

Chapter 1

The Road to Russell

A career in the Public Service which closed after a decade as Secretary to the Department of Defence started from what might seem an unlikely origin. In 1942, aged 28, I was brought to Canberra from a wartime reserved occupation to work on analysing Australia's interests in the international economic and financial regulations being proposed for Australia's responses by the British and American planners who were preparing for a better world system after the war had been won. For a short period I was made responsible to Dr Roland Wilson (later Secretary to the Treasury), but in 1943 the Labor Government created the Department of Post-War Reconstruction, with J.B. Chifley as its Minister (and concurrently Treasurer) and Dr H.C. 'Nugget' Coombs as its Director-General. I worked under Coombs for several years, preparing papers and advice for several of Australia's most senior economists on the problems to be expected, and the safeguards needed, to protect Australia in the impact of these post-war plans of the two major economic powers. Over the years, I attended several international conferences arranged to discuss and to amend and endorse these plans, beginning with the 1944 Bretton Woods International Monetary Conference.

External Affairs 1945

I was seconded into the Department of External Affairs in 1945. That Department, under the urging of Dr J.W. Burton, was seeking a role in policy in these economic fields, particularly with the prospect of the United Nations and other institutions being set up with various regulatory powers. Apart from Burton, the Department was devoid of experience in economic matters. My secondment became a continuing one, leading to permanence from 1946 onwards.

I have written about my External Affairs years elsewhere.¹ I am here recording only how my interest in national security and defence matters developed. It was that interest that led me to accept, two decades later, the offer by the Gorton/Fraser Ministry² to become Secretary to the Department of Defence.

But before this my duties lay elsewhere. I became an international conference handyman and draftsman between 1945 and 1948, based in New York and attending, as adviser and occasionally as leader of delegation, a frenzied round of meetings at which Minister for External Affairs Dr H.V. Evatt's policies of pushing Australia into all the burgeoning specialised international institutions required representation. I had a part in drafting what went into the constitution and the rules of several of the new institutions being established. Returning to

the Department in late 1948 from the UN Mission in New York, I was made responsible for overseeing the development of Australian policies and representation in these areas as well as helping formulate our policies in the political organs of the United Nations.

After the Liberal–Country Party Coalition won the 1949 election, I had my first meeting with the new Minister for External Affairs, P.C. Spender. In his Sydney office, a pinkish, shortish man with a bristling moustache greeted me by first denouncing the policies of Evatt that I had been serving and then saying: ‘Burton says you know something about economics’. I confessed that I thought I did. He then bade me produce some ideas for him to use at the meeting of British Commonwealth Foreign Ministers scheduled shortly for Colombo. He took me, along with others, to this meeting, and to subsequent meetings to set up the Colombo Plan.

Burton chose to retire in 1951. Spender (after consulting Paul Hasluck, as the latter told me much later) appointed A.S. Watt to succeed him. Hasluck also told me that he had given Spender my name ‘in case he wanted a younger man’. Watt was a scholarly man, with experience in the Department, a former Rhodes Scholar and judge’s associate whose conservative views would not have commended him to Evatt. He had been sent to serve in Moscow in 1947. Watt retained me on my current duties.

Although not directly involved, I was able to observe the efforts to remedy the distrust and some antagonism that had developed between the Defence Department in Melbourne under Sir Frederick Shedden, and External Affairs under Burton. Watt had served in Washington. He had a deep concern about communism spreading internationally. He had then, and as I observed in later years, a continuing anxiety about the possibility of espionage being directed against officers of the Department, and the security of its communications.

I had been serving overseas between 1945 and late 1948, which were the years of developing differences between Burton and Shedden that several historians have documented.³ Knowing Burton well, and observing Shedden, I came to believe in later years that the differences were the product of many things: age, education, respect for conventional Public Service practices; but particularly fundamental differences on the issues in East-West relations, on the policy of non-alignment by emerging ex-colonies, and related questions. There was also the competition between a well rooted, if conservative and somewhat complacent, Department and a small group of untried newcomers in Canberra elevated into influence by a radical Labor leadership. Shedden had earned a high reputation by the support he had given Prime Minister John Curtin during the war. He had been committed to collective British Commonwealth defence under British leadership and responsive to the British desire for Australia to make resistance to any Soviet incursion to the Middle East our priority in

war—although then and later he was vigilant in preserving Australian authority over its own forces. When I came to know Shedden later, it was not in his best years. I saw little intellectual questioning of strategic priorities, while he attached unusual importance to preserving his personal contacts with the significant wartime figures with whom he had dealt in the past. He was an industrious administrator, rigid in his attachment to procedures, and a skilled defender of turf. In contrast was Burton's belief that international relations should be based on principles rather than power as he would argue—with great self-assurance about the validity of his convictions—calling for conciliation with the Soviet Union, more Australian concern with Southeast Asia, and wariness about a future threat from China. In retrospect I thought conflict between Shedden and the young nonconformist radical was inevitable. There were frictions over practical matters, such as opposition to Shedden's reform of his intelligence apparatus, and Burton's insouciance over evidence of the passage of sensitive information clandestinely to the Soviet Union from one corner of External Affairs.⁴

International Security Issues: 1950 and beyond

In the second half of 1950 the focus of my work underwent a big change, precipitated by North Korea's military invasion of the South. My advisory role was no longer concerned primarily with the economic organs of the United Nations and the new Colombo Plan for aid in Southeast Asia. Spender and Watt now looked to my division to advise on the political and constitutional objectives for the military intervention in defence of South Korea to be laid down in the United Nations and advocated through diplomatic channels. I was drawn into helping to define a security policy for Australia that satisfied several interests—domestic, political, and diplomatic—in relations with the Americans and within the British Commonwealth. They were not easy to reconcile within the framework of the UN approval that was required for the UN campaign. There were sceptics in the non-aligned world about the validity of Western intervention in an Asian country; and when the Communist Chinese entered the war (or when that seemed a possibility to be avoided), disagreement spread over such questions as the admission of Peking [Beijing] to the Chinese seat in the UN Security Council, and whether Peking's claims on Taiwan against Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] should be resisted militarily. On these matters there were Anglo-American disagreements and hardline opinion in the United States. In Australia, particularly after China entered the war, Spender chose to argue against offering political rewards to aggressors, an attitude having wide support as memories of pre-war fascism in Europe exerted their influence. And Spender's supreme objective was to earn agreement from the United States to give him a security treaty, an enterprise in which he had no support from Britain.

The work undertaken by myself and others in this tangle of interests is included in Robert O'Neill's official history⁵ and need not be repeated here. But

it may be of interest to record some of the ideas which influenced me in tracing my eventual passage into work on Australia's military capabilities as a Pacific nation, with its strategic interest centred on its near neighbourhood rather than Europe, the Middle East or North Asia.

In 1950 we went militarily into North Asia with Australian ground forces. This was a high policy decision fathered by Spender who pushed it through, past what I believe to have been somewhat bewildered colleagues, while fortuitously his cautious Prime Minister, R.G. Menzies, was abroad and unable to take part. Once the decision was made, I advocated, unsuccessfully, that we make a larger military contribution. It was not that I saw any reason for Australian sacrifices to protect the Korean people, governed by a corrupt leader; nor did I see much evidence of spontaneous popular sympathy for this remote people. But our membership of the UN Commission for the Unification of Korea, which Evatt had sponsored and where we were represented by the highly regarded James Plimsoll, gave us a moral as well as a practical duty to come to the aid of the South.

Moreover, preservation of the possibility of a new collective security being founded, we hoped, on the United States had to be fostered. But it should not be at the price, as I saw it, of Australia being dragged into a new distant conflict of dubious merit. I hoped the Government would accept advice not to commit itself to a long-term commitment to give military support to whatever government might emerge in Korea after the North Korean Army had been quelled. In particular I was moved by believing then, and also in subsequent years of crisis in the Western Pacific, that the Government of mainland China should not be provoked into war that could spread into Southeast Asia and the approaches to Australia. I took this view when, with a final peace in Korea yet to be settled, the French were overrun by nationalist forces in Indo-China. While the negotiations for an armistice in Korea were not succeeding, we also had to express attitudes, in New York and Washington, on the activities of General Douglas MacArthur in his free interpretation of his political instructions.

Spender took me to London in early 1951 as he carried his energetic and single-minded campaign to a sceptical British audience. I recall the visit as one of the most determined forays of its kind that I have witnessed. Meetings and public addresses were packed into a few days, before he went on to Washington to take a very important opportunity to put his case for a security treaty direct to President Harry Truman. He left me behind in London, entrusted with the task of composing a telegram to Menzies ranging widely (and somewhat indeterminately) over all the issues.

If historians, when making their meticulous interpretations of what they read, knew how some papers originated, it might lighten their days (and their prose). On his journey to Southampton to join the RMS *Queen Mary*, Spender

sat me in the 'dicky seat' of his Daimler to record his thoughts and his instructions. His staccato speech seemed, as always, to be in a race with the agility of his mind. We wound through the villages of southern England cloaked in darkness, except when lights, apparently relics of the Second World War, sporadically illuminated the moving vehicle. They proved essential for making crude handwritten notes. At our destination we parted company in his cabin after he gave me his second thoughts (Spender was not a man of few words), interrupted by an altercation with a majestically uniformed purser upon whom Spender vented his displeasure at the inadequacy of the cabin that Cunard had provided to the Foreign Minister of Australia.

In London I pieced together what I thought Spender had told me to say. The telegram to Canberra is now a small piece in the published history of the times⁶ and I doubt that Spender ever saw what he is recorded as saying to his Prime Minister. I had anxieties in those days, but I also had fun.

In the 1950s the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs had no role in decisions on the development of the three arms of the defence force. But when it came to their deployment, membership of the Defence Committee, and advisory sessions with Ministers from time to time, enabled the External Affairs Secretary to express his judgement on where they should not be deployed. It is not possible to say how much influence we had of this kind; for example, in opposing military support to the Dutch in West New Guinea, or in advising the Government to argue the Americans out of defending the off-shore islands in support of Chiang Kai-shek against attacks from the mainland. In the final days of the attempts to settle peace terms for the conflict with China over Korea (and over the issue of repatriation of prisoners of war), we in External Affairs were wary of an American idea of a pledge by the allies in Korea, declared to China, to take punitive action if China broke the negotiated agreements. Widening the war was one of our fears during those years.

These examples of the interconnected interests of External Affairs and Defence illustrate why over some 30 years I held to the view that administrative and inter-Ministerial arrangements were essential to make possible a consensus on security policy. Contrary to the conventional thought that it was only a matter of restraining unwise military initiatives, I came in later years to believe that restraint was needed on the temptation, particularly for Prime Ministers, to inflate Australia's influence in the world, making commitments that outran the community's willingness to provide the resources needed by the Defence Force if Australia's military capability were put to the test.

In mid-1951 R.G. (later Lord) Casey replaced Spender, who had chosen to become Ambassador to the United States. Casey took me on several overseas missions. Those to Southeast Asia reflected his interest in the progress of the British military commanders in Malaya and Singapore in subduing the jungle

insurgency. He also wanted to meet and form an impression of the emerging indigenous political leaders. I also accompanied him on a later tour through Cairo and several European capitals, when he led the delegation to the UN General Assembly in Paris. Casey was dismayed by the acrimony of the political debates and by the ferocity of the attacks of Andrei Vyshinsky, the Soviet delegate, on the Western alliance.

When I returned to Canberra in early 1952 I was again advising on the efforts to break the conflict between voluntary and compulsory repatriation of prisoners of war, in order to reach a settlement with the Chinese for an armistice in Korea. At year's end I was appointed to the embassy in Washington, with the rank of Minister, under Spender, in order to pursue this and other matters. I was Australia's liaison officer with senior officers of the US State Department consulting the 16 force contributors in Korea. One of the unrecorded duties that I was given was to exercise restraint on Spender in his free-running presentation of views, often at odds with those of Casey and Watt, on such matters as the Korean negotiations, Indonesia and Dutch New Guinea.

My assignment was cut short when Casey, on a visit to Washington, told me of Watt's desire for a post in Southeast Asia, and offered me appointment as Secretary of the Department. After 12 months in our new home, I packed up my family again, disrupting the children's schooling,⁷ and returned to Canberra to take up my new post in January 1954.

While in Washington I saw at first hand the way the Defence Department handled defence relations with the Americans—through a military mission not integrated into the embassy and one senior officer in the embassy. Beyond attending to routine business concerning relations between the armed Services of the two countries, there seemed to be little interest in reporting the defence policies of the United States towards Asia and the vigorous public debates in Congress and elsewhere which had a part in shaping them. Nor was there much evidence of guidance from Melbourne on this subject. Then, and later in Canberra, I wondered whether there was a reluctance to grant Casey leadership in security diplomacy or, more simply, slowness in recognising the implications of the 1951 ANZUS Treaty.

In my new post in Canberra I was propelled by the events of 1954 into helping the Government to respond to the recurring crises in the Western Pacific. The Government sought to attract US involvement for the first time in arresting the spread of communist influence on the Southeast Asian mainland, following the collapse of the French in Indo-China. Support for the legitimacy of the Saigon Government was needed after acceptable terms could not be reached with the communist north for unification of Vietnam in the Geneva Conference. It was a year in which effective cooperation with the Department of Defence on the

deteriorating situation to our north had a renewed urgency. Steps were needed to overcome the obstacles to quick and effective cooperation.

Defence Management in the 1950s: A view from Canberra

My first attendance at the Defence Committee had been in 1952. I had then detected some condescension on the part of the Service Chiefs towards my Department. Perhaps this was understandable in the case of Vice-Admiral Sir John Collins and Lieutenant General Sir Sydney Rowell, both lately returned from distinguished service in a great war. The third was a seconded British officer.

The six Departments in the Defence Group (Defence, Navy, Army, Air, Supply, and Defence Support) were under overall policy guidance that seemed to value precedent and procedure over analysis and new thinking. I should acknowledge that there was much management activity in the Defence Group of which External Affairs was necessarily uninformed. We would not have been competent, in any case, to judge whether Defence decisions on manpower and weapons selection, for example, were cost-effective. Our view was confined to the way in which judgements were reached on where these capabilities might have to be deployed—in short, the strategic posture of the country.

The devotion to orderly procedures was symbolised in the mechanistic description used by Shedden to describe the senior policy-making bodies—the ‘Higher Defence Machinery’. The staff of the Defence Department was largely civilian, while uniformed Service officers, with the aid of a Departmental Secretary, managed the Services under their respective Ministers. It seemed to us in Canberra that the Defence Department personnel were a mixture of a handful of questioning and perceptive officers and a larger number performing the modest role of guiding Service officers through the unfamiliar terrain of public accountability. This put a premium on providing support to others carrying higher authority, for example as Secretaries to inter-Service committees; guiding but not initiating. Initiative seemed to lie with the Services, or took the form of proposals made to Australia by Britain as the leader of Commonwealth defence planning in the early post-war years.

Decisions by, or offers of consultation from, London or Washington required speedy comprehension of international events and assessment of Australia’s interests. The Australian Government sometimes demanded to be consulted simply as a demonstration of our independence. I think that our inability to come up with a reply must have shaken patience in London and Washington on occasions. There was exasperation in Canberra at the necessity to consult the Melbourne ‘machinery’ when secure communication was difficult, and travel to meetings slow. The Joint Intelligence Committee, unlike its counterpart in London, suffered these disadvantages and was a cumbersome way of drawing

conclusions that could be used in a timely way by the Department of External Affairs and by Ministers. The Joint Planning Committee, charged with advising on the feasibility of military operations, was impenetrable by External Affairs. If the Government was to be warned of the need for restraint on a proposed military action, the Committee's advice would have to be challenged later. On one occasion when one of our officers was invited to attend, he heard a cry of alarm from the naval member (later a Rear Admiral): 'There is a stranger in the room'. The Shedden discipline required that all past findings on a subject be laid one upon the other, with consistency valued above innovation. There was much turgid prose. More objective critics than I, in the person of successive official historians, have described the inadequacies of the system.⁸

Both Departments suffered from the remoteness of Ministers from their Departments and from each other. Casey preferred to spend as much time as possible in Melbourne or his country property at Berwick. Other Ministers in the Defence Group were scattered around the continent when Parliament was in recess. Defence Minister Sir Philip McBride, with whom I had much to do in later years when he was Acting Minister for External Affairs, might be beyond reach for one or two days while touring the vast expanse of his sheep runs across the north of South Australia. One ruminated fruitlessly on the ease of consultation among Departments and Ministers in cosy Britain.

Prime Minister Robert Menzies was the pillar to whom we turned when crises demanded a prompt response. He was resident in Canberra and sought the advice of officials methodically, and of relevant Ministers when they were available to meet with him. When Parliament was sitting, these meetings occurred not in Cabinet sub-committees but around Menzies' desk, often late at night. Generally the Ministers for Defence and External Affairs would be present along with the Secretaries of the Prime Minister's and External Affairs Departments, but seldom the Secretary of Defence or a Service Chief because of their isolation in Melbourne. The decisions reached have to be discerned by historians from outgoing telegrams to our missions abroad or to other governments.

When writing in later years of his Cabinet experience, Sir Paul Hasluck remarked on the failure of a Cabinet committee, of which he was a member, to meet and be informed by External Affairs. The comment accompanied some disparaging references to one of his predecessors as Minister for External Affairs, Casey, and was perhaps designed to fortify his criticism of the management of affairs while he was sidelined in the Territories portfolio. Hasluck was apparently unaware of Menzies' preference for *ad hoc* meetings of the kind I have described. Menzies had no disposition for attending Cabinet committee meetings simply for educational purposes.

In my discussions with Shedden over the years I heard few opinions on Australia's strategic interests or priorities. He was more interested, it seemed,

in procedures and in respect for the Defence Committee. Absence from its meetings would earn a mild rebuke. His conversation in moments of relaxation, as previously noted, dwelt very much on the famous wartime personalities with whom he had dealt as the adviser and Secretary to Curtin's War Cabinet. I was aware that in that role he had earned the highest respect from the Government. But I found his methods in respect of our strategic interests and their priorities to be unsuited to the new age. Australia was forging a foreign policy in alliance with a new ally and was actively engaged with military situations, rather than directing its attention to British concerns with the Soviet threat in the Middle East. Assessing the strength of potential threats to Australia's independent interests, within the area covered by the ANZUS Treaty, made considerable demands on such intellectual resources as the two Departments possessed. In his dealings with the British, Shedden was vigilant to protect Australia's control of its forces. There was much that needed high-level discussion of issues. But the Defence Committee method looked to subordinate Service officers to come up with recommendations for the Defence Committee to approve or disapprove. The Committee was a place for decision rather than discussion of the substance. I found this hard to resist because it seemed to reflect a use of staff officers in the command system to which the Service Chiefs were attuned, and I was not.

The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines a bureaucrat as 'an official who works by fixed routine without exercising intelligent judgement'. There was an element of such a bureaucrat in Shedden during his final service years.

Shedden seldom appeared in Canberra. I was ready to respect the responsibilities and military knowledge resident in the Defence organisation. Because of this, in August 1954 only six months after becoming Secretary, I wrote to Shedden to ask for his cooperation. It was a time of recurring crises in Asia, and Australia faced the possibility of being drawn into war in support of the Americans. In plain language I had pointed out that errors of judgement by the Americans demanded that we put our views to the Americans promptly as events developed. This would have to be without the benefit of Defence advice if their methods precluded prompt responses to my urgent requests. I recall no response from Shedden or change in his methods. It was a case of priority being given to process rather than to the substance and the outcome.

In the mid-1950s Menzies and his Ministers became dissatisfied with what was coming out of Melbourne. They exerted pressure on Shedden to stand aside and write up his experiences, for which he was given official assistance. It was sad, but presumably a more dignified ending for his career could not be found.

His replacement in 1956 was Edwin (later Sir Edwin) Hicks, formerly Secretary to the Department of Air. His experience lay less in security policy than in the application of organisation and methods to Departments.

External Affairs and Defence cooperation

Slowly the External Affairs and Defence Departments worked more closely together. In 1957 the Secretary of External Affairs was made a full, as distinct from an invited, member of the Defence Committee. This was also the year that the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department (then Allen Brown) joined the Committee, which was to have consequences for External Affairs authority in later years. External Affairs assumed chairmanship of the Joint Intelligence Committee, recognising it as the prime source of political intelligence, while the Joint Intelligence Bureau in Melbourne assembled military intelligence of a static kind. Preparation of material for meetings of the ANZUS and Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation Councils necessitated joint work, although some continuing problems remained in ensuring that the conclusions of meetings of the military Chiefs in these organisations were presented in a useful way to the External Affairs Minister for his Council meetings. I earlier described the external security situations that demanded joint appreciations between the diplomatic and defence arms of government. As the decade progressed, the growth of the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia, the Communist Party of Indonesia) and the growing bellicosity of Indonesia's President Sukarno in respect of Dutch New Guinea and, later, the 'Confrontation' challenge to the birth of Malaysia, required many meetings of the Defence Committee in response to calls on it from Ministers. Beyond all this was the dangerous escalation of the confrontation between the nuclear powers, on which the Committee offered the best judgement it could on the information given us. While some academics offered analytical judgement on the effectiveness or otherwise of deterrence of the Soviet Union, I do not think the Australian Ministers were equipped to understand the complexities of the issues. Nor do I believe that any Australian position other than an offer of diplomatic support would have weighed with the United States.

Through the Defence Committee I made many associations and some lasting friendships with the top levels of the Services and with their British, American and New Zealand counterparts during their consultations. At other levels productive work developed with the Defence Department's Gordon Blakers, whom I considered to be one of the wisest and most experienced contributors to strategic thinking. Day-to-day cooperation outside the more stifling committee procedures accelerated when the Defence Group moved up to Canberra. Other Defence officials who contributed to memory and continuity were Gordon Poyser and Don Clues. Service officers working in these areas had less continuity because of the Service necessity of rotating officers. A more stable appointment at senior level was that of Rear-Admiral Alan McNicoll (later Sir Alan when he was appointed Chief of Naval Staff). External Affairs staffing in this area also needed to be improved. I had the customary Public Service problem of what to do with officers who did not measure up.

The grip of the past in the strategic outlook

There were misunderstandings on both sides. The ideas embedded in Service tradition grew out of the history of imperial defence, and subordinate attachment to allied commands wherever governments sent them. Much of our national history was so made.

During the 1950s Australia's defence concerns became more focused geographically. Leadership of the alliance fell on the Americans in the Pacific and the British in Malaya/Singapore. Our alliance did not specify a role for Australia, as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization did for its members. Casey, while Minister for External Affairs, tried without success to get access to American plans in the Pacific in order to see where Australia fitted. The Americans fended us off with the argument that they maintained flexible capabilities not tied to specific scenarios—and probably because our capabilities in respect of the Soviet Union and China were so limited that we should confine ourselves simply to maintaining operational compatibility with the Americans against the day when we might be needed somewhere in concert with them.

Not surprisingly therefore, the Services, in Defence Committee discussions, derived Australia's role from generalisations, such as 'limited war' of no defined location and 'support of allies'. In those days I saw no reason to object. The government of the day, while prudently avoiding commitment to some American ideas on new military engagements in the Pacific, subscribed to the view that our main defence lay in America honouring an obligation under the ANZUS Treaty. In party politics, the Menzies-led Coalition claimed a unique ability to ensure that support. Questioning whether there was certainty of that support, including military action in every circumstance, was forbidden as, to use the political jargon, 'downgrading ANZUS'.

In 1959 I argued in the Defence Committee for a strategic posture that called for more capabilities that could operate independently, from which Australian contributions to allied-led operations could be drawn. The idea was incorporated in the Strategic Basis recommendation sent up for Cabinet policy direction. It was rejected by Cabinet. I was later told by Sir Garfield Barwick that a senior Minister warned Cabinet that the concept was an invitation to the Chiefs to demand more money.⁹ So much for national self-reliance.

I wanted to get competent officers into positions requiring dealings with the Defence Department and with British, American and other officials, in Canberra or in the respective capitals. Notable contributors from External Affairs were John Quinn (later an Ambassador tragically killed in an aircraft crash in North Africa), David (later Sir David) Hay, Alan Eastman, Robert Furlonger, and Malcolm Booker. Later others followed.

The substance of advice given to Ministers during these years is not part of this narrative. I am describing the awakening of my knowledge of defence matters on a road that was later to lead to a decade in the Defence Department. In these years I saw evidence of the high regard in which Australian Service officers were held by other countries for their standards of operational efficiency. I also began to form opinions that I retained in later years about their limitations in strategic analysis and about the grip on them of historical experience that was not always relevant to the present and the future. Inescapably I formed judgements about such matters as educational background and intellectual quality.

While External Affairs was much involved in these strategic assessments in the 1950s, we had no role in decisions about the shape of our defence capabilities. In earlier years Menzies had proclaimed 'we cannot stand alone'. In November 1959 the Defence Minister, Athol Townley, told Parliament that 'the primary aim of our defence effort should therefore be the continual improvement of our ability to react promptly and effectively with our allies to meet limited war situations'. There was ambiguity in the definition of 'threat' in Defence usage. Reflecting our historical engagement in allied operations worldwide, the term had an open-ended connotation, although the assumed area of any Australian military action was now much narrower.

By the early 1960s, Defence programming was putting more emphasis on a capacity to act independently. In 1963 Townley spoke of the desirability of being able to 'react ... by ourselves'. A trend in attitude was beginning to appear. Although the size of our forces increased little, it coincided with growing apprehension about developments to our immediate north, where the reactions of the Americans could not be predicted. The growing bellicosity of Sukarno, and the use of intimidation and some force to disrupt the incorporation of Borneo and Sabah into Malaysia, were frequently reviewed in the Defence Committee, which recommended increased defence provisions because of our long military association with Malaya. In these years it was a Defence axiom that threats could arise with little or no warning, demanding that adequate Australian forces be available for deployment.

America's definition of the ANZUS obligation

During 1963 Ministers became exercised over the uncertainties of US support should Australia have to protect Australian New Guinea and if military conflict with Indonesia were to arise from our commitment to come to the assistance of Malaysia. In February 1964 I was sent to Washington for discussions on these matters. During the course of the talks the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, asked me pointedly whether Australia intended to increase its defence capabilities. I do not think that my subsequent report had any significant effect. Ministers

were committed to promoting economic development projects (like so-called 'beef roads' in Queensland) under the constraints of an anti-inflation policy.

The Americans had longstanding reservations, rooted in their history, about defending British colonial interests in Southeast Asia. The consultations with the Americans brought home to the Australian Government that any US support to Australia with combat troops was neither guaranteed in advance nor unconditional. But this was the last thing for the Government to admit publicly. As to the adequacy of Australia's ability to deal with any Indonesian attack, Rusk said plainly to Hasluck in 1964 that the United States would expect to see conscription in any country supporting Malaysia before considering giving help themselves. I was impressed by the careful deliberation of his words as I heard them. Later, in November 1964, Cabinet approved the introduction of national service and increased provisions for defence. And the Prime Minister and Hasluck issued a decree that any further questioning of the Americans about their view of their ANZUS obligation must cease—presumably not wanting to risk an unpalatable public answer.

I had opportunities to meet the British commanders of all three Services, and I talked with the First Lord of the Admiralty, Peter (Lord) Carrington. I was with the Minister for External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick, when he met the US Navy team and the Justice Department officials to negotiate the terms of Australian consent to establishing their naval communications station at North West Cape. Apart from hearing Barwick rejecting many of their requests for privileged treatment with a lecture on the Federal Constitution, it was a useful introduction to the US Navy's global view, and the nuisance they found in other people's sovereignty.

I had a non-speaking part in various Prime Ministerial meetings with high-level visitors. There were ANZUS meetings, Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation meetings, and Commonwealth Ministerial meetings, and at all of them, in the 1950s and early 1960s, international security problems were part or the whole of the agenda.

These were years in which I sought help from the Services in improving my understanding of Service activities. The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sir Valston Hancock, offered to show me, in a Canberra bomber aircraft piloted by himself, how a low-level attack could evade radar detection. I was disconcerted when his deputy, Colin Hannah, bluntly questioned my sanity and recommended I ask to be flown by a young flight lieutenant. Nevertheless the lesson from Hancock proceeded. The chosen day had intensely high temperatures and correspondingly high low-level turbulence. I had a trickle of blood from a stud in the canopy over the jump seat after we came in low over a beach east of Canberra and the Air Marshal, having lost radio contact, found that his appeals for permission to ascend to calm air were unheard and fruitless. He told me of

his fear of structural damage until we bounced northward towards Richmond with radio restored. We landed for a needed respite before flying back to Canberra, our intended destination.

The year 1964 and early months of 1965 were my last as Secretary of External Affairs. They had a similarity with 1954 when I began. Our diplomacy continued to be dominated by concern in the Menzies Government for the country's security. Situations in Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia were straining relations with allies. After a long period of nursing our relations with Indonesia with an eye to the longer term, we in External Affairs (criticised as we only later learned for being too conciliatory)¹⁰ accepted that a military response might be necessary to curb Sukarno, while we could still hope for internal restraints on him. Measures to support the disintegrating government in South Vietnam were not my first priority because I could see no initiatives that Australia could effectively take. My newly appointed Minister (Hasluck) thought otherwise. In public statements by him and by the Prime Minister, the situation was seen as a downward thrust from China through satellites into Southeast Asia.

My own influence on policy in these matters was diminished. Symptomatic was the presentation to Cabinet of a Chiefs of Staff estimate (questionable in my opinion) on the possibility of holding a military line in South Vietnam, without the paper being accompanied by the customary External Affairs estimate of the likelihood of effective government with popular support. Hasluck would not have felt the need to have the Department advise him on such a matter.¹¹

Earlier, in 1962, one of Barwick's first actions after succeeding Menzies as Minister for External Affairs was to address the Dutch–Indonesian dispute over the status of West New Guinea, and the inertia of Australian policy. He had taken some steps (which Menzies considered electorally risky for a Government with a majority of one) to persuade the public of the enduring need for good relations with our close neighbour. In the background was the certainty that the Dutch would not remain in the territory, and the public needed to be prepared. In 1961 I had myself warned Menzies in writing that the Dutch were certain to leave, and said his Government needed to decide what it would prefer to see in their place. When Barwick told Cabinet of the need for a process to settle the dispute, he was told not to take any initiative.

During 1963 Barwick told me that the Prime Minister had suggested the need to consider a change in the occupancy of the Secretary's post. Barwick implied that there was no hurry, but wanted suggestions as to where I would like to go. I had the impression that he would have liked me to stay on. It was only years later that I learned of the strength of Menzies' dissatisfaction with me and his determination to have me out (and that I was not to be offered the vacant Washington Embassy posting). As a result of this, Barwick asked again later for my decision. I expressed a preference for New Delhi, India, enabling an exchange

to be made with Plimsoll if they accepted my recommendation that he succeed me in Canberra. Barwick then retired, but Hasluck, his successor, moved promptly to bring about the changes.

I remain uncertain of the reason for Menzies' displeasure, which he never expressed to me. Over the years my assessment of Australia's best interests in respect of nationalist struggles against colonialism, and the antipathy of some Asian leaders to Australia's military alignments, had sometimes differed markedly from his view when he encountered these issues in the Commonwealth and read reports of their treatment in the United Nations. Perhaps it was a matter of personality. There was some solace in the fact that, as will appear later in this narrative, four later Prime Ministers (Gorton, McMahon, Whitlam and Fraser) did not share Menzies' judgement. Each offered me appointments or responsibilities as Departmental Secretary or Ambassador in a major embassy.

Moreover, after some months of Hasluck's aloofness from his Department, his disapproval of being offered advice on policy, and his schoolmasterish scolding of senior officers on trivia of administration, I was personally pleased to be heading for New Delhi.

Interlude in India

New Delhi was not a professionally demanding post. Bilateral relations were cordial but constrained both politically and commercially. Relations had long been affected by the contrast between India's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement (which was in fact weighted against the United States) and Australia's military alliance with the United States. Nothing that Australia said was likely to move India away from its opposition to the military intervention in support of South Vietnam, nor its calculated playing off of the United States against the Soviet Union while accepting American aid and being conciliatory to Moscow. Pressure from powers greater than Australia to negotiate with Pakistan over Kashmir would have been ineffective. The morass of bureaucratic regulation of the economy under an old-fashioned socialism frustrated Australian business investment.

Our substantial gifts of wheat during the food crisis earned us some goodwill in the Indian Government. I directed much of my energy to cultivating a better opinion of Australia in the influential print media and among members of the Lok Sabha (the lower House of Parliament). I doubt that I made much impression on the coterie preserving the Jawaharlal Nehru tradition (including his daughter Indira) and certainly not on the Defence Minister Krishna Menon, passionate defender of the Nehru faith. I recall that before I addressed a meeting of a young lawyers' association, he introduced me with a warning to my listeners that I was aligned with the United States. Such absurdities were not universal and I was on good terms with some younger Ministers who were prepared to listen. There

were plentiful opportunities for speaking engagements around the country where English was in common use among those influencing policy and opinions.

I gave special attention to the role of the armed Services at a time of spreading separatist movements, as well as the unresolved border dispute with China, and the feud with Pakistan. Some observers were speculating about the possibility of an Army takeover, which I discounted. On the face of it, the Army had great power and undoubted popular prestige. I had several talks with the General (later Field Marshal) commanding Eastern Command whose force of 300 000 illustrated the point. The British tradition of keeping out of politics seemed secure. Candour with me was encouraged by respect for Australia's Service traditions and record, and for our historical British connection. I lectured often at senior Service establishments. There was limited sympathy there for the Soviet Union about which our intelligence assessors in Canberra showed interest, not least when the Indian Navy began to acquire Soviet submarines.

I learned more about British mess decorum in India than I did elsewhere. In speech and drill the customs of Sandhurst flourished, and their polo was certainly better. Nor was the Indian Navy an exception to the British tradition, judging by a scene on the grassy uplands of the Nilgiri Hills in the south as I approached the Wellington Staff College for one of my regular speaking engagements. A dishevelled rider in a red hunting jacket, tossed off his horse, was identified as a bearded Sikh naval captain. I learned that his quarry was a jackal because of the paucity of foxes.

Access to Bhutan was very restricted and only a handful of ambassadors were permitted entry. The Indian Army had at least one division deployed to protect the country's frontier with China. Its Chief (General Kumaramangalam) made arrangements direct with the King for him to receive me. A young Australian house-guest was greatly impressed to hear him say: 'I shall ring the King'.¹² The Air Force was more reclusive, perhaps because of heavy reliance on Soviet deliveries of equipment, and I found congenial relations to be more difficult. In contrast, an Army General, Sen, when in office had said, after dinner in the Australian High Commissioner's Residence, that he was leading a study of ways of conducting a successful coup against the Government. After a suitably dramatic pause he added that it was done at the request of the Minister for Defence, and had concluded that if any dissident command in the Hindu north were to start such a move, it would be quickly suppressed by loyal units from elsewhere.

There was time in India to reflect on the strategic assessments of my own country and the level of our defence preparation, while the Government dwelt on fears for national security. There was still a propensity, after Sukarno had been dislodged, to give more emphasis in Australia to our dependence on the ANZUS Treaty than to a sober estimate of Australia's own capability to look after itself. There was not much in India's policies to emulate. Yet, wrong-headed

and hypocritical as India's policies sometimes were, one's mind was gripped by the undeviating direction of India towards national self-interest without concession to sentiment towards others, or to the 'loyalty' so evident in Australian official policies towards our 'traditional friends'.

I visited Vietnam twice during my New Delhi assignment, the better to understand the prospects of the Saigon Government. In 1967 the Australian Ambassador, L.H. Border, escorted me to three of the Corps Headquarters to meet local commanders and officials. I flew by helicopter to the Australian Task Force Headquarters at Nui Dat for a briefing from those in the field. In 1969 I visited Saigon again. On each occasion I was briefed by the American senior commander and given what a sceptical Australian Army officer described to me as the optimistic briefing customarily given to American Congressmen. I was also briefed by each of the Australian two-star generals serving at the so-called 'Free World' Headquarters. I was later to serve with each in Canberra.

In pursuing these interests as an External Affairs official, and reporting what I thought of the state of the South Vietnam's Government and my impressions of the US effort, I was influenced by my own conviction of the need for Australia to have a system to marry defence and foreign policy activities so as to produce sound security policy.

After India: Where to move?

By 1969 I was entering my fifth year and the fifth summer in India. The number of summers endured has been the traditional Western European's measure of a family's ability to survive the debilitating heat and the intestinal torments of the north Indian plain, particularly for anyone determined to get out of the air-conditioning and secure hygiene in order to meet Indians in their own environment throughout the country, as I did.

My time was coming to an end as 1970 approached. Before relating some twists and turns that finally were to place me in the Department of Defence, I should describe some correspondence in 1968, two years earlier, which might well have had an effect. I had then offered some gratuitous advice to an old friend, Sir Henry Bland, when I learned that he had been appointed Secretary of the Department of Defence in succession to Sir Edwin Hicks. Drawing on my accumulated judgement of the weaknesses in that Department in my dealings with it for over a decade, I wrote to Bland urging him to reform the system, and went on to argue why that was necessary:

You may be asking what it has to do with me. Put it down to the exuberance of an early retirement and to eleven and a half years of participation in the Defence Committee. In fact I first attended Fred Shedden's performing animal show in Melbourne as an acting 'invited member' in about 1952. Chiefs of Staff have come and gone like a mirage

in a desert. But one visible and rocklike feature that remained with us always was the indomitable resistance of the Department of Defence to being itself the innovator of anything, or the original source of ideas on strategy, or choice of weapons, or defence associations with the outside world—or anything else. Accountancy and minute-taking have been its forte—from Secretary down. It has been heartbreaking—and sometimes frightening through the years. Time and again it has been EA [External Affairs] (whether its views were right or wrong) which has had to say—‘Look! This is a problem. It needs an answer—by next Thursday. Please forget about the holiday weekend’. It has been partly mental sterility. But it has been more a deplorably wrong approach and system of administering the formulations of the ‘defence view’ of current international or domestic situations to say nothing of the determination of purely ‘defence’ questions like the choice of weapons systems—in respect of which I have no more knowledge than an outside listener but got an impression of the superficiality of much of the analysis.

So I hope you are going to import some brains and—more important—stimulate them and those that the Department already possesses, to come up with ideas without waiting for the Joint Service machinery or EA to speak first.

Which leads to the tripartite Joint Service machinery—with its Defence Department appendages, and EA participation where the subject matter is relevant. I do not believe that past methods of working the system are adequate for the needs of the past decade (much less the future). There is absolutely no stimulus to fresh thinking or re-analysis of traditional conclusions because Services inescapably argue from individual Service briefs and get no marks for supporting an innovation of ideas from another which might have ill consequences for their own. They are not stupid men. It is the system that is wrong. And, to compound the problem, the prime attitude of the Defence Department is, it seems, to remind all concerned of the past decisions on the question and to ensure that the commencement of the paper quotes the past decision. It is like starting a romance with your late wife’s photograph in plain view—dampening to all. Tattered old clichés in papers coming up to the Defence Committee get sanctified as holy writ but the system abhors change.

A more balanced view than this of Bland’s Department would acknowledge that some blame lay with the Coalition Governments for preserving four other Departments (Navy, Army, Air and Supply) over which the Defence Department had only partial control; and that the Defence Department’s own methods had

served the country well enough in the Second World War. My exaggerated language was aimed at moving Bland (himself an innovative reformer).

Moreover, when writing as I did, I had no thought of leaving External Affairs. I looked forward to further years in India and to the eventual possibility of heading one of the three major high commissions or embassies, although aware that two of them had been filled invariably by politicians.¹³

In March 1969 I was dismayed to be offered, by an inexperienced Minister for External Affairs (Gordon Freeth), a new position of Deputy High Commissioner in London to be created for me. I recalled the persistent unwillingness of High Commissioners there to allow any subordinate to have access to British Cabinet Ministers. In particular, the Australian High Commissioner in London from 1951 to 1956, Sir Thomas White (not the most discerning of intellectuals), had fended off an attempt by Menzies to have him bring External Affairs people in Australia House into high-level contacts. I rejected the idea of being inadvertently demoted in this way to talking only with officials. I asked for an ambassadorial position of responsibility such as Washington or Tokyo or London (in that order of preference), and otherwise to remain in India.

In Canberra five months later, dining with Freeth and later having Sunday morning drinks with John Gorton at the Lodge, I was offered the posting to Washington. Keith Waller (the incumbent) and I corresponded thereafter about arrangements for the takeover, preserving confidentiality as protocol required. I also wrote a critical commentary to my old friend Plimsoll on the loss of initiative in the Department of External Affairs and on the exclusion of officers from policy discussion with Ministers. On the basis of discussion with several officers, I attributed this in part to an inheritance from the stifling attitude of the former Minister, Paul Hasluck. This had a sequel.

The Defence Department appointment

Administration under Gorton was often unorthodox, sometimes scornful of convention and prevailing lines of authority, and affected by the Prime Minister's preferences for particular individuals. These habits extended to his relations with some of his Cabinet colleagues, as I was to observe more than once at close quarters. Early on 21 November 1969, as I was dressing for the day, the Residence Head Bearer/Major Domo (Shafiq Mohammed Ali) ascended the stairs in an excited state crying: 'Sahib! Sahib! There is a man on telephone from Australia wanting to speak to Sahib and I am telling him it is not right time and please go away, but he is angry man. I am not knowing his name because telephone is not good—something like "Gorton".' After expressing hasty apologies to the Prime Minister, I heard him say that he and the Defence Minister, Malcolm Fraser, wanted me to succeed Sir Henry Bland who had suddenly decided to retire because of his wife's indifferent health. Having said I would do whatever he

thought best, I made a point of saying that I had no experience as a member of any of the Services. He said this did not matter. I suggested that Fraser discuss the timing with my newly appointed Minister, William McMahon.

Four days later McMahon rang me to say that he would like me to return as Secretary of the Department of External Affairs (re-named Foreign Affairs in 1970), as he thought it best if Plimsoll moved on. I told him I thought that much needed attention in the Department as a result of Plimsoll's administrative shortcomings, but this was not for me as I was now committed elsewhere. McMahon said he had been kept in the dark by Gorton and Fraser over the Defence appointment offer and would consult his colleagues. Asked which Department I preferred, I said External Affairs. (On reflection later I decided that my return would not have been good for the Department.) In another telephone call to New Delhi, McMahon said that the Prime Minister had only then confirmed what had been going on in the dark. In a cable, through commercial channels, he asked me to report on the Department's deficiencies that I had referred to, and to give him an assessment of the officers whom I thought ought to be considered to replace Plimsoll. I wrote doing so, in my own hand without keeping any copy, recommending Waller. Waller was in fact appointed. Lest my view of Plimsoll should be misinterpreted, I should add that in overseas missions—and he headed all of our major ones as no other career officer had done—Plimsoll was unique in his ability, perhaps our best. People at the top, including difficult people like Syngman Rhee in Korea, opened their doors to him. Administration of a large Department and nurturing its staff were, however, not his forte.

The announcement was made and I made my farewells in India. On the way back to Australia I made some visits to gather information that would be more difficult to make in my new capacity without media speculation—Tokyo, the American supply base on Okinawa, and Jakarta.

You will get on much better than our Defence Secretary because you know nothing about weapons whereas he has been there too long and thinks he knows a lot.

An Indian Chief of the Naval Staff said this to me as I departed for Canberra in January 1970. Would the same be said about me nine years hence?

Defence Minister Fraser: His strategic outlook

The leisurely pace of the Department under Edwin Hicks that I visited during the 1960s had changed. Bland had started many changes. Fraser, who was 39, had been in office only a matter of weeks and already the staff were experiencing his demands with urgent timetables attached. He intended to make a far-reaching statement on defence policy, to bring to decision outstanding matters (not least the delivery of the problem-plagued F-111 aircraft which had the Government

under continuous attack from the Opposition and the media), and to record his view of Australia's strategic priorities. Bland for his part was trying to round up quickly, before departure, the many enquiries, proposed reforms in inter-Service collaboration, and central staffing reorganisation that he had initiated under Allen Fairhall.

Fraser made his statement on 10 March 1970.¹⁴ He recapitulated and endorsed the reforms that his predecessor (Fairhall) had approved on Bland's advice. On strategy he promised ambitious policies: to reject isolation; to involve Australia in the processes of change in Southeast Asia and the surrounding Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean waters; to prepare Australian forces for regional security; to maintain the focus on Malaya and Singapore; to make our forces more self contained; and to include an offensive capacity.

In later years, after experiencing the failure of successive governments to finance a capability which lived up to these ambitions, I began to recognise the Fraser statement to be in this respect at one with those of the Menzies Government earlier: to make commitments for sound diplomatic reasons which outran the Government's later willingness to provide the defence capabilities to implement them. Eventually Australia had to narrow its focus away from the wider visions of Spender, Casey and their successors, and to concentrate more on capabilities to defend our own soil and nearer neighbourhood, abandoning some strategic capabilities for more distant operations for which finance could not be found.

Some years had to pass before advocates of a comprehensively equipped Defence Force were forced to accept choices and priorities among Fraser's objectives. It was to prove a long drawn-out effort to bring the Services to accept the unpalatable. And it took longer—long after my time—before Ministers accepted narrower strategic objectives and the need to bring defence capabilities into line with those more limited strategic interests, under a limited budget and accepting traditional popular opposition to compulsory Army service. In this process, rejection of capabilities is fiercely fought by the interested Service and its parliamentary supporters, is disliked by allies, and requires courage by Ministers. The eventual abandonment of Australia's aircraft carrier with its distant blue-water capabilities is an example.

A common outlook had to be achieved. Fraser made a prescient remark, only months after President Richard Nixon's 1969 forecast at Guam of reduced American world policing: 'We need to ensure that each of the Services prepares for the same kind of conflicts, in the same places, and in the same time scale.'

An encouraging aspect of Fraser's speech was the fact that he surveyed the world situation and gave strategic objectives—over-ambitious or not—their status as the foundation of defence activities (incidentally earning a rebuke from McMahon for intrusion into his Foreign Affairs territory). Previous statements

and public comment tended to focus endlessly on the adequacy (or inadequacy) of ships, aircraft, weapons and Army manpower, without focus on where Australian interests were likely to require these military assets to be actually used. Geographic focus was missing and was usually submerged in the concept of ensuring 'balance' and 'operational compatibility with allies'. As I shall suggest later, there was powerful resistance that grew out of our historical national allegiances which were the basis of traditions within the Services themselves, before a Minister for Defence was able to say with an authority not previously existing: 'The Defence policy of the Government is to pursue a disciplined relationship between strategy and force structure within the constraints of what is financially feasible'.¹⁵

New to the scene in January 1970, I made no significant contribution to the Fraser statement. My first priorities were to take hold of a large system, to learn about it, and to consolidate the Bland reforms.

The Fairhall/Bland Reforms inherited

During 16 years in the industrial relations world as Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Bland had demonstrated confidence in his own opinions and readiness to enter a fight undaunted by rank or odds. These were qualities eminently suitable for one about to enlarge Ministerial control and impose unified objectives on the Services' expenditure and activities.

By mid-1968 Bland had persuaded his Minister, Allen Fairhall, to agree to innovations to achieve these results. One method was to cease to rely in the Department on the committees to which each Service sent its representative, unavoidably connected with satisfying the interest of the Service; and to replace them with officers, chosen for their qualities, to serve for some years in the Department as members of a joint staff in an environment conducive to more objective analysis. Another innovation called for a system of analysing proposals that each Service made for a place in the Defence Minister's expenditure programme for ships, aircraft and their weapons systems (and, in the case of the Army particularly, for manning levels). This would involve the Joint Staff. In what turned out in subsequent years to be one of the most controversial aspects of the reform, Fairhall decided that qualified civilians were to join in the process. Bland set about recruiting such civilians.

The second leg of the reforms was to create a methodical system of keeping under regular review commitments to future expenditure, tabulated according to the year of impact on the budget, and to keep such commitments within an annual limit laid down by Ministers. They made no commitment to the figures, which were known only as 'financial guidance'. Proposed commitments would be judged by the analysis process for their conformity to the official strategic outlook, subordinating single-Service ambitions to collective defence priorities.

Bland sent officers to study the Rand Corporation system used by the US Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara. It was later adopted as the Five Year Defence Rolling Program—'rolling' because there was an annual review of outlays forecast and adjustments made to the content where necessary, whether because of changes in cost, or of delivery or other problems. I believe Gordon Blakers gave Bland the idea after Blakers had had a briefing by the Pentagon on the Rand concept of applying the test of cost-effectiveness to proposals to acquire new weapons and other capabilities. It rested on detailed questioning of their conformity to endorsed strategy, to priorities in the approved programme, and to financial limits. The so-called Planning, Programming and Budgeting System demanded disciplined analysis. The Defence Department was the first to introduce this forward programming into Canberra administration in the face of Treasury scepticism. It was many years before the system was widely adopted elsewhere in Commonwealth Departments.

Fraser adopted the new system, but its introduction required new procedures and there was latent resistance to change. The desire remained to safeguard the power of decision by professional Service officers in the interests of their Service, and perhaps of members of the specialised branches for which they had been trained and where their careers lay. In their view, the Defence Department did not understand Service needs and was a predominantly civilian Department, not all of whose staff was of the high quality that should accompany the power of saying 'no'. Possibly some high-handedness contributed to a mood of non-cooperation.

Understandably Bland, in his 24 months, had been unable to reform entrenched Service attitudes towards each other and towards the Department of Defence and its Minister. I came to believe that nothing less than a kind of cultural change over time had to be the objective. Tribalism is not eliminated solely by making new rules. Progress was made in my time. But it took decades, a succession of Labor Governments committed to reform, and the arrival of a new generation of more liberally educated Service officers, before it could be said that there was no turning back from the reforms that had their genesis in 1968.

After Bland retired for family reasons, he was justifiably commended in editorials of major journals. He later expanded his views on defence reorganisation in the 1970 Roy Milne Memorial Lecture, following Lieutenant General Sir Leslie Morshead's idea of fewer Departments.¹⁶ When I later developed my own views on that matter, I did not adopt Bland's particular solution.

The scope of the Defence Group empire

In the year that I came to the Defence Department, the Defence Group's 1970–71 budget was responsible for 14 per cent of total Commonwealth expenditure, and was estimated to be 3.6 per cent of the Gross National Product. Much of this was attributed to our operational expenditure in respect of Vietnam. As I was later to discover, other requirements were neglected. The number of civilian staff, mostly dedicated to activities in the Service commands, was very large. The Defence Group's activities were widely dispersed geographically. They required the services of a wide range of professional personnel in shipbuilding; aircraft and arms and stores production; scientific research and its application to the repair and the modification of equipment to unique Australian climatic and other conditions; health services; and much more. There were establishments for education, and others for training in the advanced technologies employed in weapon controls and the sensors needed for all environments. The range of activities sustained by the Defence vote was a microcosm of Commonwealth Government administration across the board, as well as of much within the province of State administrations. Relations with allies had to be fostered and disagreement negotiated away. Important intelligence-gathering systems and analyses of the product had to be managed.

I had to remedy my lack of knowledge of the way each Service managed itself, and of the operational requirements that lay behind each Service's submissions to Defence for financial approvals. In the equipment area each Service had its own philosophies, based on accumulated experience in combat, on such matters as survivability in conflict, life in service, acceptable rate of obsolescence, and maintainability under Australian conditions. Those conditions included the physical environment (such as the hot wet and hot dry climate), paucity of ports, distance from bases, as well as the country's industrial capability to meet requirements or to modify equipment without dependence on distant countries of origin.

Five Defence Group Ministries: Previous unsuccessful reforms

It soon became apparent to me that I had to clarify the authority I derived from the Minister. Fundamental to this was to get recognition of his authority over the constituent parts of the Defence Group, particularly the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. The Department of Supply, while jealous of its autonomy, was under Public Service management and more amenable to guidance.

Fairhall had in writing called on the Defence Group Ministers to cooperate with the system instituted by him on Bland's advice. But before the end of 1970, I could see some of the problems that Fraser had in consulting and winning the cooperation of these Ministers. They were based far apart, while Fraser made

his home in Canberra. Each had full Ministerial status, yet none (apart from the Minister for Supply) was a member of the Cabinet where financial and foreign policy restraints were debated and policy decided. The Service Ministers were not privy to the documentation and high-level assessments in which their own Chiefs of Staff shared. Nevertheless, each Service expected its Minister to give parliamentary and public support, to foster morale and to acknowledge the Service's achievements.

In 1970 the total number of regulars in the three Services was 84 000. The system of control had long been an anachronism. It had been designed for management of more than a million Navy, Army and Air Force personnel during the Second World War, serving commands remote from each other around the world under various higher commands (usually allied). When they were brought together back in Australia to satisfy peacetime priorities with drastically reduced numbers, there was rivalry between Services pursuing different strategic concepts with not always consistent military capabilities. It is reasonable to speculate that the rivalry was made more likely by the weakness in the system of Ministerial oversight. Fraser, not a notably patient man, found that consultation with the Service Ministers—James Killen (Navy), Andrew Peacock (Army) and Senator Tom Drake-Brockman (Air)—was impeded by their being scattered around Australia from North Queensland to the Northwest of Western Australia, while Fraser resided and worked in Canberra. They complained, and he complained.

What should have been fundamental to the authority of the Defence Minister was the Menzies 'directive' of 1958. At that time, the Prime Minister had explained to Parliament his Cabinet's rejection of the Morshead Committee's recommendation that it abolish the Service Departments and the decision to adopt the alternative of issuing a firm declaration giving the Defence Minister overall policy command. When I came into the Department 12 years later, I did not find anyone who knew of the directive; nor did the Service leaders acknowledge its significance. In formal papers leading to decisions or to recommendations to the Government, the Menzies directive was never quoted.

The Menzies solution to the disunity and lack of adequate central control in the Defence system was, in my view, a failure. It may be that a lethargic Defence Department in the late 1950s and early 1960s was at fault in not vigorously keeping before the top layer of the Services, always moving between Canberra and their commands, their responsibility to observe the directive. Or there may have been a convenient amnesia. In any case, there was probably a deeper cause of resistance to supervision by the Defence Minister of the professional activities of the Service Chiefs. They enjoyed—or claimed—the right to go over the head of their Minister to the Prime Minister. I occasionally heard officers flirting with the idea that the Governor-General's constitutional status as commander-in-chief

had practical application, although I did not hear this disturbing view of responsible government from any of the Chiefs of Staff.

Respect for the authority of the civil power was never in question. They were entitled to say (and often did) that civil servants were not the civil power. At the same time, I believe that public servants did find in the Services differences from their own instinctive respect for Ministerial authority, and from their desire to assist Ministers to the utmost, whether asked or not. Service leaders are understandably conscious of the unique nature of their profession, requiring as it does dedication to a duty to put their lives at risk in a way not shared by any other. I would expect that keeping Ministers out of trouble politically would not be much on their mind.

To reform practices within the military command system required military, not civilian, leadership. The Menzies decision had created the office of Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, placed in the Department and answering direct to the Minister, with a rank higher than that of the Chiefs. When I entered the Department, the Chairman was General Sir John Wilton, then approaching the end of a four-and-a-half year term. Bland had told me of some differences between them. Wilton was a friend of mine from my External Affairs days and we had that advantage in managing our relationship. But he was a taciturn man and I found this inhibiting when discussing with him ideas about reforms. Wilton was chafing under his lack of power of command over the Services and his somewhat obsessive interest in this remedy for deficiencies in policy directions of the Defence Group. While as a civilian I expected that, given goodwill, persuasion could be exercised by the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, I was aware that command had to be legally based because of implications for life and death. The more relaxed and informal attitudes in the Public Service were not wholly applicable and would not survive endemic rivalries over resources and power. In later discussions of the reforms under Labor, I learned how often a proposal for change might be judged by where the power of decisions would reside in a changed arrangement, rather than by the intrinsic merits of change.

Some writers have attributed intellectual qualities to Wilton that I did not discover.¹⁷ He gave me (as he had done to Bland) his proposed changes in the chain of authority. I was unwilling to give his ideas priority over many other reforms that had been initiated and not brought to fruition, and others that were needed.

In any case I was wary of his objective, as Bland had been. This was justified when I became aware (from reading an essay by Ian McNeill)¹⁸ of Wilton's memoirs. He had expressed his desire that submissions to the Minister, apparently irrespective of subject, be made by the military Chief rather than by the Departmental Secretary. Perhaps this debate had gone on in the Army Department

earlier. To convert the Defence Department into a military command headquarters in this way (as might be found, for example, in Indonesia) was something no government was likely to tolerate. Menzies' Coalition Cabinet—the more likely of the two alternative parties to grant status to the Services—had specifically given, as a reason for its opposition to the abolition of the Service Ministers, that the consequential disappearance of the Public Service Departmental Secretaries would give too much authority to the Service Chiefs.

Managing the Department with limited powers

For me in 1970 there was much to learn about the requirements of each Service and what went on inside each of their different systems. Weapons procurement apart, Defence could only exert influence through its right of approval of total budget allocations and major weapons acquisitions. Attitudes did not help. The Defence Department was seen as an outsider—a primarily civilian regulatory Department, no more welcome to involve itself in Service decisions than was an analogous Department, the Treasury. The vast area of expenditures and decisions on maintenance and running costs, which imposed commitments on future budgets, remained a mystery to me. There was some confirmation that the secretaries of the Service Departments had their difficulties too, despite their responsibility under the law to safeguard economy in expenditure. In 1968 W.J. Curtis, then Deputy Secretary in Defence under Bland after long experience in the Army Department, spoke of that Department's lack of penetration into Army activity. Entry into this area by the Defence Department had to await the progressive introduction of the programming of intended expenditures, with a ceiling which provided an incentive to establish higher and lower priorities. In the absence of such a system, only resolute military leadership would have made any progress. Parliament had many former officer members ready to protect one Service or another against change, particularly if it involved unwelcome civilian initiatives.

For the new Departmental Secretary in the Fraser years, 1970 and 1971, there was more to defence administration and policy advice than battling over reforms to the antiquated system. There were intelligence arrangements with allies to deal with; defence arrangements with Singapore and Malaysia (whose relations with each other were deteriorating); the consequences of supporting our forces in Vietnam; and major weapons procurement. Meetings had to be attended in Singapore and Wellington. There were some problems in the Department following the influx of Service officers, and the Fairhall/Bland exhortation for them to take a 'Defence' rather than a single-Service approach to their duties. There were a few cases when exploratory ideas about reforms, still not considered at the policy level, were rushed off secretly to the Service that might be affected, leading to premature reactions and occasionally appeals to sympathetic journalists. This was no way to encourage people to put to paper innovative

thinking about possible reforms. Civilians in the Department became wary. I was probably at fault for withholding access by these Service officers to departmental files. But, with time, a more trusting atmosphere developed, as all wrestled with the procedures for introducing defence programming for the ensuing five years.

My wish to get out of Canberra in 1970 in order to visit the commands and operational units was frustrated by having to attend to jurisdictional disputes of the kind described. I concluded that Bland had introduced too many rationalisation studies, and too many changes to the practices required of the Services, in too short a time. Moreover, to be successful, the changes required Service officers to look for solutions without bias towards their own Service. There was no less a requirement to find civilians who understood the needs and ethos of the Services, but also with the intellectual ability to be innovative, and the stuffing to stand up for what they believed. Such people were hard to find in sufficient numbers in the Defence Group. Many in the geographic commands, like the stereotypical 'Colonel's clerk', acquiesced in Service authority. Tempers were frayed by some Defence Department demands with short timetables, and by some ideas of doubtful utility put to the Services. Some emollient was needed, as well as new priorities for our activities.

I let some of Bland's inquiries run down. I gave high priority to the handful of officers (principally John Moten and John Enfield) who were drawing up the procedures for the new system of defence programming. Time had to be given to explaining the system to officers at all relevant levels, and to circumventing the sceptics about the McNamara method of control.

Its significance for the authority of the Defence Minister and his advisers went much further. With the exception of large capital expenditure items, which would go to Cabinet individually, Treasury would cease to be concerned with the detail of expenditure of the Services and Supply. The Defence Department, consulting within the Defence Group, would become the system's treasury, acting within the overall expenditure limit agreed with Treasury.

There were weaknesses and anomalies. The rights of the Defence Group Ministers and of the Service Boards remained intact in legislation. Central scrutiny of the expenditure on the running costs of the Services and the group's factories and science laboratories, under their respective systems of authorisation, was impossible. As to decisions on equipment procurement, with the foreseeable related manning and maintenance expenditures they would generate, I concentrated on having this major aspect of the Secretary's financial responsibilities put to systems analysis by a mixed committee of qualified Public Service and uniformed officers. As I said earlier, this area of control in the Department was to become the focal point of controversy and objection to civilian intervention throughout my years in the Defence Department.

In his Defence Report published in September, Fraser said:

The application of systematic analysis to the Services' proposals does not imply any intention to replace judgement by analysis. That is plainly impossible. On the other hand, the factors that have been referred to (the interest of local manufacturers), and the increasing military technology and its rapid rate of change, make it increasingly unlikely that reliance can be placed solely on unsupported judgement. Judgement must be complemented by the systematic analysis of alternative solutions—taking account of benefits and costs.

In effect, the intention was to displace the traditional Service 'requirement', with its mandatory connotation, with the more supplicant term 'bids'. Terminology is important. If Fraser realised what an uphill battle it would be, given the existing Ministerial arrangements, he did not admit it publicly for understandable reasons. The Opposition would have loved it.

Fraser's initiatives—and conflicts with Gorton

My early months working under Fraser were spent chiefly on establishing the new administrative apparatus already described, rather than on policy advising. Fraser for his part was still wrestling with the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, in the atmosphere of public passion and protest that had built up over many months. I had not experienced this. In India, with no television and only meagre radio reports from Australia, my eyes had been on that country's turmoil, its military tensions and its conflicts with its neighbours. I was told of Fraser's earlier attempt, when he was Army Minister, to start an orderly withdrawal of ground troops from Vietnam. It had been difficult to calibrate such a withdrawal with unpredictable American withdrawals in a way that avoided appearing simply to do what the Americans did. I learned of Fraser's belief in using skills within Army units in forms of civil assistance to the community to foster support for the Saigon Government.

Handling our military presence in Vietnam, with its conscripted component, in the face of popular protests, was a major preoccupation for Fraser. But he had also committed himself, in his 10 March 1970 statement, to a programme of extensive changes. In addition, there was another burning problem—the Government's failure to achieve delivery of the F-111, the subject of accusations of mounting costs and Labor taunts in Parliament.

Fraser decided that the delivery problem had to be solved. There was a sharp difference with the Air Force over our insistence on bringing defence scientists in to advise him on the feasibility of the Americans solving the metal fatigue problem that had crippled the retractable wing system of the aircraft. The Air Force relied on its powerful engineering branch to monitor the situation. I had no doubt that it also wanted to preserve its exclusive relations with the US Air

Force, whose goodwill they might lose if our negotiating tactics impacted on the US Air Force budget.

Believing the long-running controversy in Parliament to be politically intolerable, Fraser led a team to Washington. He made me a member, along with the Secretary of the Air Department (Fred J. Green) and the Chief of Air Staff (Air Marshal Colin Hannah). On the eve of meeting the Americans, Fraser assembled his team for a late Sunday night session in the Australian Embassy chancery to try out various ways of approaching the Americans. Playing devil's advocate, Fraser shot down most of the arguments that we suggested, based on our agreement to accept supply of an airworthy F-111. Following loss of sleep during the journey to Washington, the occasion overwhelmed both Hannah and Green; one of them went to bed for several days.

Fraser doubted that the Air Department's conciliatory approach would give us satisfaction. He decided to go over the head of both Air Forces. He presented to Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, a largely political case about the damage to defence relations. He reminded the American that the Labor Opposition, who had attacked the transaction from the beginning, took a different view of our ANZUS association with the Americans. Fraser asked, in effect, that the Americans produce a viable aircraft or give us our money back. As Fraser himself has subsequently recorded,¹⁹ the venue of the negotiation shifted from the Pentagon to a stadium holding a baseball game that Laird wanted to watch. Perched on uncomfortable benches among shouting spectators, in an atmosphere redolent of hot dogs, the two negotiators went on with their business.

After stressing the need for a viable aircraft in our joint strategic interests, Fraser accepted an offer to lease F-4 *Phantom* aircraft to bridge the gap until the F-111 problem was solved. Eventually we took delivery of this technologically advanced aircraft at a cost that was, in the context of rapidly rising prices, relatively modest, despite Opposition claims to the contrary.

Before returning to Australia, Fraser and I had a welcome diversion visiting mutual friends at their vacation retreat on the Virginia coast. William Battle, a wartime friend of John Kennedy, had been his Ambassador in Canberra during Fraser's early days in Parliament and mine in External Affairs.²⁰

Back at home, Fraser decided to satisfy Service grievances over pay and conditions, a subject on which he felt I had been unduly cautious. Slowness of the legal authorities in drafting regulations to adjust pay (for example for the Navy's technicians) compounded the deficiencies of an earlier decision imposed on the Department and the Services. This had aligned their pay to civilian awards, a system that was incapable of recognising the command responsibilities of non-commissioned officers in the Services. This was creating anomalies and resentments as pay levels followed, after long delays, the wage blow-outs then

prevalent in the civilian economy. A report by Justice Kerr defined for the first time a distinct profession of arms and a system of matching pay to responsibilities.

In this and other ways Treasury intrusion into Defence management had reduced the Department's standing in the eyes of Service personnel. Bland had only recently got the Treasury out of controlling the works programmes of the Services in their various bases and establishments. It took time to wear down Treasury's parsimony over the housing provided for other ranks.

Fraser called for a prompt study of the feasibility of locating a task force in Western Australia. He was disinclined to accept the Army's reservations and typically slow responses. I was more sympathetic to the Army's argument that it would be inefficient, and costly for training, to have to bring the task force together with specialists located on the east coast. I thought that Fraser's motivation was probably political, with an eye to the Western Australian electorate, which complained of its lack of defence protection. The idea died, but not before distrust of the Army developed.

I had my own frustrations with the Army and with the Army Department. There was an absence of candour or willingness to admit the existence of a problem that Defence could help to solve. Getting the right outcome for the totality of the defence effort required a shared belief in that objective rather than solutions sought by one Service in isolation from the others. I had to live with this insistence by all the Service Departments on their domestic jurisdiction, but it was the Army that was the most reluctant.

The Army was involved in one of Fraser's setbacks, but it was only one of several actions by the Prime Minister, Gorton, that gave it importance. The Prime Minister took it upon himself to authorise a call-out of the Pacific Islands Regiment, to provide a legal basis should the Administrator (Sir David Hay) later decide it was necessary to use troops to quell an uprising in New Guinea. In so acting, the Prime Minister overrode Fraser's earlier decision not to recommend the action to the Governor-General. My advice supported Fraser's view, as I believed there would be damage to the Army's image and that of Australia if Australian-led soldiers were used against indigenous people in a trust territory before civilian policing had demonstrably failed. The Governor-General (Sir Paul Hasluck, who had been a Territories Minister) asked whether the proposal had Cabinet backing. The matter did not come to a head as, in the event, the Administrator did not call out the Pacific Islands Regiment.

There were other setbacks. Gorton's reservations led Cabinet to postpone indefinitely the creation of a tri-Service academy recommended by a committee chaired by Sir Leslie Martin. (The title 'Australian Defence Force Academy' was only established some years later on my recommendation.)

I was not involved in yet another event involving Fraser and Gorton which developed into a crisis leading to the departure of both men from Ministerial office and which prepared the way for the downfall of the Coalition Government within two years. The situation arose out of Fraser's determination to exercise his authority over the way in which the Army command was acting in Vietnam, not in respect of its military operations in Phuoc Tuy province but in its dealings with the Saigon Government and others over civic assistance to local communities. His channel for conveying his questions and instructions was the newly appointed Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Admiral Sir Victor Smith. I saw the Secretary as having no more than a watching role in respect of conformity to government policy by the Services in such operations, as I was not a proper channel for instructions where commands were needed.

After a visit to Vietnam to survey the political situation, the prospects of the Saigon Government, and the progress in pacification of the countryside, Fraser had come away dissatisfied with progress. He believed that reporting from Saigon through military and embassy channels was fragmented and inadequate. Taking a close interest in policy issues, he directed the Joint Intelligence Organisation, which served the inter-departmental National Intelligence Committee, to gather more information on the situation. The Director of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, Robert Furlonger, having no intelligence-gathering function, informed the Army of the task he had been given and sought their cooperation.

In February and early March 1971, a crisis of misunderstanding and distrust began, fuelled by unauthorised statements to the media in Saigon suggesting, wrongly, that Defence policy towards the continuation of 'civic action' had changed. It was further fuelled by an outrageously inaccurate report in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* that the Joint Intelligence Organisation had been instructed to report on what the Army was doing, with the implication of spying on them.

There was substance in Fraser's indignant belief that the Army was acting on the assumption that, because the total withdrawal of the Army could be foreseen, forms of aid to the civil community (such as new building, medical assistance and so forth) should be reduced to those that could be completed before the withdrawal. As Fraser believed that some Army activity (such as that of the engineers) could continue after the remainder had withdrawn to Australia, he objected strongly to the Army's creating new policies and letting them appear in the media. Whether this was in fact the case, or just a suggestion in Army planning papers, is obscure. Fraser preferred to believe the former. He was, it seems, conducting his own unacknowledged briefing of selected media, making clear his disapproval of Army actions in Vietnam over civic action.

At this point the Prime Minister made another imprudent entry into Fraser's domain.²¹ Having read (as he later explained publicly) media reports of actions

by Fraser deleterious to the Army's reputation, he spoke, not to his Minister to satisfy his disquiet, but to the Chief of the General Staff (Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Daly) to obtain his view of events. What was said during the discussion is in contention. A prominent journalist wrote a story saying that Daly had complained of Fraser's disloyalty to the Army. Gorton left this statement unchallenged by not denying it.

Fraser reacted strongly. While not involved in this deteriorating situation, I had become aware, from discussions with Fraser over some months, of his critical view of the way Gorton conducted his office. When undermined in this way, he called me to his office to tell me of his decision to resign. I considered this to be a political matter and confined myself to advising on some of the formalities that Fraser would have to observe. Having set the process in motion, Fraser told me a day or two later that Gorton had offered some reconciliation. We discussed the steps already taken to give effect to the resignation. Fraser decided that he would go on with it. I took no part in his preparation of his resignation announcement in Parliament (privately I thought the language a little exaggerated). He was gracious and generous in saying farewell to officers of the Department.

Defence lost a strong and purposeful leader, better in these respects than any Coalition Minister for Defence up to the time of my retirement in 1979, and possibly better than any predecessor. His statement on 10 March 1970 of intended reforms, some of which he had inherited, was a remarkable survey of defects needing to be fixed. Whether he would have been strong enough to bring them about, had he remained in office, cannot be known. While always determined to get his own way, his insistence on consulting colleagues when Prime Minister later has been commended by some as desirable practice.²² On my observation of him in Defence, I incline to the view that he needed the reassurance of support before acting. One needed reform he did not attempt was abolition of the Service Ministers. On that he would not have had the support of his Prime Minister, Gorton.

He had opinions about most things and was sometimes impetuous in forming them. He expected his advisers to disagree with him and some found his personality hard to endure. He was not always considerate enough to recognise the pressures felt by some. Setting short timetables for production of results by his subordinates maintained his reputation for vigour as a Minister, but it sometimes made for unreasonable demands on those serving him. Sunday night had to be accepted as a normal working time if it happened to suit him.

As to my own relations, Fraser told me in later years that, when considering names for Bland's successor, he rejected several names because, as he put it, 'I wanted someone who was willing to disagree with me'. It was not long before I had to oblige him. It was, as I recollect, over an administrative matter—his

wanting one of my staff for an assignment when I said I needed him elsewhere. We exchanged one or two testy minutes before he brought the tiff to an end with an admirable solution: 'Before writing further formal notes I ask you to come over and discuss the matter that apparently disturbs you. It might be best to come at an hour when we can put a whisky in our hands.'

He had much to do with my decision to acquire a trout fishing haven in the mountains, blessed by the absence of a telephone or easy access. But there was never any rancour in our relations. Indeed, we shared a common love of fly-fishing. After becoming Prime Minister, he gave my wife and me the pleasure of having him as our guest at my haven.

Gorton the Defence Minister

Gorton had the portfolio for five months until McMahon dismissed him. Press verdicts on Gorton made much of his inability as a Minister to shake off the imperial style of Prime Ministership. I thought that in his relations with his new department he behaved very much the way Gorton always had—unorthodox, unconventional, not easy to persuade where his sense of loyalty to some group was involved, and prone to leaving his administrators in some uncertainty while he did what he had made up his mind to do. At the same time, one knew that Gorton had intellectual qualities of a kind seldom found among Defence Ministers.

He was confident of his own judgement on policy matters. While he did not tell his Department, as Hasluck had done in External Affairs, to speak on policy matters only when spoken to, he did not encourage policy advice. I had had an altercation with him years earlier when he was Minister Assisting the Minister for External Affairs. When he disputed, in brusque and uncompromising language, my right to vet expenditure proposals made to him by the Director of the Antarctic Division of the Department, I confronted him. The encounter ended in a draw. I am sure his respect for the adventurous Antarctic explorers was greater than his respect for chair-bound staff. Memory of this episode set me wondering how he would respond to the current programme of expanding the Defence Department's oversight of Service activities. The matter was not put to the test before he left the portfolio. I had no reason to foresee any personal distrust in as much as he had himself as Prime Minister offered me the Washington Embassy posting and later had personally asked me in that phone call to New Delhi to accept the diversion to the Defence Department sought by Fraser.

He showed his independence from his officers in ways unusual for a Minister. When Cabinet in mid-year called for a A\$50 million cut in the Defence budget, he personally walked the rounds of the three Service buildings at Russell on a Sunday morning, trying out what cuts they could wear. Meanwhile his Departmental Secretary sat in his office waiting to be handed the scrap of paper

recording Gorton's findings. A Chief of Staff later confided to me that he thought that Gorton had 'cooked the books' in his favour.

In a debate over the size of the Army, Gorton overrode the objective of both his Departmental Secretary and the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee to reduce Army manpower, in order to satisfy the requirement for better capabilities in other Services. The opposition he could expect from Army sympathisers might have given his Prime Minister the opportunity to 'get' him. Perhaps this was indeed in Gorton's mind. Gorton's rejection of a proposal, unanimously supported by the Service Chiefs, to place over the individual Service medical officers a superior medical officer answering to the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee was a bad omen for any new rationalisation efforts.

He showed his independence from previous Coalition attitudes in areas that I personally found encouraging. He had formed his own views on external defence relations while Prime Minister (and they appeared in an address to the Imperial Service Club in Sydney), for which he had not looked to the Department for advice.²³ He attacked some over-simplified slogans that had long been at the heart of the Coalition's policies in its conflict with the Labor Party over whether Australia's strategy needed forward bases and deployments. This was the conflict between 'forward defence' and 'fortress Australia'. Gorton pointed out that the ability to project power abroad did not, of itself, necessitate the stationing of forces overseas. If we did deploy them thus, it should be designed to strengthen the Australian fortress. The real issue was how best to defend Australian soil. It was this simple definition of Australia's interest that we were later to urge on David Fairbairn and William McMahon and over which they both stumbled and retreated. Moreover, when advocating cooperation with allies, Gorton seemed to be thinking of Asian countries. He did not mention ANZUS once.

With the case for withdrawing from Vietnam growing, and our troops in Singapore the subject of dispute over finance, this trimming of sails was expedient. Looking to the longer-term implications, we in the Defence Department saw some prospect of what in External Affairs I and others had long advocated in our advice, but without success—namely less dependence on the major powers in favour of what we came to call greater 'self-reliance'. But Gorton's ideas did not survive after his short-lived term as Defence Minister.

We saw less prospect of obtaining the Minister's support for our efforts to impose on the Services what we believed to be more rational priorities in respect of manpower and equipment. The Imperial Service Club speech offered the Services all that they said they needed—more spending, better conditions of service and (doubtless with the previous Minister in mind) loyalty from Ministers. There was nothing about facing up to the discipline of priorities.

I could see the Department and its programming system reverting to a role of simply supporting Service bids for funds—the ‘adding machine’ role of earlier times. I saw little prospect that Gorton would support increased authority for the Defence Minister over the Services, or any interest in reforming the existing clumsy apparatus of policy control. Before these gloomy ruminations materialised, Gorton was dismissed from the Cabinet by McMahon for reasons that had nothing to do with defence programming.

Fairbairn: Minister for Defence 1971

David Fairbairn took office in August 1971. He had won his Distinguished Flying Cross serving in the Air Force in Europe and had been Minister for Air as well as occupying some other portfolios during his career. Working for Ministers who disliked their predecessor, as did both Gorton and Fairbairn (and Hasluck in External Affairs), taught me to be wary of carrying personal loyalty to a Minister beyond the duties of the job, although in one or two cases a friendship was sustained when we were both in private life.

Fairbairn was a different personality from Gorton, and he was different in intellectual grasp of issues, ability to articulate ideas, speed of comprehension and much else. The Department found him congenial and no doubt the Services did even more so. He clearly enjoyed his official and social engagements with them. One noticed that he showed unusual respect for some senior officers, under whom he had served but to whom he was now entitled to issue firm orders. To the Department he was gentlemanly in conduct, invariably courteous and singularly undemanding. His reading of papers was rather slow. He left in doubt whether he always absorbed what the Department put to him.

According to Gorton, Fairbairn had earlier asked him for the High Commissionership in London. (After his Defence years he was to achieve the lesser post of Ambassador to the Netherlands.) He had the necessary social attributes for diplomatic life.

After the customary briefing of a new Minister into the various classified areas, it was necessary to explain the budget provisions that had already been announced. For the Department, after the disruptions of previous months, it was necessary to undertake the first effective effort to construct a five-year comprehensive programme and to establish what objectives we would recommend for the force structure now that the withdrawal of forces from the Vietnam commitment could be anticipated.

The Department needed more systems analysts. This was a relatively new concept in Canberra administration, especially in financial control, and analysts were hard to find. In any case there was some reluctance to enter the relatively unknown ‘military’ environment with its known tensions. For work on assessing the strategic environment I turned to Foreign Affairs. I brought in R.N. Hamilton

after his service in Africa. Gordon Jockel took over the Joint Intelligence Organisation after serving as Ambassador in Indonesia, and later in 1973 I persuaded W.B. (Bill) Pritchett to join after serving in London. (He eventually became my successor as Secretary.) Paul Dibb, who later earned high repute for groundbreaking work on the force structure, came into the Joint Intelligence Organisation.

I came to the view that the Chief Defence Scientist was not making much impact on force structure debates and decisions. On the retirement of the current incumbent, I took the advice of the Chairman of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (Sir Frederick White) and appointed to the position Dr John L. Farrands, head of the Aeronautical Research Laboratories. Added to his professional knowledge, he proved to have personal qualities of temperament that gave him persuasive influence in dealings with the Service Chiefs. My working relations with him were all the better for our sharing an addiction to fly-fishing on the stream adjoining my mountain property.

I wanted to develop the Defence Department's competence in assessing situations where we had a defence interest, notably Southeast Asia. I remained convinced that my old Department, Foreign Affairs (as External Affairs was renamed in 1970), should retain a large say in estimates and assessments of this kind, but I was aware of its limitations. I wanted some analysts to be closer to the realities of our military capabilities and the restraints on deployments overseas. Liaison officers from Foreign Affairs rotating through Canberra lacked this awareness. But several such officers, after being employed inside Defence alongside the military staff, provided a needed continuity of balanced judgement.

I needed this for the further reason that there was an overweighting of military judgement in the Department. While at the senior level we had the talented and wise Gordon Blakers, the lower levels were weaker. Civilians were needed to balance military judgement because there was evidence that some military officers' appreciations of the nature and whereabouts of threats was influenced by the role they saw for the Service whose uniform they wore. The Fairhall/Bland exhortation for complete objectivity could not always prevail over the pursuit of 'crest of the wave' technology pressed on the Services by British, American and other manufacturers.

To hold up Service bids for questioning was a heavy responsibility. In these early months the Department's staff did not always perform well. Apart from this form of supervision, the Department was also required to satisfy Service needs, where support functions had been centralised. Performance by the Department's computer services ran into difficulties, compounded by the loss of key personnel in an increasingly competitive environment. The Air Force was dissatisfied with the service. Keeping aircraft airworthy and in service depended on timely access to accurate records of its vast inventory.

We were in a continuous contest over the exercise of the authority that the Department claimed under the new programming procedures. Past Ministerial exhortations and claims of authority were not very effective in the face of a legal position that gave Service Ministers and their boards autonomy, other than control of the aggregates in the annual budget. In practice, the Defence Minister's strength lay in his conviction, persistence and courage rather than in past declarations. His standing in the Ministry and interested sections of the backbench no doubt contributed as well. He had no practical control of the nature and purpose of Service training (all Service activity when not in combat). Training reflected the Services' own expectations of where they would be fighting, although this was the prerogative of government. Beach landings, jungle tactics, air superiority or air-to-surface attack, destruction of submarines—all involved strategic assumptions that might or might not be valid or common to the three Services, about where we would find an enemy. Civilian control of running costs rested with Service Departmental Secretaries. They had no part in the formulation of strategic guidance, and might never have seen the Defence Committee's conclusions. I formed the impression that those Service Chiefs who took part in Defence Committee deliberations did not pass papers far down the command chain. My growing frustration appears in a diary note made on 26 September 1972:

We are told by Army and Air, because of the complexity and number of people involved, they cannot, in less than six months, give us the statement of their long term capability objective and the contribution made (to it) by this (1973–8) Five Year Defence Programme. This after Army has written hundreds of pages calling for an Army of 50 000; the three Services proposed weapons authorisations of \$3000 million (and were granted \$1500m); and the three Chiefs and the three Secretaries endorsed in the Defence Administration Committee the need to spend some \$7000m. in the next five years at fixed prices. In pursuit of what we ask? They claim time to answer.

This note, written some months before Labor re-wrote our strategic priorities, contained my own thinking on that matter:

The transition to a defence policy for the Australian continent and its interests, away from having capabilities to offer loyalty to an ally, requires great mental adjustment—as well as perception and leadership of thought. There has not been much of the latter in the Defence Department (sic). We still don't know whether the Australian community really wants to spend money for the defence of Australia's interests. It is a new thought—at least since the threat of Japanese hegemony—which left curiously little mark except a belief in 'forward defence'.

Speaking to the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at The Australian National University in 1974, I described the situation in 1972 as follows:

The formalities of separate identity—sanctified by the Administrative Order—imposed an obstacle to the harmonising of Service activities, and to the reconciliation of the exercise of military command with the policy objectives of the Defence Minister—strategic, diplomatic, political, industrial, social, and (use of) resources. Communication inside the system was inadequate. It was formal, stilted, slow, and clumsy; too many people to get together.

I, personally, was dismayed at the amount of time and nervous energy that had to be applied to enquiring—in terms acceptable (given the formal autonomy that existed)—into what was going on, whether what one read in the newspapers was true or not. Sometimes, if one called a committee together to consult or explore, one had to expect an argument as to whether there should be such a committee or what its terms of reference should be.

... For its part, the Department of Defence set out to break down the separatism by setting goals that its own staffing did not enable it to reach. The result was some frustration, thwarted single Service projects, and not enough suggested by way of alternatives promptly enough by the Central machinery.

A strong-minded Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, aided by such an influential civilian as Gordon Blakers, could bring about change in Service priorities for capital equipment (weapons and their platforms, such as ships and aircraft). Blakers has lately reminded me that in the mid-1960s Air Chief Marshal Sir Frederick Scherger, as Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, had brought about a preference for long-range maritime aircraft over bombers. He also overcame the Army's plan to locate a new task force on the Mornington Peninsula in the extreme (and salubrious) southeast of Australia, and had it despatched to north Queensland. More *Hercules* aircraft entered the programme. These were early signs of greater emphasis on continental defence, no doubt precipitated by the growing unpredictability of Sukarno's Indonesia. But in later times military advice of this kind, founded on strategic considerations rather than on the simpler notion of replacing what we already had in service, became rarer.

The Services liked deployments to overseas bases and the equipment that went with them. For the Navy, it was a 'blue-water' capability protected by carrier-borne aircraft that gave them status with the American and British navies. Air Force Chiefs described service at the base at Butterworth in Malaysia as good for morale, not merely for the operational exercises but also for families able to enjoy amenities not found around Australian airfields. I do not know whether

these benefits coloured the belief that these deployments improved the likelihood of American support under ANZUS should we need it.

As to that, I retained a memory of the blunt warning that I heard Dean Rusk give to Hasluck in 1964. During the discussion of worsening relations between Malaysia and Indonesia, Hasluck volunteered to inform the Americans before committing Australian forces in support of Malaysia. Responding to the inherent assumption that such a deployment would trigger an expectation of American military support, Rusk pointedly said that the United States would expect that Australia would have introduced conscription and full mobilisation, and added 'there is no residuum of responsibility falling on the United States that is reached at a certain point'. This statement of the unpredictability of American military support confirmed to me how misleading had been many of the Australian Government's statements of the previous two decades, implying that ANZUS gave us an unqualified undertaking. Menzies had said: 'Australia cannot stand alone.' The truth of the matter had always been that in some circumstances, or for some testing period, Australian combat forces would stand alone. Some advisers, including myself, believed the Government should say as much. But the expediency of presenting the Coalition as the assurance of security for Australia, while it claimed that the Labor Party was distrusted in Washington, meant that such candour would be rejected as 'downgrading' ANZUS—a phrase frequently used.

When the Government told us in 1972 to prepare a White Paper on defence, we saw an opportunity to present new ideas and a more realistic view of what we needed to do for ourselves in response to the kind of threat-level then foreseeable.

The Department's 1972 'Defence Review': New ideas

Preparation of the White Paper required many contributors. R.N. Hamilton and Gordon Blakers, along with contributors from Foreign Affairs, did most of the drafting. I personally put my stamp on it by incorporating ideas that had matured in my mind over the years, some of which I described earlier. One of these was to obtain a changed expression of national attitude in statements of our strategic outlook. I wanted to have self-reliance recognised as having a necessary place in the posture of an independent self-respecting country. While in later decades the concept became regularly used in the language of all political parties, I believe I was the first to make it part of the language of discussion. Much defence policy lies in the mind; and what may seem no more than a slogan can be made a powerful directing influence on more material matters.

In a talk with the editor of a Sydney periodical [Donald Horne of the *Bulletin*], I tried out the idea that this concept might provide an escape from the sterile political argument between 'forward' and 'continental' defence.²⁴ I had noticed

that Gorton had gone in that direction in a speech several months earlier. Each of the political parties had adopted one of the two concepts and the result had been an anaesthetising effect on discussion as to what best served Australia. 'Self-reliance' had an emotive resonance for people who took pride in the history and legends of the sturdy individualism of the country's early settlers and in past military campaigns—all of which shaped the ethos of the nation. We peppered our paper with references to self-reliance. It was the nearest I ever got to launching a political idea that might detach Australian policy statements from the degree of public dependence on the United States that had been expressed since 1950. Slogan or not, it would give defence planners something to replace the loose guidance calling for interoperability with the forces of our chief protector as the major objective. The draftsmen gave their draft a nationalist tone without unrealistically disassociating us from allies, declaring the protection of Australian interests (not simply the continent) to be the supreme objective of defence planning. On the stationing of forces overseas—a subject of sharp political debate—we wanted the Government's paper to recite some of the conditions which had to exist to permit maintenance of the deployment. The review suggested that deployment needed to satisfy the interests of both countries, which might not continue to be the case. Moreover the document could serve another purpose, which was to demonstrate the significance of distance, whether in estimating a threat or calculating the practicalities of deploying to meet it. There had long been imprecision as to what were the boundaries of 'our region', a term so frequently used in External Affairs and by Ministers.

One of my fetishes in the Defence Department was to have maps of Australia in plain view during discussions to show how remote we were from the mainland of Southeast Asia. The other side of that coin was the illustration of just how much distance separated our major defence bases in southern Australia from the area of assumed threat, even after the move northward had begun to take effect. The inclusion in the Defence Review of a map illustrating the distances in the continent's environment was in no sense an academic exercise.

Distance meant different things to different Services. In a pre-Vietnam War presentation in 1963 by the then Minister of how the Services saw their roles, the Air Force seemed to have recognised the constraints of distance, most of its airfields and maintenance facilities being in the south of the continent. Its primary function, the statement said, was 'the security of Australian territory and its sea and air approaches but with mobility to operate in Southeast Asia'. The Navy was unconstrained by distance so long as it had blue-water capabilities. It said its role 'was preparation for any kind of war in which Australia could be involved' and 'protection of convoys to the operational area wherever it may be'—Delphic but logical and a case for a blue-water navy until it was told otherwise. That came later when the Government declared a need for coastal

protection in brown water by patrol boats. This revealed the paucity of ports and facilities in the north of Australia. For the Army, distance had always been a constraint when called on by governments to operate at a far distance (Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Malaysia), because of the paucity of means of transport for men and materiel.

Another powerful influence on the make-up of defence preparation was the immediacy (as distinct from the location) of the threat which the Government recognised and to which it expected the Services to respond. A threat would naturally cause the Services to ask for more resources; and experience showed that a more likely consequence, after governments predictably declined to do so, would be to absorb more of the Defence vote on stores and stockpiles and other consumables at the expense of capital assets in the form of equipment and ground installations for use in future contingencies. The current trend in the disposition of defence money led us to draw attention to this requirement of sound planning.²⁵ The new Five Year Defence Programme revealed that there would be inescapable expenditures in the future as obsolescence overtook major items (such as destroyers and aircraft), and illustrated the need to avoid cuts in current capital spending that would result in an overload on future budgets.

On the central question as to where our essential strategic interest lay, we pointed to the prospect of governments in Southeast Asia becoming more capable of dealing with their insurgencies and any likely defence problem. We recommended a changed strategic focus to one closer to our own territory. In this we were, I believe, tacitly acknowledging the past unwillingness of governments to have a defence vote big enough to enable us to project significant forces far from Australia. We argued for having capabilities 'which are particularly suitable to meet conditions in an ocean and archipelago environment'. This geographic definition would be a calculated retreat from giving priority to the Asian mainland to giving priority to an area containing the uncertainties that existed over Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The argument had obvious implications for the Air Force and the Navy, giving them priority over the Army but weakening the case for a blue-water fleet based on a carrier, as compared with other naval vessels. The Army's Chief had difficulty in accepting the priority.

After its finalisation, the Prime Minister threw the status of the document into confusion by deciding against presenting it as a White Paper expressing Government policy, and instead declaring it to be a Departmental 'Review'. When Fairbairn presented it to Parliament, his speech accepted the idea of greater self-reliance. He was probably thinking of hardware rather than attitude. He was more equivocal on the question of retaining forces overseas.

In effect, the Department was lumbered with responsibility for a hybrid—a document that included views we knew the Government would want to include

which we did not share, and an analysis of the desirable strategic posture that failed to receive government endorsement. We were chided by the Opposition for being 'political' in our advice. Nevertheless, the Labor Opposition (and specifically a future Prime Minister, Paul Keating) gave much of the 'Review' a tick of approval. From the backbench Gorton liked the attempt to remove the artificial dichotomy between 'forward' and 'continental' defence.

McMahon's caution might well have been for fear of devil in the detail. In retrospect I believe I made an error in allowing the document to include every new idea that the Department felt to be important. It became an indigestible document for Ministers. I doubt whether the document had any lasting influence on members of the Coalition Cabinet or of its backbench. Domestically, it did disseminate ideas within the Services and the Department that might have influenced Service priorities. But this can only be speculation.

The 'Review' has not received much attention by historians or by commentators on the defence policies of the 1970s, but those interested in the evolution of thinking in Canberra's advisory system will recognise that much of the document presaged reforms later implemented in the Whitlam/Barnard years. Herein may lie the reason why, as we shall see, Labor, when taking office in 1972, found the Department well prepared to implement its policies.

While preparing the intended White Paper, we found that Fairbairn was more comfortable in discussing Service bids for equipment than in more abstract reasoning over the strategic outlook. In this there was a contrast with the visiting Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Schmidt. Fortuitously, as a result of an unexpected commitment in the House of Representatives which prevented Fairbairn keeping an appointment with him, I was called upon to receive Schmidt. I called together the members of the Defence Committee (the Service Chiefs and the Secretaries of the Departments of the Prime Minister, Foreign Affairs and Treasury). It proved to be a most stimulating experience. Schmidt gave us his view of the state of Europe and of the Western alliance in the stand-off with the Soviet Union. He asked all the right questions after I offered my view of the situation in Northeast Asia and, more confidently, the prospects in Southeast Asia and in Australia's neighbourhood. We were privileged because Schmidt later became Chancellor of the German Federation and earned the reputation of being foremost among the European statesmen of modern times.

It was the more regrettable that Fairbairn fluffed his opportunity, when toasting him at an official dinner, by making lame jokes about the Iron Cross on his visitor's aircraft and the superfluity of a party in a democracy having to proclaim the word 'democratic' in the title of his political party. Schmidt replied with an urbane account of the honourable history of his party in outlasting three dictators (including Adolf Hitler).

Attention to ongoing matters for decision did not wait on the outcome of the Defence Review. Decisions were needed on the acquisition of a new type of destroyer for the Navy and on the development of a naval base at Garden Island, south of Fremantle. There was a strong push from the Navy's designers and dockyards within the system to have the destroyer's hull designed and built in Australia. As the Navy intended to incorporate from overseas the most modern (and changing) sensors, weapons and control systems, there were warnings that matching them with the hull would be a formidable and perhaps insuperable task. Nevertheless, the plan received Defence Committee endorsement. I did not feel I had the necessary understanding of the subject to deny what the Navy wanted. As time passed, the problems grew, the list of requirements grew, the size of the hull grew, and so did the estimates of cost.

During the year I took opportunities to escape Canberra and to learn about Service life, albeit in pampered and peaceful conditions. In March the Navy winched me down to HMAS *Brisbane*'s after-deck from a helicopter at sea during a Pacific Ocean exercise, enabling me to observe a *Tartar* missile firing. They then tested my nerves with a jackstay transfer across the ocean waves to HMAS *Parramatta*. In this my safety from being doused in the sea seemed to depend on what the crew members, who were holding taut the hawser, thought of this particular civilian.

Some time later the Army, during a visit to their training establishment at Singleton, had me throwing grenades at targets, followed by an unscheduled lesson in helicopter flying. On my return flight to Victoria Barracks the obliging Army pilot offered me the controls, assuring me that his status as instructor made this legal. I headed south erratically over the Central Coast aiming, on his instruction, at the Sydney Harbour Bridge in a long descent. But the prospect of disaster as we approached tall buildings beyond the bridge caused a collapse of nerve and I asked to be relieved of my post.

The Services, particularly the Army, have a good record of preserving the historic buildings they have occupied since colonial days. But there were eyesores in the form of structures erected through necessity in environmentally sensitive areas during the Second World War. At this time in the 1970s there was not much interest in the environment among politicians. As a former Sydney-sider I took a possibly parochial interest in Sydney Harbour. I visited several sites where there were offending structures. I questioned whether the Army needed, for any operational purpose, sites on headlands adjacent to the harbour in Sydney; and in particular the wooden barracks resembling woolsheds disfiguring a site of such historic importance as South Head. Having achieved their removal I took a more sympathetic view of the Navy's claim to be by the sea, but helped ensure that when they were provided with an installation for advanced training on South Head it would be secreted underground.

In the same mood I had cast a speculative eye on the Navy's ugly industrial stockpile littering part of historic Garden Island. This was the forerunner of some rehabilitation of historic buildings, which the Navy had preserved well. When Labor was in office, soon afterwards, they transferred most of the materials to an abandoned car factory at Zetland so that the Navy had quick access.

By October, the defeat of the Government in the forthcoming election was widely predicted. There were many activities and international arrangements needing to be carried on, irrespective of which political party was in power. Few on Labor's front bench had experience in government. Allies would need reassurance that classified military information entrusted to Australia would be protected. In the debate on the Defence Review, Lance Barnard, Labor's Defence spokesman, had declared his party's opposition to foreign bases on Australian soil, and their intention to withdraw from Singapore. I asked Fairbairn for permission to meet Barnard in order to assure him that he would be fully briefed on such matters immediately, should he gain office, and to advise him to hold off definitive public commitments until he was in possession of all the relevant information. I said there would be nothing prejudicial to the Coalition in anything I said to Barnard.

Fairbairn was liberal-minded and forthcoming in response. In a discussion with Barnard over lunch at Parliament House I told him that we would be ready with information if elected. He told me of various policy changes that Labor had in mind. One of them was to centralise the Defence Group of Departments along with their control. I said that he would find that I had some definite views on that subject to offer him.

In November, on the recommendation of Coombs, I attended a seminar at Ditchley in England, held by an Atlantic club interested in international affairs. There was a mixture of senior American and British officials, academics of both countries, and members of the Armed Services Committee of Congress and the White House staff. Outside the meeting the Director of the Royal College of Defence Studies, Alistair Buchan, told me that the shift of British interest towards Europe was increasing the competition for places at the college from Europeans and reducing the interest in the strategic significance of Australia's neighbourhood, with implications for the number of places offered to Australia. He believed we should create our own Defence Studies College.

Final months of McMahan's Coalition Government

It became clear as the months went by that the McMahan Government had become hostage to its doctrinal attachment to 'forward defence' and to the associated deployments in Malaysia and Singapore. This was exploited by the Democratic Labor Party in particular, but also by an opportunistic Singapore Government. That Government had earlier demanded rent for premises occupied

by the Australians sent to defend them, as well as reciprocal use of bases in Australia. When McMahon visited the two countries in June 1972, with an election imminent, his mind remained in Australia. His principal interest seemed to be to obtain a public affirmation, from his hosts, for use with the Australian media who accompanied him in the aircraft and others back in Australia, that both countries wanted our forces for the present. He seemed a rattled man. He stumbled repeatedly while recording an interview for a Sydney radio station, with John Bunting (the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department) and I doing our best to point out his misstatements of facts or policy. He was good-natured to his advisers and did not mind being corrected.

During the return flight, while the Prime Minister spent time at the back of the aircraft with the media, I recorded in my diary:

Australia is now governed in almost continuous press conference. No discussion of substance about the purpose or consequences on a matter of foreign policy or external defence in this part of the world seems possible without reference to how the press in Australia will react.

McMahon was like a bird hopping from branch to branch over a loaded gun.

He was invariably considerate to me. We met informally on occasions. I often met Ministers at funerals burying their departed colleagues. On such an occasion, and others, McMahon said he regretted being outwitted ('kept in the dark', as he put it) in his wish to appoint me as Secretary when he had the Foreign Affairs portfolio. But I could not honestly reciprocate his admiration.

In my area of administration there was drift and frustration. On 27 October I entered in my diary:

The past week has seen some cases of an unnecessarily large number of senior executives—in our case two Generals and myself—pursuing enquiries or waiting about while more urgent problems burned because of a ... lack of a sense of the importance of things, the addiction to trivia, and the plain confusion of mind which fails to communicate promptly and clearly.

I suggested to Fairbairn that he should move to establish a review of the organisation of the Defence Group of Ministers and Departments. Not surprisingly, he said that McMahon would not want to open up such a controversial matter. After Labor's victory was announced on the night of Saturday 2 December 1972, I obtained Fairbairn's approval to give Barnard his classified briefing at his earliest convenience. Even though uncertain as to the policies I would be implementing (if still in the job), I recorded in my diary my relief at escaping from months of frustration and unproductive effort.

ENDNOTES

¹ This probably refers to a memoir that Tange began writing. At his death he had written only a few draft passages.

² That is, the Government in which John Gorton was Prime Minister and Malcolm Fraser was Minister for Defence. Tange sometimes used the term Ministry in referring to a government in a way that is more common in Britain than in Australia.

³ See, for example, Peter Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Strategy and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-65*, Allen & Unwin with the Australian War Memorial, St Leonards, NSW, 1992, pp. 53–56; and David Horner, *Defence Supremo: Sir Frederick Shedden and the making of Australian defence policy*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000, pp. 259–60, 268–70, 286 and 288.

⁴ See Desmond Ball and David Horner, *Breaking the Codes: Australia's KGB network 1944-50*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1998.

⁵ Robert O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53, volume 1, Strategy and Diplomacy*, Australian War Memorial and Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1981.

⁶ It has not proved possible to identify this document in published sources, such as Roger Holdich, Vivianne Johnson, Pamela Andre (eds), *The ANZUS Treaty 1951*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2001.

⁷ Tange had two children, Christopher (b. 1944) and Jennifer (b. 1947).

⁸ This is presumably a reference to O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53, volume 1*, and Edwards, *Crises and Commitments: The Strategy and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-65*. See also Horner, *Defence Supremo: Sir Frederick Shedden and the making of Australian defence policy*.

⁹ Tange later recorded that the Minister who had said this to Barwick was Sir John McEwen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade.

¹⁰ Tange did not discover until the publication of *Crises and Commitments* in 1992 that the Prime Minister's Department had been critical of the External Affairs Department's handling of policy towards Indonesia at the time of Confrontation.

¹¹ See Garry Woodard, *Asian Alternatives: Australia's Vietnam Decision and Lessons on Going to War*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2004, chapter 10, (pp. 191–208), and Edwards, *Crises and Commitments: The Strategy and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-65*, pp. 335–40.

¹² The house guest was Tange's daughter, Jennifer.

¹³ Tange was referring to London, Washington and Tokyo. The first career appointment as Ambassador in Washington was made in 1964.

¹⁴ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. H of R 66, 10 March 1970, pp. 232–47.

¹⁵ Statement made by Kim Beazley to Parliament on 14 October 1988.

¹⁶ Sir Henry Bland, 'Some aspects of defence administration in Australia', Roy Milne Lecture 1970 (published as a pamphlet by the Australian Institute of International Affairs). See also Fedor A. Mediansky, 'Defence Reorganisation 1957–75', in William J. Hudson (ed.), *Australia in World Affairs 1971–1975*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1980, pp. 37–64.

¹⁷ This comment was written before the publication of David Horner, *Strategic Command: General Sir John Wilton and Australia's Asian Wars*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2005.

¹⁸ Ian McNeill, 'General Sir John Wilton: A Commander for his Time', in David Horner (ed.), *The Commanders: Australian military leadership in the twentieth century*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp. 316–34.

¹⁹ This is probably a reference to the passage (including extensive quotations from Fraser) in Philip J. Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser: a biography*, William Heinemann, Richmond, Vic., 1987.

²⁰ William C. Battle was the American Ambassador to Australia from July 1962 to August 1964.

²¹ On this episode, see the accounts in Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser: a biography*; Ian Hancock, *John Gorton: he did it his way*, Hodder Headline, Sydney, 2002; and Peter Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2006.

²² See the discussion of Fraser's style in Patrick Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM: a study in prime ministerial power*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic., 1989.

²³ A summary of Gorton's speech of 18 June 1971 to the Imperial Service Club in Sydney was published as John Gorton, "'Forward defence' or 'fortress Australia'?", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 1971. The speech and its significance are discussed in Hancock, *John Gorton: he did it his way*, pp. 343–45.

²⁴ Horne recounted this meeting as follows: 'Arthur Tange came to my office, sat in a remote chair, forcibly immobile, like a statue of a nineteenth-century statesman in a frock coat, and asked me if I had a new phrase that could replace 'Forward Defence'. 'Fortress Australia?'—never. 'Self-reliance?'—perhaps.' Donald Horne, *Into the Open*, HarperCollins, Sydney, 2000, p. 156 (emphasis in original).

²⁵ A note indicates that Tange intended to insert some statistics at this point, to illustrate his point. There is no indication of the particular statistics that he intended to insert.