President, Australian Institute of  
International Affairs

Panel of former senior Australian diplomats:

Richard Woolcott AC, former Secretary, Department of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1988-92

Robert Furlonger CB, former Director-General, Office of  
National Assessments

Pierre Hutton, former Private Secretary to R.G. Casey,  
1958-60 and Head of Mission to Nigeria, Lebanon, Iraq,  
Syria, Jordan, Egypt, The Sudan and Switzerland

James Ingram AO, former Director, Australian  
Development Assistance Bureau and former Executive  
Director, UN World Food Programme

Alfred Parsons AO, former High Commissioner to the  
United Kingdom, Singapore and Malaysia

William Pritchett AO, former Secretary, Department of  
Defence

**Afternoon Tea** **2.15-2.45**

**Session 5: Dick and Maie Casey in Partnership**  
**2.45-3.30**

Presenter:

Dr Diane Langmore AM, former Senior Fellow and General Editor of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, and author of *Glittering Surfaces*, a biography of Maie Casey

Comments:

Richard Gardner, former Private Secretary to R.G. Casey, 1955-58

Moderator:

Dr Shirley Scott, Associate Professor of International Relations, University of NSW and Chair of the Research Committee of the Australian Institute of International Affairs

**Closure**

**3.30-4.00**

Some Points from the Discussion:

Geoffrey Miller AO, former senior Australian diplomat and National Vice President, Australian Institute of International Affairs

Closing Remarks:

Melissa Conley Tyler, National Executive Director, Australian Institute of International Affairs



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