



JOHN CURTIN PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY
EDUCATION PROGRAM

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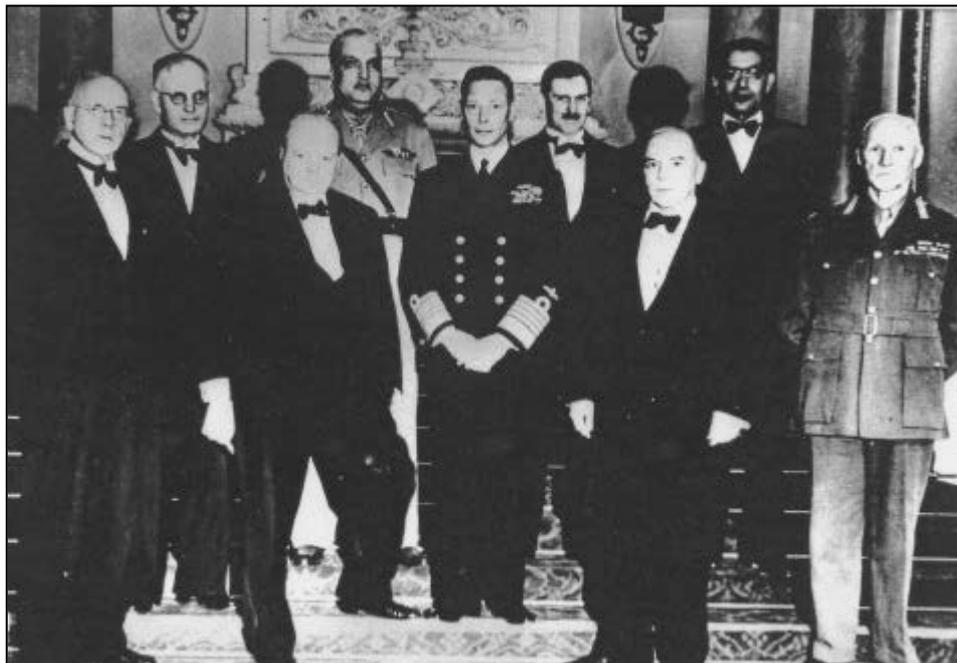
Trip Abroad

For some time pressure had been brought to bear on John Curtin to visit Britain and the USA to discuss war problems, but it was not until the urging of Cabinet and President Roosevelt in 1944 that he agreed. A three month trip abroad was planned for Curtin to attend the Dominion Prime Ministers' Conference in the UK and also to visit the USA and Canada. The purpose of the trip was to promote Australia's interest in the postwar plans for what would happen in the Pacific region. There were many questions to consider – should Australian troops remain in the Pacific war until the end? How could Australia best achieve a balance of manpower between the military forces and the needs of civilian production gearing up for peacetime markets? What was to be the new world organisation after the war was concluded?

On Wednesday, 5 April 194 Curtin and his wife, Elsie, embarked on the US Naval transport, the *Lurline*, to undertake the two week trip to the US.

Curtin and a small entourage left Washington early on 26 April and flew first to Baltimore (1800km) where they lunched with the Governor, before making the 5000km trip to Ireland. The Boeing flying boat was equipped with a large supply of aviation fuel as the trip was non-stop. Once in London, Curtin was quickly absorbed into the Prime Ministers' Conference, with the first meeting being held at No.10 Downing Street on 1 May.

After a month of military discussions in England, Curtin returned to Washington, via Canada, where he met with Prime Minister Mackenzie King and addressed the Canadian Parliament. In Washington, Curtin wrote to Roosevelt, enclosing a memorandum detailing his strategic plan for the South West Pacific area.



Dominion Prime Ministers dining with HM King George VI, London 1944. John Curtin stands second from left.

(JCPML00139/18. Original held by J S Batty Library of West Australian History: BA499/18, 53432P)
http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au:80/R?func=dbin-jump-full&local_base=era01jcpml&object_id=80137

John Curtin's speeches and correspondence reveal Australia's relationships with Britain and the United States during World War II. Curtin outlines the role that his country should play during and after the war.

1. **Australia and U.S.A. – Mr Curtin on Problems, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 April 1944, p.1 (excerpt) (Trove)**

WASHINGTON, April 25. Quick-witted rejoinders to some searching questions raising world issues enlivened Mr. Curtin's Press conference with 80 of the nation's leading journalists yesterday.

"We used to call you cousins, but now that your soldiers are marrying our girls we have become 'in-laws,'" he said, dwelling on the desirability of closer relations between Australia and the United States after the war. ...

Mr. Curtin said that his visit to America was to exchange views on the legacy which the war would leave.

"We cannot go back to what was," he said; "we must go on to what will be."

The purpose of the Imperial Conference he felt could best be expressed by the idea that a family should have consultations and maintain some continuity on certain matters. ...

Full document available in the Trove website at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/17891138>
(Transcript and downloads available in left column)

2. **Broadcast by the Prime Minister (Mr Curtin) from London, 8 May 1944 (excerpt) (JCPML00603/1)**

I speak to the people of Britain on behalf of 7,000,000 Australians. ...

Australia is now grappling ... to maintain Australian combat forces, to feed and service Australian and allied forces, to feed and maintain the Australian civil population and to produce vital food for Britain. All that imposes a terrific strain on Australia's manpower pool.

I make it clear that Australia's preoccupation with the war against Japan involves more than Australia. ... The issue in the Pacific as in Europe is between slavery and freedom. We, like you, have stood and fought for freedom. We, like you, do not mean to see the freedom we have helped to win for all people everywhere in the world diminished. When peace comes the British Commonwealth, therefore, must recognise that the interests of all its members are involved in the ability of Australia to maintain and expand British institutions in the Pacific. In particular, Australia wants her partners in the Commonwealth to understand the vital position Australia occupies in British Commonwealth affairs. ...

Australia lays stress on the importance of the combined Allied military effort against Japan and ... points out that ... It is essential that a certain minimum effort must be maintained in the Pacific so that prolongation will not become stalemate. I am happy to say that this point of view has been completely accepted by the Prime Ministers' conference. ...

Our generation will have left its mark before we hand on the torch to our sons and daughters. Our remaining task is to think and plan so that their world may in truth be a new world. There can be no going back to the good old days. They were not good days and they have truly become old. We have to point the way to better days.

Full document available in the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library's Electronic Research Archive (ERA) at: http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au:80/R?func=dbin-jump-full&local_base=era01jcpml&object_id=88552
(excerpt: Folios 87–90 in the Text Document, pp.88–91 in the Digital File)

3. Address by John Curtin to a private meeting of members of the Empire Parliamentary Association, London, 17 May 1944 (excerpt) (JCPML00110/86)

I do not propose to discuss in any way the operations that have yet to be carried out, other than to say that the war in Europe must continue until the army of Germany has been defeated, that the war in the Pacific must be continued until the Japanese navy has been defeated, and when the Japanese navy has been defeated there will still be, perhaps, large armies of the Japanese left in occupied territories, and those armies must be defeated ...

Now, that strategy is the strategy, in broad principle, which Australia has accepted. It is that the great weight of the United Nations shall not be brought against Japan in fullest strength until Germany has been defeated.

Full document available in the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library's Electronic Research Archive (ERA) at: http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au:80/R?func=dbin-jump-full&local_base=era01jcpml&object_id=101466 (excerpt: pp.66–67 in the Text Document, pp.66–67 in the Digital File)

Full document also available in *Diary of a Labour Man: 1917–1945* at: http://john.curtin.edu.au/diary/primeminister/fulltext/fulltext%20prime%20minister_1944_9.html

4. Written to President Roosevelt at Australian Legation, Washington, 5 June 1944 (excerpt) (JCPML00266/3, original held by Franklin D. Roosevelt Library)

My dear Mr. President,

While in London, I have had discussions with Mr. Churchill and his advisers about the Australian war effort, with particular reference to the demands likely to be made on Australia when United Kingdom Forces come into the war against Japan in strength, following the defeat of Germany.

2. For some months the Australian Government has been seeking to re-balance the Australian war effort in order to remove certain stresses and strains which have arisen from the extensive call-up of manpower after the outbreak of war with Japan, when the A.I.F. was still in the Middle East. The return of the A.I.F. and the arrival of United States Forces gave rise to extensive demands for food and other requirements and a re-adjustment of manpower has been necessary to provide for these needs and to sustain the level of activity in a number of basic industries on which the Australian direct military effort ultimately depends. ...

3. Mr. Churchill and I have reached agreement on these strengths and the level at which food production should be maintained for exports to Britain. As Australia is in a sphere of American strategic responsibility, Mr. Churchill also agreed that I should discuss the matter in Washington.

4. Had circumstances permitted, I would naturally have discussed this matter with you first. As this was not possible, I went ahead with my discussions with the Combined Chiefs of Staff ...

5. I enclose for your information copies of:--

(i) The Memorandum submitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

(ii) Their reply.

Yours faithfully

John Curtin

Full document available in the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library's Electronic Research Archive (ERA) at: http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au:80/R?func=dbin-jump-full&local_base=era01jcpml&object_id=82483 (excerpt: p.114 in the Digital File)

5. The Australian War Effort, Memorandum to Combined Chiefs of Staff, Washington, 2 June 1944 (excerpt) (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade)

MOST SECRET

2. Australia, in addition to maintaining Forces of considerable strength in the South West Pacific area, as well as continuing its part in the Empire Air scheme and manning certain ships for the Royal Navy, has accepted responsibilities for the provision of works, supplies and services for the American Forces as well as its own. It has also to maintain the civil economy on certain austerity standards, and to meet commitments for the supply of foodstuffs to the United Kingdom to assist in the maintenance of the rations of the British people.

3. The following was the distribution of Australian manpower in December, 1943:

	Per cent
Navy, Army and Air Force	26
Munitions industries	14.7
Other essential industries	30.7
Total for direct war activities	<u>71.4</u>
Less essential industries	21.7
Other	6.9
	<u>100.0</u>

An indication of the degree to which the national effort has been concentrated on direct war activities is to be obtained from a comparison between the figures for the United Kingdom and Australia. In the case of the United Kingdom 75.1 per cent of its manpower is absorbed in direct war activities; the figure for Australia is 71.4 per cent.

4. As Australia does not possess the manpower and material resources to meet all the demands being made upon it, I discussed our problem with the Commander-in-Chief, South West Pacific area in December, 1943. General MacArthur fully agreed with the action contemplated by the Government to provide for the following needs:-

(a) The additional manpower necessary to sustain the level of activity in a number of basic industries on which the Australian direct military effort ultimately depends (transport, power, timber, minerals, food, clothing, etc.), in order to ensure a proper balance between the direct military programme and its industrial basis.

(b) Certain further requirements of manpower for the production of food for Britain, and of food and general supplies for the rapidly growing Allied Forces in Pacific Areas. ...

Full document available in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website at:

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/historical/volume-07/historical-document-07-179.html>