

MELBOURNE "PEACE" CONFERENCE

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON TUESDAY, 27TH OCTOBER, 1959

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the function of the Australian security intelligence organization is perfectly clear. It was established by the late Mr. Chifley; it has been continued by us. It operates in a direct sense under the Prime Minister but it is attached to the Attorney-General's Department for certain administrative purposes. It reports to me on matters about which it thinks I should be informed. It undoubtedly maintains contact with the Department of External Affairs. It would be a very remarkable state of affairs if it did not, since the Department of External Affairs is charged with responsibility for our relations with other countries and is in charge of a general policy which, in one of its major aspects, consists of resistance to Communist aggression. The security intelligence organization is our principal weapon for gathering knowledge about Communist activity, and I will continue to encourage it to perform its duty in that respect in spite of anything that may be said about it.

It is quite true that in one exceptional case, the circumstances of which were referred to by the Attorney-General (Sir Garfield Barwick) this afternoon, and on request, information was given to one gentleman in Sydney who was a sponsor of this congress. It is not the function of the security intelligence organization to go around persuading people. It has no instructions to do so and, with that one exception on request it has not done so. But it keeps me informed and, through me, it keeps the Government informed of what goes on. I am happy to say that there is very little that goes on in the Communist Party organization of Australia with which one is not familiar as a result of the activity, loyalty and zeal of the officers of the security service.

This particular congress that is to be held seems to have been the occasion for this trouble. In the very few minutes that I have, let me say one or two things about it. There is nothing very mysterious about them. They have only to be stated. They have their effect on the minds of sensible people.

This congress issued a printed pamphlet describing what it was about and what its functions were. It made no secret, because on the very first page it said :

"The idea for the congress arose from the post-war history of the struggle for peace.."

That is a phrase that we have heard so frequently from those who have conducted the cold war. The statement went on -

".. the post-war history for the struggle for peace and in particular from the Stockholm Conference for Disarmament and International co-operation last year."

Does anybody, with any wits about him, suppose for one moment or have any doubt that the Stockholm Conference was a Communist front? The Stockholm Conference, which then began to operate through the World Peace Council and, as it comes to Australia and New Zealand, through the Australian Peace Council, enlisting the aid of those remarkable bodies like the Eureka Youth League and a half a dozen bodies of that kind, notoriously Communist or Communist controlled or made up of Communist fellow travellers? There is no mystery about that.

The marvellous thing to me is that anybody should suppose that the eminently respectable people whose names have been put forward as sponsors are actually those who have promoted the

conference. They are not. This conference was promoted as a result of the Stockholm Conference. It is perfectly clear that this conference has been made the main 1959 activity of the Communist Party of Australia. This is their great effort for this year and if it succeeds in attracting the attention of a sufficient number of thousands of non-Communists, they will regard that as rather a propaganda victory.

Those are the simple facts about the matter. These are the people who have promoted the conference. What they have done is to go to a number of eminently respectable people and say: "Would you mind having your name used as a sponsor for this conference?". And a lot of people, who, like everybody in this House, desire peace and who would do much to secure it, have said: "Yes, if this is for peace, you may use my name." But there is a very great difference between being an invited sponsor and being an invitor, an organizer, a promoter, and I say, with no hesitation, that the whole of the initial promotion of this conference goes back to Communist, and Communist-allied organizations. Indeed, anybody who cared to examine the list of the executive officers would, without knowing too much, know that the list embraces a number of well-known and notorious Communists.

Therefore, Sir, I want to say this: If it is the desire of the Labour Party to promote a peace conference, good. Let it do so. That is intelligible. If it is the desire of the Churches to promote a peace conference, they have an enormous constituency and a powerful spiritual influence on the people of Australia; let them do so. But it is very odd to me that some of them should allow themselves to be drawn into the organization of a congress which they have not promoted at all but with which, unhappily, they have allowed their names to be associated.

I wonder if honourable members ever cast their eyes on the "Tribune", the Communist official journal? They will find that that has given a powerful boost to this conference and well it might because this is the task for this year.

Now I must confess that I was surprised to hear my friend the honourable member for Melbourne Ports (Mr. Crean), who just concluded his speech, and whom nobody would accuse - and I thoroughly agree - of being a Communist, and whose intentions on this matter are of the highest. I am surprised that he should take some pleasure in the statement that the Labour Party in Victoria is supporting this congress. At the risk of occupying a minute longer than I should, I just want to say this: The Labour Party has spoken about this matter twice. The Australian Labour Party through its Federal conference and executive in 1951 gave consideration to the Australian Peace Council, one of the active promoters of this Conference. What did they say? They said:

"Your executive gave consideration to the standing of the Australian Peace Council in relation to the Australian Labour Party and determined as follows :-

That this Federal Executive, being of the opinion that the Australian Peace Council is a subsidiary organization of the Communist Party, we therefore declare that it is not competent for any member of the Australian Labour Party to be associated therewith."

If that was true in 1951, when did it cease to be true? It certainly had not ceased to be true in 1955 because once more the Party came back to the same problem and this is something which I will quote and, having quoted it I need say no more. What they said was this:

"The Executive now declares that it is Communist strategy to use these functions to represent the West as aggressive and the exclusive centre of danger to world peace to conceal

the aggressive actions of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and in Asia and to bring about negotiations between Communist regimes and the West under circumstances when territorial concessions will be made by the West in return for concessions which have no substance."

Sir, that is a pretty clear and powerful exposition of the present position. Therefore, Sir, as I said, I can satisfy myself by quoting it. I agree with it. I stand by it.

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