



VISIT TO US, CANADA & U.K.

MONTREAL, CANADA

PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR.

HAROLD HOLT IN MONTREAL

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May I be seated? I think this will work better if I do. Ladies and gentlemen, I first thank Sir Valston Hancock for introducing me to the press of Expo. I do want to say how greatly my own country has appreciated the opportunity of being represented at Expo, and how proud I am, as the head of the Government, having had an opportunity of seeing Australia's Pavilion and having had an opportunity of seeing the various exhibits, the lay-out and the general construction, that we should have a Pavilion which I believe fittingly expresses our national sentiment and some of the more prominent features of our national life. Perhaps, before saying a little more in detail about that, I should acknowledge the tremendous satisfaction I have felt in what I have seen of Expo 67 generally.

It is fitting at a time when man is demonstrating again only too tragically that he can destroy the things that he has built, to find here in this Exposition a demonstration that man can also innovate and construct and take vision for the future. It has been something of an inspiration, certainly a tonic in these sombre days, to have had the opportunity to see Expo 67 in being, to have gone over some of the Pavilions - that of Canada of Quebec of Great Britain in addition to that of my own country Australia - and I am sure that the inspiration and stimulus that has come to me from the visits to the other Pavilions would be repeated if only one could have wandered and studied more intensively throughout this Exposition. My wife said it has almost a spiritual quality about it. Well, I don't know whether it is spiritual or whether it has its own mystic, but certainly there is a spirit about Expo 67 which is encouraging, stimulating and even inspiring. One thing which has impressed us is that it does not seek to be, so far as we can gather, a sort of money-making enterprise.

I have an impression of our own Pavilion with me of a well-constructed, even imaginatively conceived Pavilion, with a quiet restful dignity about it which answers the various phases of Australian life which are reproduced, I think, so arrestingly in the Pavilion. I would like to take this public opportunity of congratulating any of the architects and those who were concerned with the interior decor, and Sir Valston Hancock and his staff for helping to make the Australian Pavilion the success which, I believe, the figures of attendance demonstrate it to be. You may have already been told that the anticipated attendance has been multiplied about fourfold over the period of the Exposition, and this is at the one time not only a mark of the success of Expo 67 itself, but a mark also of the attraction which the Australian Pavilion has held for those who have visited the Exposition.

So my congratulations on behalf of my Government and people to all who had a hand in the Australian contribution. Just as fittingly, one's congratulations must go to Mr. Dupuy and all associated with him, and to the city of Montreal for having had the courage and the enterprise to take those ambitious projects, and to make such a successful achievement of it. Well, that is all. I wish to say thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen. If there is any query which I can conveniently cope with, I shall do my best.

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Q. Mr. Prime Minister, you said in Ottawa, yesterday, that you envisage a greater role for Canada in Asia, in the policy making in Asia. I wonder just what you mean by this? And why you would see Canada in such a role?

P.M. Well, I will deal first with the situation as I see it, and I am projecting my mind not into the short term but into a much longer period ahead. By the end of this century the population of both Canada and Australia should have doubled. Already we have a significance in international trade and, I believe, in international affairs out of all proportion to our numbers.

I can't say what the gross national product is of Canada. I know it is a good deal higher than that of my own country. But, just to illustrate what I mean from the situation as I know it. India has 42 times our population but only double the value of our gross national product. Indonesia, our nearest neighbour to the North of Australia, has nine times our population, but only one third of the value of our gross national product.

With two countries such as Australia and Canada which already have had a long association through the Commonwealth of Nations and, with less frequent meetings, inside the Commonwealth and with a community of interest in other directions in international trade, in a progressing world of peace I believe that it is important we should be closer together and get to know each other more closely than we have been accustomed to do through our occasional meetings in London. We should be encouraging more of our people to visit each other's country now. What has this to do with the Pacific? You happen to have not only a burgeoning economy but a Pacific border and an outlook westward from British Columbia and indeed from the whole nation.

I am sure, your own leader indeed the Prime Minister has publicly recognized, that where in the past most of the orientation from Canada has been towards the North Atlantic or North America, in the years ahead they have to an increasing degree (not supplanting of course the interest you have in these areas I have mentioned), but to an increasing degree growing trade interest, perhaps a growing political interest in the affairs of the Pacific. We have a vision in Australia of a growing Asia, growing in economic, social and political strength where communism can be brought in check as it has in so many of the countries of Asia.

We have seen remarkable economic growth. My own country's trade with Asia or the countries East of Suez has moved from 15% in 1950 to 40% at this time. Japan, just to name one country trading with us, has surpassed the United Kingdom as the biggest purchaser of Australian goods, and I think Canadians are sufficiently keen traders. Once they find that this has been going on in an area to which they look from their western borders, they will not be slow to take up the opportunity which will come their way out there in a growing Asian economy.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, is Australia and Canada to have a continuing policy of immigration?

P.M. Well, when you say continuing, it has never really had an all-white policy of immigration. There has always been room inside the Australian immigration policy for the admission of people of known European races for specified purposes. I find a good deal of misunderstanding, particularly in this part of the world, far more misunderstanding than one finds in the countries of Asia themselves. In fact it might interest you to know that in all my

visits to the countries of Asia I have never been asked a question on that immigration policy by the representative of any Asian government, because I know in their own visits to Australia no discrimination is shown against them.

There are at the present time 12,000 students from Asia in our colleges and in our universities. Since the Second World War more than 30,000 people from these countries have come to Australia, who had not been eligible to enter Australia under the regulation or rule of immigration which previously applied. Many thousands of them have taken out full naturalization as Australian citizens; many Asian men and women marry in Australia and immediately take Australian citizenship as a matter virtually of right. The children, of course, are Australian citizens, but the people of Asia would not want us to give encouragement to those who go through the universities and the colleges, to stay in permanent residence in Australia. They want them to go back and help them in the development of their own country. You find spokesmen for typical Asian countries such as Tunku Abdul Raman of Malaysia, publicly amending policy, recognizing the value of a secure stable and relatively homogeneous Australia for the other countries of the region.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, how does your Government view the events of the past 48 hours in the Middle East?

P.M. Well we have made official statements on this matter. My colleague the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. J. McEwen, with whom I was in contact, put out an official statement from the Government yesterday. He, of course, in company with most of the other people around the world, deplore those tragic events, and hope that an effective action can be speedily taken which will bring an end to the fighting.

We would hope that this could be achieved under the auspices of the United Nations, and I myself would feel that all the major powers, as far as I can discover, are anxious to see the fighting brought to an end. This could be a test of the effectiveness of the Security Council, particularly the permanent members of the Security Council, and of the United Nations in dealing with a situation in which all the senior members of the Security Council wish to see the fighting brought to an end.

My own country, of course, has only a relatively insignificant part to play in these events, but we have a great interest, first in the cause of peace, because peace to us enables us to go on with the task of development of a great continent, and because peace is precious in itself. But we also have, as one of the twelve top trading nations of the world, an interest in seeing that the international waterways are kept free for trade and the traffic of the peaceful and free world. So we are concerned on these counts to see an early restoration of peaceful conditions in the area.

Q. Sir, if the U.N. force should have to be recruited to keep the peace there, would Australia participate?

P.M. Well, you have raised an hypothetical question, and it is not customary to state Government policies on hypothetical issues. But Australia is a good member of the United Nations. We have constantly supported it. We supported the action which was taken in Korea as United Nations action. We have financially supported

peace keeping efforts in various directions. We have policemen in Cyprus at this moment as part of the United Nations grip there. But I mention that as evidence of our record of loyalty to the United Nations support of foreign decisions. But I am not committing my country in advance in any course of action until I know what is proposed to it.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, especially in view of your reference to Australia's importance as a trading power, and in view of what happened in the Suez Canal - namely that the Canal has been closed so we hear at least - would you agree with Foreign Secretary Brown of the United Kingdom that that is an illegal act, or would you say in any case it's an act which will seriously jeopardize Australia's interests?

P.M. Well, what I would like to know first before I make any definite comments would be the facts of the situation. As I had the news item this morning, the claim has been made that the Canal was closed in order to keep it secure and to protect it against bombing which could be damaging both to the shipping and to the Canal as a waterway. Now if that were so one might take a different view of events than if it were simply closed in order to prevent free movement of shipping, so I would not wish to indicate an attitude of mind without being fully in possession of the facts that I haven't at the present time. Thank you.

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