

PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES ON FRIDAY, 13TH
NOVEMBER, 1959 at 11 A.M.

QUESTION: Can you tell us, Sir, when you expect the new Governor-General to reach Australia?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, early in February. He would be here well ahead of the beginning of the 1960 Session so that he will be able to open it.

QUESTION: Any date fixed for this, Sir? - The opening.

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, no. But I mean normally one assumes that it will be some time in February, but it may be late in February.

QUESTION: He's coming by ship, I suppose, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, he is due to arrive here about the 1st or 2nd or 3rd of February.

QUESTION: Is it the usual customary five-year term?

PRIME MINISTER: No special arrangement.

QUESTION: You expect it to be about 5 years do you, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes. As you know, it is an appointment at will. But that is the sort of normal practice.

QUESTION: Sir, there has been a certain amount of criticism of the appointment, mainly by Mr. Calwell and ...

PRIME MINISTER: Has it been in your paper. How important that would be!

QUESTION: Well, I was just wondering whether you would comment on that, Sir, on the criticism that the Governor-General is not an Australia, Sir.

PRIME MINISTER: My views on that are perfectly well-known. Australians are not excluded, but they are not to have, say, the exclusive right to be considered. My idea is to get the best man.

QUESTION: Was there any thought given to the possibility of getting someone from one of the other Dominions, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: No. Well, when you say "was there any thought" I ran the whole world over in my own mind first, but I didn't bring into consideration any individual from another Dominion.

QUESTION: Could you tell us, Sir, whether this was your nomination to the Queen or her suggestion?

PRIME MINISTER: My nomination to the Queen. I think I ought to tell you the way we go about this thing. I don't take up the attitude that I nominate 'Jones' and that's the finish. What I've done twice now is to have quite a long discussion with the Queen about the kind of person we want, and getting her views on people, and offering a few comments on any names that she might 'throw into the ring'. And then in this case I said: "Well you're going off to Canada and there's not all that hurry; I will correspond with you when you get back from Canada". Then I wrote to Her Majesty and suggested two or three names that might be considered

by her, but I put them in my own order for preference, but indicated, of course, that if she had any strong feelings about any one of them that, naturally, would influence my mind. My No. 1 was W.S. Morrison and she emphatically approved of it. I think I should add, having regard to some talented pieces of lying that I have read in one newspaper that from first to last, neither directly or indirectly, have I made any proposal that a member of the Royal Family should be appointed to be Governor-General, nor has any such proposal been made to me. I hope that is sufficiently specific. If people will invent stories, I wish they would invent something more consistent with my attitude to these matters.

QUESTION: How long have you known the Viscount, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Twentyfour years.

QUESTION: Did you first meet him in the legal or the political world?

PRIME MINISTER: In the political world. In 1935 I think he had just become Financial Secretary to the Treasury and I went down and stayed with him a few days at his house. He lived in what might be described as an old remnant of some early monastery or something of that kind - one of those little old houses that you strike in the Cotswolds with a slippery elm stairway up which I had to go; you know, a rope on the side, and a bathroom in the attic. But at that time, of course, his boys were very young. But he and I have been very great friends ever since. That, of course, I hope won't be held against him.

QUESTION: He is a Scot of course?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes. He was born in the Hebrides in the western islands.

QUESTION: Do you happen to know if he is a Presbyterian, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, I'd lay odds that he is a Presbyterian, but I wouldn't know. He's got all the marks.

QUESTION: Sir, would you know if Lady Dunrossil's father was a Doctor of Divinity?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, he was a Presbyterian Minister. Like Lady Slim's father. In fact Lady Slim and Allison Morrison know each other.

QUESTION: There has been some criticism in London, Sir, that he retired from the Speakership because of ill-health.

PRIME MINISTER: I think that that amounted to a slight deafness and oddly enough he felt that even a slight deafness wasn't very good in a Speaker, who ought to hear both sides.

COMMENT: It is sometimes very useful not to hear, Sir.

PRIME MINISTER: I think you will find that he is in very nimble form.

QUESTION: The snapshot I've seen makes him look rather like a Munroe Ferguson portrait. Would that be true, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Don't think so. There's a superb photograph in this morning's Sydney Morning Herald. That is absolutely "Shakes" Morrison to the life. You know that big full-on one. He is a tall slightly built man.

QUESTION: Where does the "Shakes" come from, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, his name is William Shepherd Morrison and a lot of people when I first knew him were firmly of the opinion that his second name was Shakespeare. I think a lot of people got that misapprehension. Probably in his student days he might have got it because he took a keen interest in poetry and he read a lot of Shakespeare and is fond of Shakespeare. He wrote one or two very good poems himself, I don't mind saying. But I think he was called "Shakes" only after he came round to live among the Sassenachs. I think he was always called "W.S." when he was at the University.

QUESTION: Did he have an opportunity of seeing much of Australia the last time he was out here; to know what the country would be like?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, I don't know. They weren't here for more than a few days. He didn't have much opportunity. But he has represented a rural electorate in the North Cotswolds and he was Minister for Agriculture for some time in the United Kingdom Government.

QUESTION: Sir, I think you said much earlier that Australians were not excluded. Is that correct?

PRIME MINISTER: That's right.

QUESTION: You've no objection to Australians ...?

PRIME MINISTER: No, I haven't but it is very difficult to get a man from your own country in reality, unless you can get somebody who is not, politically, a contentious person. And most people who are best known in Australia have been through some political or controversial mill. You might very well have somebody who wasn't handicapped in that way, but who was a man of great eminence. I wouldn't exclude him. I think it is always useful for the man appointed to be known to the Queen because he is the Queen's personal representative. But I've advocated for many years the idea, for example, of having some Australian made Governor-General of Canada or South Africa or vice versa. I think these cross-bearings are valuable. But there again, of course, it is not easy.

QUESTION: Does that suggest, Sir, that the list you presented to the Queen could have included an Australian name?

PRIME MINISTER: No, it didn't. I did not find myself able to select a suitable name in Australia. You understand this was my No. 1 nomination. This notion that I've been toting the business around, of course, is most offensive because this is No. 1 nomination and warmly and promptly accepted at that point of time by the Queen. Up to that time we had, in effect, merely talked about the type of person or the qualifications, which is a good thing to do.

QUESTION: He announced himself in London last night, Sir, that it wasn't until the 27th October that he was approached.

PRIME MINISTER: That's quite right. I didn't sound him or anybody until I had the Queen's concurrence in my nomination. Then the next step is that I say: "I now ask permission to approach that man to find out whether he is agreeable". You don't go around saying: "If you were offered it would you take it?" you know. That's no good.

QUESTION: His retirement from the Speakership was not in any way related to the appointment?

PRIME MINISTER: No. As a matter of fact it was when I knew some little time back that he was giving up the Speakership that I brought him into the area of thought myself.

QUESTION: Mr. Menzies, as I understand it then the machinery is that the Prime Minister approaches the nominee, not anyone from the Queen's ...

PRIME MINISTER: In this case, having got the Queen's approval, I then got Sir Eric Harrison to see Mr. Morrison with a specific message from me. He then considered the matter for a day or two, then Sir Eric Harrison told me that the answer was "Yes", then I communicated with the Queen saying that the nominee was agreeable and I therefore now formally nominated him and would be glad to know on what date the Queen would make the announcement - what date and time - so that it could be referred to concurrently at this end. Then, I finally got back word that Her Majesty would announce it at 12 o'clock noon yesterday.

QUESTION: The other possible nominees, Sir, would not even know that they were considered?

PRIME MINISTER: No, never.

QUESTION: One small point, Sir. The paper you referred to as not quite accurate. Could you tell us whether that was a Melbourne paper?

PRIME MINISTER: It was a Sydney paper -- a Sydney afternoon paper. You would have no doubt about that would you - which one I mean?

QUESTION: What's the fate of the Divorce Bill going to be, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: It's a non-party measure. Somebody was asking when I was in there last night whether that stood right. It does. Most of the argument seems to centre about this Separation clause.

QUESTION: Are you going to speak on it, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't think so.

QUESTION: Have you made up your mind on it, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: I'll support the Bill.

QUESTION: You stated, Sir, that the new Governor-General would open Parliament. That means there will be a prorogation of the Parliament?

PRIME MINISTER: That's right.

QUESTION: Sir, re the Governor-General. Have you heard any word as to whether he will be bringing any personal staff out at all or will he . . .

PRIME MINISTER: Those matters are being discussed with him now.

QUESTION: What progress has been made with your review of Parliamentary allowances and amenities, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: What review is that?

QUESTION: I believe you said you were informing yourself about it.

PRIME MINISTER: I said I was informing myself about it, yes. But somebody appears to have got into his head that I have established a committee or something, but I haven't. There has always been an Amenities Committee.

QUESTION: Have you informed yourself, Sir, to the extent that you are going to crack any heads?

PRIME MINISTER: I haven't yet informed myself I regret to tell you. I have been too busy on other matters.

QUESTION: Which Ministers have the authority to direct the activities of the Security Service without reference to you, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: The Attorney-General's Department has it for administration purposes. I am responsible for policy and the Head of the Security Service communicates directly with me.

QUESTION: Would Sir Garfield's direction to approach Professor Stout be an exercise of his administrative authority or a policy matter?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, he didn't direct Spry; he found out that Stout wanted to know and so apparently Sir Garfield conveyed that to Spry, no doubt with an indication that he thought it might be useful if Spry saw him and helped him. I don't regard that as a normal practice. As I said in the Parliament, the normal practice on these matters is that the Security Service reports to me, or from time to time if I say I want the Attorney-General to see this, to the Attorney-General or from time to time to the Department of External Affairs because these things have a bearing, but the Security Service exists to inform us - putting it in that way - and does not in fact normally convey information to other people. It collects information. But I don't feel at all disturbed about the fact that he saw Stout because as a matter of fact it became quite clear that everything that he informed Stout about, had already been published in the Press. There was no secret cloak and dagger stuff about it.

QUESTION: The end in effect of this project though, Sir, seems to have been to dissuade some non-communist people from attending this meeting and perhaps leaving the Communists to win the Congress by default. Do you think that was a desired end result?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, you are now saying - the "end result" of what? The end result of statements made by Mr. Casey and Sir Garfield Barwick and myself, not by the Security Service, but by us, may have had the effect of dissuading a lot of people to attend. I hope it did. I consider it most desirable. I don't like to see decent citizens having their legs pulled. So there you are. I must be careful because I saw in one report that they were going to pass a vote of thanks commending me, and I

hope none of you will publish anything that will prevent that from coming about.

QUESTION: It might be just to test the feeling of the meeting.

QUESTION: On the Security Service, Sir, you told Mr. Whitlam in the House, 10 days or so ago, that you expected to reach some conclusions on the telephone matter before the end of the year. Has that been developed yet, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, no. We've been so heavily engaged in Cabinet on other matters. I've had some discussions with the Attorney-General but I haven't got it to the point of discussing it with the Cabinet yet.

QUESTION: When do you expect the Defence Statement to be ready Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't know. We've had two or three Cabinet Meetings on it. We're having another one next Wednesday. I am hopeful that all this will enable a Statement to be made in the following week, but as I said earlier to you chaps, I want this thing to be cleared up before I leave.

QUESTION: Has any decision been made, yet, Sir, on National Service Training?

PRIME MINISTER: No. No decisions have been made yet. We have arrived at a series of tentative views, but further paper, or papers, are being prepared which we are going to examine when we next meet on this matter next week and we will then, I hope, be in a position to arrive at a final conclusion.

QUESTION: You mean, Sir, that you are hopeful of being in a position to make a statement to Parliament the following week.

PRIME MINISTER: Well, yes. I don't know whether I will make the statement or whether the Minister for Defence will. I haven't worked that one out but I'm hoping a statement will be makeable - if that's the right word - by the following week.

QUESTION: Sir, there seems to be a suggestion from the United Nations that there has been a change in the Australian Policy towards South Africa's racial laws. Formerly, when the matter was brought up, we voted on it - against the resolution. This year we are abstaining.

PRIME MINISTER: Well the reason for that was explained yesterday in the House at Question Time by the Acting Minister. We have consistently opposed the United Nations intervention on the ground that this is a matter of domestic jurisdiction.

QUESTION: Has that been a policy hitherto or ..

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, no. That's been our policy for ten years, that it is a matter of domestic jurisdiction just as we would resist United Nations intervention in some discussion that we were having with Papua, or with people in it. I say that's domestic jurisdiction. We've never felt called upon to sit in judgment on actual policies pursued by the South African Government because we've said that matter doesn't arise with us. We say the matter is a matter of domestic jurisdiction under the

Charter and therefore it ought not to be dealt with. This year our people felt that this point of view of the Australian Government, though it is completely logical and prudent from our point of view, was becoming a little misunderstood and was being interpreted in some countries as an approval by Australia of the actual policies being pursued by the Government of South Africa, and in order that that should not any longer be an inference from our voting against it, it was decided that Australia would abstain, having explained first, once more, its belief that this is a matter of domestic jurisdiction and not cognizable by the United Nations. That is the whole of the story.

QUESTION: A cable from London yesterday, Mr. Menzies, stated that Dame Pattie would launch the liner "Canberra" on March 1st and I was wondering whether this had any bearings on your plans for that time next year?

PRIME MINISTER: No. I'll be here on March 1st. She is going over by herself, quite privately.

QUESTION: Could you tell us, Sir, what Sir Giles Chippindall's salary will be as the new Chairman of T.A.A?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't know. I suppose the same as the last one. Better ask Shane Paltridge. I don't know. What does the Chairman get?

QUESTION: I think he probably got £2,000.

PRIME MINISTER: Well, whatever it is.

QUESTION: That doesn't compromise his Public Service Pension I presume, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: You don't suppose I've been thinking about that do you? We only made the appointment yesterday afternoon.

With the Compliments of -
Mr. Hugh Dash,
Press Secretary to the Prime Minister.