
SPEECH

BY

Rt. Hon. SIR ROBERT MENZIES,
K.T., C.H., Q.C., M.P.,

ON

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND
DISARMAMENT.

[From the "Parliamentary Debates," 22nd October 1964.]

SIR ROBERT MENZIES (Kooyong—Prime Minister) [8.31].—Mr. Speaker, we have just heard a pathetic speech.

Opposition Members.—Oh.

SIR ROBERT MENZIES.—Yes. I repeat that it was a pathetic speech. The question before the Chair, though we may not realise it from what was said, concerns a paper—a ministerial statement in relation to this so-called peace Congress. I would have expected that the spokesman for the Opposition, first, would have explained to us why he believed in the Congress and, secondly, would have told us that he would attend it, and why. But, instead of that, we have heard a speech that was a rambling affair. I recall an old judge once telling an advocate in my presence that he had circumnavigated the entire globe of irrelevancy. If ever anybody did that, the honorable member for Werriwa (Mr. Whitlam), speaking as Deputy Leader of the Opposition, did it this evening. He circumnavigated the entire globe of irrelevancy. Here, we are dealing with a conference and a very serious problem concerning the question of whether this is a Communist front—which it is, beyond question. But did the honorable member address himself to that matter? No. He

went on a little voyage of discovery. He talked about the "Voyager" disaster. He talked about Ansett. He talked about homes. He talked about overseas investment. He even brought into the discussion Sir Walter Murdoch, a most distinguished scholar who has been honoured by Her Majesty, not for his political views, but for his great distinction in the world of literature. Really, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is pretty hard put to it, is he not, when he has to come to this? He even told us who somebody's uncle was. I have had a few uncles myself whom I have liked. But there may be nephews of mine who would not want me dragged up on the occasion of some debate in the future. The honorable gentleman is hard put to it in this debate.

Oddly enough, in the midst of all this, he has been devoting his attention to the somewhat anaemic labour of reading the "Anglican", which, may I tell you, is not the official organ of the Church of England. I happen to know that because, after it had published a few foul and defamatory remarks about me, I wrote to the then Synod of the Church and asked: "Is this your official organ?" I was hastily assured that it was not. The last time I heard of the publisher of the "Anglican", he was in a

little trouble over an obscene publication, as honorable members will recall. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, being frightfully anxious to avoid coming to the point, has been reading the "Anglican". If he can find a Presbyterian who is a little pink, he quotes him. That is easy enough. I know quite a few of them myself. If he can find a Methodist, he quotes him. He ran over the landscape and picked up a bishop or two, but never, from first to last, did he face up to the problem that once exercised his Party—the problem of whether this Congress is a Communist front. In spite of the most engaging invitations by some of my friends on this side of the House, he failed to say whether he would attend the Congress. I am prepared to lay a slight shade of odds within the limits of my purse—

Mr. Hayden.—Oh.

Sir ROBERT MENZIES.—Within the limits of the honorable member's purse, if he likes. Let me put it that way. That puts it a little higher. I am prepared to lay a slight shade of odds that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will not be at the Congress, because he will realise that self-preservation is the first law of life. That is how the matter stands, Sir. He tried to make something out of the Patriarch of Moscow. But he made such an awful blue there. He put questions in the House asking whether the Patriarch of Moscow—the guest of the Archbishop of Canterbury—had been refused a visa, or something of the sort. It turned out that he was not speaking of the right fellow. But that is nothing to the honorable gentleman. The facts come easily and depart easily on his tongue. He took up about 30 minutes of the time of the House without thinking fit to come to the point of this matter. I want to come to the point of it, Sir.

The Attorney-General (Mr. Snedden) made a statement on this subject, and it is on the motion that that statement be noted that this debate occurs, though nobody would have imagined it after listening to the speech just made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. After the Attorney-General had made his statement in this House, the organisers of this beautifully polite, kindly intentioned non-Communist Congress were so shaken by what he had

said that they advertised denying that the Congress was a continuation of a similar congress held in Melbourne in 1959. I do not remember most honorable members opposite, or even the honorable member for Werriwa, being at the conference of 1959. Although that conference had been practically conceded to be a Communist front, it was essential for the organisers of the present Congress to get away from that sort of thing. So they advertised, in a certain newspaper which I shall not advertise, denying that the Congress was a continuation of a similar congress held in Melbourne in 1959. But, at the very moment when the Attorney-General was making his statement in this chamber, a brochure was in circulation on behalf of the Congress. It stated—

In 1959, there was held in Melbourne the Australian and New Zealand Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament. Following this Congress, State continuing committees were formed to carry on its work. In February 1964, representatives of these committees decided to convene a panel of citizens to form a provisional sponsoring committee to begin preliminary planning for a national congress in October 1964.

That Congress begins in a few days. Can anybody seriously believe that it is not the legitimate child of the 1959 conference? Yet the organisers of the present Congress advertised that it "was not connected with the World Peace Council or any other organisation either inside or outside Australia". They expressly denied that the Congress was a continuation of a similar Congress held in Melbourne in 1959. Yet I have just quoted the words of their committee, which demonstrate that that was simply a flat lie.

On 18th August, before the statement was made, Congress News Bulletin No. 3 was published. It contained a series of items which should be discussed at the Congress. After the statement by the Attorney-General, two of the items were omitted. They were the North West base and an independent foreign policy for Australia. This latter item was designed to get Australia, in the interests of peace, to abandon all its alliances with the United States, Great Britain and other countries. Sir, I can only assume that these items were so clearly related to Communist policy and unrelated to peace, as we understand peace, that the organisers felt that to have them discussed would rather reveal the true nature of the Congress. I do not need

to labour this matter. Nobody with his ordinary wits fails to understand that this is a Communist-front organisation. Indeed, the honorable gentleman does not deny it. He merely quotes a number of people as giving respectability to a Communist-front organisation, forgetting that the whole purpose of Communist-front organisations is to get eminent and respectable people to lend an air of respectability to a conference that otherwise would be exposed as a Communist activity.

Why do these Communist-front organisations exist? The first reason that I can think of is that these people want to make Communists and Communism respectable. Nothing makes a person so respectable as to be seen in company with a bishop. That is a very interesting feature of life. Therefore, they get a bishop if they can. Nothing makes a person much more respectable than to be in the company of a Presbyterian clergyman. This appeals to me very much. I know two or three of them. I do not wonder that they are in this business. The first purpose of these organisations is to make Communists and Communism respectable. The second purpose is to weaken the will of free people to resist. This is tremendously important. Why do they have a conference in Australia instead of in Moscow?

Mr. Pollard.—You are not crediting the people with much common sense.

Sir ROBERT MENZIES.—If you do not mind, Reggie old boy; you are like me, decent Presbyterian in your spare time. behave yourself.

The second purpose of these organisations is to weaken the will of free people to resist. Why must these conferences be held in Australia? This is a vital question. If these people want to pass resolutions and explain to others the vital importance of peace, the abandonment of threats and the abandonment of aggression, why do they not operate in one of the Communist countries? Instead of doing so, they come here and bring some of their respectable sponsors here. Why do they do this? To tell the Australian Parliament not to be aggressive? To tell the Australian Parliament or Government not to lay covetous eyes on other people's possessions, other people's lands or other people's freedoms? Can anybody with a grain of

common sense suppose that any government, any party or any parliament in Australia needs to be persuaded that we want peace and we are against aggression? We do not need to be told about peace by these people. Some others in the world do, but these people never tell them.

One of the objects of these conferences is to divide the free world. I have not the time to do it, but if honorable members will look at some of the items that are to be discussed and have been discussed in the past at these conferences they will find that more is said in the resolutions and the debates against America than against the Soviet Union or Communist China. There is more cackle about American imperialism than there is about the sinister imperialism of the Communist world. But of course these people like to talk about American imperialism. They would have us believe—we have heard evidence of this in the last few days—that a great contribution to peace in the world would be made if the United States of America were to abandon South Vietnam, the South East Asia Treaty Organisation, its bases in the Pacific and, incidentally, Australia. I will defy anybody to find a single word spoken by any of these people that support S.E.A.T.O., A.N.Z.U.S. or the great liberal, free activities of the United States on behalf of free people all round the world. Not a word is spoken by them against the Soviet Union or Communist China.

Mr. Stokes.—The North West Cape was on the agenda.

Sir ROBERT MENZIES.—Yes, but they have left that out for reasons that my honorable friend perceives in a flash. One of the purposes of these conferences is to promote nuclear disarmament. Nobody can deny that; it is all perfectly clear. It is on the record. We are all in favour of disarmament, but we are not such fools as to abandon the freedom of the free world by saying: "Abolish nuclear armaments but leave all conventional armaments untouched". To do so, of course, would be to put the world in the hands of the Communist powers.

Another purpose of these conferences is to discourage military alliance against Communist aggression. "Military alliance" is a rude expression. Really, are we to accept

this? I knew that I am discussing something that the honorable member for Werriwa did not care to discuss. I happen to be discussing the motion before the Chair. I want to make it quite clear on behalf of my Government that we are not in favour of persuading or driving the United States out of Vietnam and the western Pacific. But the active sponsors, the real organisers, the Communist promoters of this Congress are. We are not in favour of destroying Malaysia and removing the British bases from Malaya and Singapore.

Where do the members of this Congress stand? Heaven knows, they have had three, four or five of these Congresses. The previous one was held in 1960 in Yokohama. I regret to observe that my friend, the honorable member for Reid (Mr. Uren), was amongst the delegates present on that occasion. I hope he has been misrepresented, but according to the report a unanimous resolution was carried attacking S.E.A.T.O., attacking Cento, which concerns us very much in the Middle East, and attacking other military alliances "organised by imperialist powers". I ask the honorable members to note the last words. Imperialist powers? I suppose that is a fine phrase to describe a very great power like the United States, a great power like the United Kingdom or a small power like Australia! We are all members of these treaty organizations. In Japan in 1960, since when, of course, they have suffered a sea change into something rich and strange, they were attacking all these things.

May I just say, because time is not unlimited—I am grateful to the House for having given me as much as it has given me—that in March 1951, which after all was after this Government came into office, the Federal Executive of the Australian Labour Party made a pronouncement. I shall quote its precise words. The Labour Party was a little more given to precision in those days than it is now. The Federal Executive said—

We further denounce so-called peace councils as instruments of Soviet imperialism, and we warn members of the Australian Labour movement against being involved with appeals of organisations which exploit the desire for peace in the interests of Russian plans.

Those words, my honorable friend would agree, are fighting words. There is nothing ambiguous about them. They say, in effect:

"Don't you be misled; don't do anything about this." Indeed, the Federal Executive went on to underline that expression in 1951 by stating that it further declared—

That this Federal Executive, being of the opinion that the Australian Peace Council is a subsidiary organisation to the Communist Party, we therefore declare that it is not competent for any member of the A.L.P. to be associated therewith and remain a member of the A.L.P. . . .

Those were the good old days of 1951 when the executive said: "Don't you go; if you go, you are out of the party." Does anybody—I look at honorable members opposite—seriously want to tell me that these congresses have changed, that the congress of 1964 is utterly unlike the one of 1959 or is utterly unlike the one that was considered and adjudged in 1951? Nobody believes that. If honorable members look at the names, and in particular the ecclesiastical names, of some of the people connected with the congress then and connected with this one now, they will find exactly the same set-up.

I sympathise with a member of the Labour Party in this Parliament who is just as good a non-Communist as I am but who finds himself put in this ambiguous position. It is an ambiguous position. His own party has said: "Have nothing to do with it or you are out of the party"; but now, in 1964, it says through the present leader, that the A.L.P. in New South Wales—there seems to be a rather limited exemption given on this occasion—the A.L.P. in New South Wales—which, I believe, was regarded, or professed itself to be, as right wing until it endorsed Mr. Leslie Haylen as a candidate in the Senate election, when it abandoned its pretence—has decided that it will not be officially represented, but that individuals are permitted to participate. If there was anything funny about this it would be the funniest statement in the world—to say to the A.L.P., in the greatest State in Australia: "You are not to be officially represented. Whatever you do is to be unofficial. If any of your boys go, they must go unofficially. They must even conceal the fact"—no doubt—"that they are members of the party". What is this humbug?

What is the position of a party which says, in the largest State in Australia: "Now look, we cannot officially be connected with this thing, but unofficially we

don't mind if you nip in the side door". It is almost incredible.

Mr. Clyde Cameron.—It sounds like Bolte to me.

Sir ROBERT MENZIES.—I know that the honorable member has succeeded for a long time in being both official and unofficial at the same time, being a rebel and being one of the Establishment at the same time. I envy him this. This argues his great talent. But it does not detract from the point that I am making, looking at my friend, the honorable member for Banks (Mr. Costa) and the rest of you. How can you be officially out and unofficially in? That is the position that the Labour Party has got itself into.

I conclude by saying that all of us in this Parliament—I say this with no reservations whatever—all of us want peace. None of us believes in an aggressive policy. We are, indeed, foundation members of the nuclear test ban treaty. Nothing could suit a developing country like Australia more than total disarmament, honestly effectuated. Does any honorable member opposite seriously suggest that there ought to be unilateral disarmament in this world? Of course not. Therefore, what we are after—all of us—is ultimate disarmament, honestly effectuated, so that nobody is left with the power to crush another. But, those being our objectives, I come back to where I found myself a little while ago. Why have this conference? To persuade us of things of which we are among the world's greatest advocates? To persuade us? Of course not. These conferences do not direct themselves to the Communist powers; they direct themselves to us. Therefore, it is proper to say to them and to their unofficial friends and sponsors: "What changes of policy do you seek in Australia?"

I do not want to have a lot of fustian here about wanting to get rid of the present Government, because honorable members have had that feeling—very properly, if I may say so—for the last 15 years. I do not want a fustian of that kind. What changes of national policy do you want, you unofficial supporters of this congress, without seeking such changes, apparently, in either the Soviet Union or in China. You do not want a reduced defence vote. The speeches I have heard recently indicate the contrary. Do you want a withdrawal from the South East Asian Treaty Organisation? Of course you do not. You would not dare to say you did. Do you want the abandonment of South Vietnam? If you do, which would make each of you more than an unofficial member of the Congress, pray get up and say so. Do you want the abandonment of Malaysia? Do you want a withdrawal from A.N.Z.U.S.?

Sir, I could go on over the whole line of what I have believed to be indisputable national policies in Australia, and I doubt whether I could get more than one, two or three people on the other side of the House who would say about abandoning them: "Yes, this is what we want to do". Yet, these being the objectives of this conference, we have reached a stage at which the Australian Labour Party, divided but still powerful, says to its members: "Now, you cannot officially attend, but if you care to, go along and lend the benefit of your presence to this conference that will be all right with us". Sir, it would be a tragedy if well-intentioned people—many people on the list of sponsors are well-intentioned—were beguiled into believing that those who are, as we in this place are, the practical friends of peace are in reality its enemies. The choice remains as it has stood for years: We can have either the peace of defended freedom or the peace of submission.