

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT.
HON. R.G. MENZIES, IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES ON 8TH SEPTEMBER, 1960

Sir, I do not propose to take very long over this matter because my colleague, the Minister for Territories (Mr. Hasluck) has made, I think, a very comprehensive statement, with every word of which I agree. It might be quite adequate for me to say that I have heard the Minister's statement, that I have nothing to add to it, that I agree with it, and sit down.

Mr. Pollard - Why not do that?

MR. MENZIES - I will do the next best thing: I will stand.

One aspect of this matter which was referred to by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Whitlam) deserves a little mention. The activities of the University Staffs Association and certain comments that have been published rather suggest that academic freedom is involved in the exclusion of this man from the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. I want to refer to that because it exhibits a complete misconception of this problem. Academic freedom, yes. The Australian National University enjoys it in the fullest possible measure. We do not appoint people to the staff of that university. The university authorities do so according to their own untrammelled judgment. I am not asked, as the relevant Minister, to approve of any appointment made by the Australian National University authorities.

Mr. Curtin - It is just as well!

MR. MENZIES: Indeed it is just as well, because perhaps a few of the appointments that have been made would not have received my approval. But I believe in academic freedom, and therefore I have maintained the view that when the university is appointing people, professors, lecturers, readers or whatever they may be, it is the university's own business. But academic freedom does not carry with it the right to enjoy immunity from the immigration restrictions of the Territory which apply to other people. Although academic people occasionally confuse the issue, it is quite clear that you do not rise above the law simply because you attain academic freedom, and whether a man is free academic or not, when he desires to enter this Territory he must secure a permit to do so. I emphasize that point.

Mr. Cairns - No one put that proposition.

MR. MENZIES: On the contrary, it was put in the letter written by the Staffs Association to the Minister. It was put as a matter of academic freedom.

Mr. Whitlam - I did not quote it.

MR. MENZIES - I know you did not, but it has been quoted, no doubt. I am referring to the way in which it was put by the University Staffs Association. The speech of the honorable member for Werriwa (Mr. Whitlam), contained what I thought was a glancing reference to that topic.

Mr. Whitlam - I was coming to it, in order to endorse it.

MR. MENZIES - I am glad to hear that, because now I have come to it in order to un-endorse it. The first law of physics, of course, is that action and reaction are equal and opposite.

The only other comment I wish to make is this: the honorable member for Werriwa has given us a great number of testimonials. I do not know what those testimonials have to do



with the case. Honorable members opposite can produce a string of testimonials to say that this man is very able, as he undoubtedly must be, or that he is distinguished in his profession, as I willingly concede, or that the persons who gave the testimonials like him, but what have testimonials to do with the point at issue? To send newspaper representatives prowling around irrelevant departments in Great Britain, asking spokesmen - whoever those mysterious persons may be - whether they have certain things in mind, is to prepare the makings of a ludicrous case. The essence of this matter is not what somebody else thinks about this man or what his technical qualifications are; it is whether the Administrator was wrong in refusing him a permit, on the information that the Administrator had before him.

Mr. Barnard - What is the information he had before him?

MR. MENZIES - To find that out, of course, is one of the objects of the exercise. All we have to do is to publish the information, and then Security can close up. That is the idea motivating some honorable members opposite. I do not mean all of them. I do not mean the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Calwell) or the Deputy Leader. They take a different view. But there are honorable members opposite who would dearly love to force the publication of information coming to the Government in relation to the proper security interests of this country or its Territory, in order that its sources of information would thereafter dry up. Let me say that I, accepting all the responsibility that attaches to my office, am not going to take any step which would involve us in the loss of access to information bearing on the security, the territorial integrity and the political integrity of Australia.
