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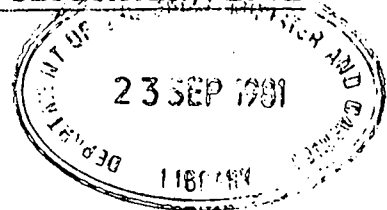
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# PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER, 1981

## ELECTORATE TALK



The Commonwealth of Nations is a major international institution and it has a capacity to make a constructive contribution in relation to issues of world concern and of concern to Australia. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Melbourne will be the largest and most significant international conference ever held in this country. The fact that this meeting is being held in Australia is a tribute to the contribution which successive Australian Governments have made both in the Commonwealth and in other international forums. The fact that this meeting is held in Australia will enhance Australia's position in the world.

The Commonwealth is a unique international organisation. It approaches problem-solving through consensus and its discussions are characterised by mutual respect, tolerance and informality. It operates on the basis that quiet discussion and a genuine meeting of minds away from the glare of publicity are more productive than public disputation.

At the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, there was the problem of Zimbabwe, which proved to be amenable to Commonwealth initiatives. So that particular meeting had a quite dramatic outcome and as a result Robert Mugabe will be coming to Melbourne as Prime Minister of Zimbabwe.

There will be no such outstanding single issue dominating the Melbourne meeting, but there are nevertheless issues of profound and lasting significance for Australia which will be at the forefront in the discussions. The meeting will be discussing in a practical and specific way the problem of food, how to improve production, storage and security of supply to those chronically in need. We will be discussing energy supplies and also how trade between developed and developing countries can be increased and made more equitable. We shall be discussing how aid can be increased and made more effective and how the international financial and monetary institutions can be improved to serve the interests of the countries they serve in a more satisfactory way. There are many highly technical questions involved in all this, but behind the technicalities lie very basic questions not only of morality and humanitarian concern, but of stable development of peace and harmony between nations.

The issues to be discussed affect not only the world in which we live, but will also have an incalculable impact on the kind of world in which our children will live. All these issues of development are particularly important for Australia, as nearly all our neighbours are developing countries.

The Melbourne meeting will be the first Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in the Pacific region. Many of the countries of the region are small, and suffer from particular hardships, like remoteness, small size, distance from markets and slender natural resources. Australia is aware that these countries should be able to draw value from the Commonwealth as do the larger countries. These countries will not be forgotten in Melbourne and I expect special attention to be given them at the meeting.

The meeting will also examine the important area of Commonwealth functional co-operation - the practical programmes of co-operation that form much of the substance of the Commonwealth's ongoing business. At a time when the vast potential of the Pacific region in trade and economic terms is being increasingly recognised, Australia can only benefit from the opportunity which this conference offers for wide-ranging discussions of Pacific issues and for cementing further our friendship with so many Pacific nations.

During the conference an international spotlight will be turned on Australia. Overseas journalists will not just report the conference, they will also report on Australia, what they see of it and think of its people, what their feelings are about Melbourne and Canberra.

The conference is a great opportunity for the city of Melbourne. The impression of Australia that our visitors carry away with them will reflect the interaction they have had with Australians from all walks of life. This conference is not therefore just a matter for Government. It is a matter for all of us to put our best foot forward for Australia. Melbourne will be Australia's front window during this meeting. I am sure it is a front window of which all Australians will be very proud.