



VISIT TO US, CANADA AND UK

SYDNEY DEPARTURE

PRESS CONFERENCE AT MASCOT AIRPORT, SYDNEY

28TH MAY, 1967

PRIME MINISTER : Well, gentlemen, I think the range of matters we shall be discussing on this visit must rank amongst the most significant that any Australian Prime Minister has been called upon to undertake in the course of an overseas journey. As you know, I shall be seeing President Johnson, the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Pearson and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Harold Wilson, in addition to other senior members of those three Administrations. The subject matters themselves will be tremendously important.

In the United States, I shall be canvassing with President Johnson a number of matters of mutual interest to us. In the international field, Vietnam, of course, will loom largely in our discussions, as will the British intentions in relation to their military presence East of Suez. There will be discussions between us, I would hope, on other matters of mutual interest relating to Britain's entry into the European Economic Community, but apart from that, there will be talks about matters of interest of Australia in the trade and economic fields.

In Canada, we have no problems as between Australia and Canada of any significance, but we do have important mutual interests. We are both senior members of the Commonwealth of Nations, and the Commonwealth is going through a period of difficult movement in which the future is not easy to perceive. Both of us, I think, would want to see a continuing role for the Commonwealth. Both of us have a consciousness that as our own two countries develop in population and in economic strength - and they are both at this time countries of considerable economic significance and strength - both of us have significant relations with the United States. I would want to talk with Mr. Pearson about the future role that our two countries can play in the kind of world which we see developing around us. I like to think sometimes of where Australia and Canada will be by the end of this century. I won't be here, of course, to do much about that, but our two countries, with a growing population there and a growing population here, able to make our policies and our influence felt amongst such countries as the United Kingdom and the United States, can, I think, usefully influence the course of events in various policies which will emerge internationally. So these are things that he and I will have an opportunity of canvassing together in the quite intimate discussions I shall be having with him during the weekend I shall be spending privately with him, and in my talks with him and other members of his Cabinet.

Of course, the stimulus for my visit to Canada at this time is Australia's participation in EXPO-67, and I am looking forward to being there on the day specially set aside to celebrate Australia's participation in this important international exposition. But Mr. Pearson and I will have opportunities together for useful discussion on many matters of mutual interest.

When I get to the United Kingdom, there will be matters there which are of critical importance for Australia, and amongst these, the most significant undoubtedly will be British intentions in relation to their military

role, not only East of Suez, but the global role which the United Kingdom sees itself pursuing in the years ahead.

As to their entry into the European Common Market, the trade aspects of this can, of course, be dealt with more appropriately by my colleague the Minister for Trade, the Deputy Prime Minister, who is our specialist on these matters and who has returned recently from overseas and from his own discussions in Europe and in the United Kingdom. But events move swiftly in this era, and by the time I get there, no doubt there will be further clarification on British prospects and I shall be able to have direct talk with the Prime Minister who has set aside the whole of the Tuesday morning immediately after our arrival on the Monday night in London for his talks with me, and some later opportunities in that week. There will be other Ministers with whom I shall be in discussion on matters which also are of significance for us - the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Minister for Defence, the Minister for Commonwealth Relations, and the Minister for Trade.

These are just highlights, as they occur to me, of the discussions I shall be holding.

In America, as you will see from the detailed itinerary that has been circulated to you, I have a number of important speaking engagements which I am hoping will prove helpful to American and Australian interests internationally.

In the United Kingdom, I haven't public speaking commitments as yet, but there will be there the close and intimate discussions with the Prime Minister and senior members of his Cabinet.

Altogether I am hoping that this will prove a visit to each country of great value for Australia. Certainly it will be informative for me and my colleagues and I hope that I shall be able to convey Australian views in a way which will have some impact on the policies which each of these countries will be pursuing in the future.

Q. On the Referendum, Mr. Holt, could we have your reactions?

PM: Well, first as to the aborigine people, I think we can all as a nation take satisfaction in the overwhelming support given to the proposal to remove any trace of discrimination, as it has appeared to many people, in the Australian Constitution. It will not only be of benefit - as I see it - to people of the aboriginal race in that it will enable the national government to co-operate more closely with the Governments of the States in ensuring just treatment and full acceptance in the Australian community of the aboriginal people, but I think it will help Australia's image abroad in that so many Australians have shown their determination to give full acceptance to people of the aboriginal race in the Australian community.

As to the nexus proposal, here as I said before the result, a victory for NO would, in my judgment be a victory for prejudice, for misrepresentation of what was involved in this, and an expression on the part of many people of fears not very clearly felt or understood, but leading them to a judgment that when in doubt they would vote N O.

I don't know what it is about New South Wales that has given them the special merit of giving the Government such good support, but my own interpretation of it is that in this State there was, both at the political level and amongst the press, a more temperate and responsible presentation of the case for the breaking of the nexus and this was reflected in the vote. In some of the smaller States, understandably, there was a fear that their own relative importance in the national Parliament might be diminished in an enlarged Parliament or with a Senate held where it is now. But I pointed out at the time, and others supported me in this, that representatives from those small States in the House of Representatives unanimously for the proposal and in the Senate there was an overwhelming majority, including a majority of Members from the smaller States who voted in support of it.

It was, I concede, a disappointing result in that we did not secure our objective, but that has been the decision of the Australian people. I feel that as time went on and there became a clearer understanding, support developed, but we were not able to get the majority we needed.

However, we shall now have to proceed in the knowledge that this is the judgment which has been expressed on the national scale. I have no doubt in my own mind that there must be a redistribution in the life of this Parliament. There are electorates, even in the same city, where one Member has to represent more than two and a half times the number of electors of another. I, myself, would not wish to go through another general election without a more equitable and balanced representation inside each of the States of the Commonwealth. However, the details of these matters have yet to be discussed between myself and my colleagues. Work will be done on the implications of this outcome before I return, and I hope after my return to be able to talk closely with them about it.

Thank you.

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