

CLOSING REMARKS AT FRANCE-VICTORIA CONNECTION COLLOQUIUM

B. LEDUN

It is time to conclude and that is to say that there is no possible conclusion: language, like life, goes on and on, without interruptions, only temporary tea breaks... Your meeting has indeed covered fields where it would be "téméraire" to assign fixed limits, and it is all the merit of its conveners, Colin Nettelbeck and Dennis Davison, to have included topics like music, the arts, science and technology, business, which give the "France-Victoria Connection" its true contemporary dimension since they are all aspects of our international relations of today.

French presence in Victoria in 1985 is manifest not only through a General Consulate (although it does not play a minor role...) but also through the Alliance Française, the French Chamber of Commerce, French restaurants, multinational firms and banks (one of them for more than a century), theatre (I am thinking in particular of the Anthill Theatre and the Théâtre Français de Melbourne), cinema, television, newspapers. Even though the French community in Australia, as pointed out by Jim Davidson in his address yesterday, has never been significant in quantitative terms, the flow of things and ideas and goods from France has always had a relatively much larger impact. It has not been a "sens unique" exchange anymore for a few years, Australia being slowly but surely discovered by French opinion and media, especially when an Australian minister and a French head of state communicate with each other, to speak "diplomatiquement"... Australian wool, of course, but also wines, Australian films and artists, Australian scientists and researchers (in the last twelve months the major French scientific magazine *La Recherche* has twice published major papers from Australians), Australian fashion and literature are increasingly recognized and praised. And France remains the second largest destination for Australian tourists in Europe. All of us who contributed by our presence and participation to this meeting are responsible for the fruitful development of these exchanges and it is our responsibility to try to eradicate the last remnants of the usual clichés on both nations, each of us in our own domain of activities and respective country. The knowledge of a foreign language is a very important step in this regard, and it has to be repeated here how much the teaching of languages is fundamental for all aspects of communications between nations and peoples. We have seen the dramatic results of "repli sur soi" (retirement into one's shell) in the course of history by nations which refused any interference in their rigid dogmas and doctrines. Let's not repeat the same errors, not by alienating one's cultural identity under the imperialist dominance of another,

B. LEDUN

but by creating channels of communication, among all the cultures of this small planet of ours.

I wish at this stage to thank you all, organisers and participants, for this useful "colloque" and hope for the continuation of this interdisciplinary dialogue. Our next important cultural event on the agenda is in October, with the European-Australian forum in Melbourne at which several prominent intellectual figures from France, Italy and Germany will be present. I would recommend you not to miss it since it should prove valuable for the very reasons which I just mentioned "en passant". AU REVOIR.

*French Consulate General,
Melbourne*