PRESS STATEMENT:

Malcolm Fraser's Second Report from the United States

Washington, May 20th, 1964

Australians should never forget that the United States is a country that had to fight for its own independence. Thus, in many respects, there was a conscious effort to cut the new United States off from the traditions and memories of the past. As a result it appears to me, as a visitor, that there has been a conscious effort to create new traditions in this great country. The history of the United States is such that the American people have not had to look far for the shape or form of those traditions.

The memorials that have been built in this capital are probably without their equal in the modern world. Perhaps the most impressive memorial of all is the Jefferson Memorial. Thomas Jefferson is possibly regarded as the Father of the American Constitution and as the Architect of Independence and of the kind of society which is now found in this country. He was not only a great Statesman, he was an Architect of great significance and had a remarkable ability to master almost any matter to which he put his mind. He had a great respect for the architecture and designs of ancient Rome and, as a result, these things have left their mark on more than one building in Washington. The design of the Jefferson Memorial itself is taken quite directly from one of the buildings of Ancient Rome, built more than 2,000 years ago. The American interpretation of this building has a strength and simplicity about it that creates a fitting memorial to Thomas Jefferson.

The next most significant memorial is probably that of Abraham Lincoln. His work is still being pursued in the United States. More than anything, this memorial symbolises the unity of the American people. The Civil War was about unity. It was not only fought to end slavery - although this was the catalyst that brought these many other arguments to a head - the basic issue concerned the power of the States as opposed to the power of the Union. Many of the Southern States wanted their own legislatures and powers to be predominant with a very weak central body. The Civil War was fought to maintain the authority of the Union and to maintain the strength of the Federal Government.

A third memorial, which cannot fail to impress visitors, is the one to George Washington which can be seen from almost every point of the Capital. It stands stark and simple high into the sky.

It is around these things, these memorials, the history and the ideals that are embodied in them, and around the body of the President himself that the Americans have built their traditions, their respect and their belief in their own country.