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Summit

PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS AND T.V. CONFERENCE

LONDON AIRPORT, 24th APRIL, 1960.

T.V. INTERVIEWS

I.T.V.

Question: Do you feel that there is any influence the Commonwealth Prime Ministers can bring to bear on the situation in South Africa?

Answer: Well, I don't know but I think the talks the Commonwealth Prime Ministers will have with each other and the representative of the Prime Minister of South Africa cannot fail to do some good because they will increase our knowledge. They may have an effect on both sides. I don't mean by that that I think there ought to be talks in the full Conference. We never have gone in for that kind of thing in the past and frankly I hope we won't in future because the moment you get to that you get to the point where you have resolutions and votes, and we have never had those.

Question: Do you feel that there are any steps that the Commonwealth countries can take which might have some effect on this threatening trade war in Europe between the Common Market and the Free Trade Area?

Answer: This problem of the Seven and the Six is much too complicated to lend itself to the half minute flashy generalisation and I'm not going to make one.

All right, we'll skip that one.

Question: Australia has a big stake in the Woomera Rocket Range. What effect will the abandonment of the Blue Streak have?

Answer: Well, we have every reason to believe that there will be a considerable amount of work for it to do and for a considerable time to come. If in fact it turns out that the apparatus could be used for purposes of space research there might be no reducing effect on operations of Woomera at all. It might be some increasing results. But you don't want to exaggerate our trouble in this matter - if there is a trouble. Our contribution to Woomera has been substantial but Great Britain's contribution has been a bigger one, you know, and any losses involved in the change of direction - the losses will primarily fall on this country.

Question: Are you happy about Commonwealth defence as long as we don't have a long range missile of our own?

Answer: Well, you are now asking me a question again which couldn't possibly be answered in under half an hour. Have we half an hour? (No) You had better just write me down as being not unhappy.

Question: Could I put it in another way - do you think the Commonwealth ought to have a long range missile?

Answer: Now you are asking me a question that relates almost entirely to the Government of this Country and I think I've heard in my travels that there is going to be a debate. I am not in it.

Thank you very much indeed, sir.

B.B.C.

Question: Mr. Menzies, you are on record as saying that you believe the South African situation is a domestic one and not one for discussion by the United Nations, but how do you feel about its being discussed at the forthcoming Prime Minister's Conference?

Answer: I would hope that it was not discussed as a set item in a formal session of the Conference, because if that were to occur there would inevitably be some divisions of opinion, and these would become matters of notoriety, perhaps matters of resolution, votings - we have never had votes in the Prime Ministers' Conference. We are a wonderful body. We have no rules, no votes, plenty of discussion, and out of it all there emerges a common accepted view about something or there doesn't, and if there is no common accepted view on a particular problem then nothing is said publicly whatever. But at the same time I'm sure that other Prime Ministers like myself are looking forward to discussions with the representative of South Africa in order to become better informed as to what goes on. It is very easy to talk about their policy, very easy to be rather ill-informed about it. I have never professed to understand other people's policies frightfully well. I have all the world's trouble in understanding my own. I want to learn, I want to understand, and if in a private way I disagree with something then I am able to say it in a private way.

Question: Don't you feel that open discussion of the situation at the Conference might give some encouragement to the more moderate elements amongst the South African Government supporters?

Answer: Nothing could persuade me this ought to be listed for discussion in formal session of this Prime Ministers' Conference. I can see nothing but harm coming from it.

Question: Do you think if it were listed for discussion it could result in South Africa leaving the Commonwealth?

Answer: That is of course a purely speculative matter but there are some things which if they are allowed to happen in the formal proceedings of the Prime Ministers' Conference may - I emphasise may - have a damaging effect on the whole structure.

Question: One of the leading Nationalist papers in South Africa envisages a situation whereby South Africa could become what they call the Polecat of the world. Would we necessarily want a Polecat in the Commonwealth house?

Answer: I don't think that is a question that I ought to be asked to answer because of course that assumes something about polecats, doesn't it? I have no comment.

Question: To change the subject, sir, how do you feel about the abandonment of the rocket Blue Streak?

Answer: Well, the Prime Minister was good enough to send out to us the First Sea Lord so that we might be put in possession of all technical and military considerations which had led them to their conclusions. We found nothing which we could object to in those conclusions, and that being so those conclusions ought to be put into effect.

Thank you very much, sir.

THE PRESS

Question: Mr. Prime Minister, could you tell us what you think of David Sheppard's decision not to play against the South Africans?

Answer: I regret it.

Question: Can you re-state for us Australia's attitude to the South African situation?

Answer: The attitude of the Australian Government was stated by me on two occasions in the House of Representatives, and what I said amounts to this. We regard the problem of the racial policies existing in South Africa as matters of domestic jurisdiction. We regard them as not being within the jurisdiction of the United Nations by reason of the Domestic Jurisdiction Clause. We think also, apart altogether from the Charter of the United Nations, that it is a very sound rule of foreign policy not to seek to interfere in the domestic political problems of another country. That has been our attitude and that remains our attitude. As I have said, that doesn't at all exclude the possibility of private or semi-private discussions between the Prime Minister of South Africa or his representative and myself and Mr. Nash and Mr. Macmillan and whoever else wants to have discussions. I want to have them. I am very anxious to know more than I know now. I seem to be in a bit of a minority. Most people seem to think they know all about what goes on in South Africa. Not a dark shadow of doubt in their minds at all. But I don't belong to that happy band. I would like to have an opportunity of discussing their policies but, as you know, not as a matter of formality.

People ought to remember that there have been previous occasions when suggestions were made that a particular topic that involved a Commonwealth country or countries ought to be listed. Kashmir was one but it wasn't listed. That was a problem which was producing tension between two great members of the Commonwealth. It was never listed. It was discussed privately. And if a matter of that kind, with all its possibilities and involving as it did flatly different views on the part of two identified nations, if that were not to be listed, how does it come about that we list for discussion a matter which affects South Africans in South Africa but which after all we think is their business.

Question: I was just going to ask you, Mr. Menzies, if you can say that you personally dislike Apartheid?

Answer: I have made it clear in Parliament, and I am sorry that I have to make it clear here, when I speak publicly I speak as Prime Minister and on behalf of the Government and therefore I don't permit myself the luxury of private views.

Question: There was a statement made today, Mr. Menzies, that Russia has supplied submarines to Indonesia with trained crews. Have you had any confirmation that this is true, and have you had any concern over it?

Answer: I have had no confirmation of that at all.

But it is quoted.....

Oh well, if you had a brother, would he like cheese? That is too hypothetical for me.

Question: Mr. Menzies, a question on New Guinea. The Dutch are now talking in terms of offering self-determination to New Guinea in something like ten years. Does this speeding up of New Guinea's political development surprise you?

Answer: I have no official confirmation of the proposition you have just referred to. I know that there has been an idea floating around. We think it is impossible to state a timetable on these matters. We think that the test will be in the long run what stage of development have the people reached. That is the thing that determines the question of self-determination on their part. I don't think one ought to assume that the Dutch have really written down a specific timetable. I have read about it in the Press but that doesn't prove much.

It was announced in the House...

Well, I wasn't there, I didn't hear it. Anyhow Mr. Hasluck is coming over here and no doubt he will have some talks with them.

Question: Have you any plans for going to The Hague on this visit?

Answer: No.

Question: What visits will you be making on the Continent, Mr. Menzies?

Answer: I doubt whether I will make any. It looks as if Paris might be a bit crowded after we finish our Conference here. No, I have no plans for going to the Continent. I have just come from Geneva.

Question: May I take it from that, Mr. Menzies, that you will not be going to Paris as certain suggestions have been made that you would go to Paris?

Answer: Really! Well, I didn't know about them. I haven't noticed any of the big shots making them.

Question: Mr. Menzies, Mr. Macmillan has said that the winds of change are blowing through South Africa. How do you see the future in South Africa?

Answer: I make no comment on that. I will be much better informed on that matter when I have had an opportunity of talks with the representative of South Africa at this Conference.

Question: Mr. Menzies, what do you feel about the Korean situation?

Answer: I suppose it might be permitted for me to say that I am not surprised full stop. Where's my adviser on External Affairs? I think that's permissible, don't you, Mick?

Question: Mr. Menzies, what is your policy with regard to recognising Red China?

Answer: We don't recognise Red China.

Question: Do you intend to in the near future?

Answer: I know of no prospect of that policy being changed. It is elementary, of course. I can say that now but somebody else may have different views in future. But we have nothing before us to suggest any change in the present policy.

Question: Sir, is a visit to the Queen before the Wedding on the 6th listed in your programme?

Answer: I don't know. I know that I am down to have an audience with her some day. I think it is quite early in the Conference, isn't it? But whether it is before or after the Wedding - does that matter very much? Is that very important? What point are you going to make of it? It will have all the time and novelty to me when you make it.

Question: Returning to Africa, sir - do you see the South African situation causing a Commonwealth split? With the coloured nations being separated from the white?

Answer: Look, I am not going to say any more on that subject because anything that anybody says at this time is not very helpful to the Commonwealth. Let's get together, and let us have this great opportunity for meeting each other, directly and personally.

Question: Have you anything to say, sir, on the prospects of a Summit success?

Answer: No, nothing to say on that.

Question: Mr. Nash was quoted in Moscow yesterday as saying that he was sure that Mr. Khrushchev wanted peaceful co-existence and disarmament.

Answer: Well, if he turns out to be right, this Conference has a wonderful opportunity of being productive.

Question: Are you able to discuss any subjects which you yourself will raise at the Prime Ministers' Conference?

Answer: No, I am not very talkative about these things before they happen.

Well, we are trying hard.

I know.

Question: How long are you here for?

Answer: Three or four weeks, I think. I have to go and do a lecture at Cambridge.

Question: On what?

Answer: On the changing Commonwealth.

Question: Will you fit in some cricket then?

Answer: No. I would like to see them once but I don't know whether I will be able.