

P.M. to attend U.N.

Mr. Khrushchev's attitude to U.N.

Australia's policy in New Guinea

Mr. Macmillan's "phone call" to P.M.

West's position at U.N.

PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES AT KINGSFORD SMITH  
AIRPORT ON THURSDAY, 6TH OCTOBER, 1960

QUESTION: Mr. Menzies would you explain, Sir, what you hope to accomplish by going to the United Nations?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I've never been in the practice, or in the habit of saying in advance what I think might be achieved.

But what has happened at this Conference has been that something that began only a few weeks ago as a normal meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which is normally attended by foreign ministers, has steadily become a meeting of the heads of Government.

Under those circumstances I came to the conclusion, finally, that Australia ought not to be conspicuous by not being represented by the head of the Government.

That doesn't mean that I have any lack of confidence in the Attorney-General who is a very able man, and very well able to say what we need to say.

But I did finally come to the conclusion, and my colleagues thought so too, that we ought to be represented by the head of our Government at a time when such a violent attack is being made, not only on the United Nations itself, but on the whole of the democratic world.

And, frankly, I don't expect that I'm going to accomplish very much as an individual. I mean I'm a fairly small potato, and we're not a very large country.

But I think that as part of a group of people I may be able to say something - in fact I think I can - which exhibits Australia's point of view, which is not necessarily the same as other people's point of view, but which is sturdily democratic, and our own interests are great.

In particular we have very lively interests in relation to South-East Asia, and I will endeavour to put these things as clearly as I can.

QUESTION: Would you tell us, Sir, what you think of Mr. Khrushchev's attitude towards the United Nations?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I have never met Mr. Khrushchev. One of the great attractions, one of the few attractions about this rather strenuous journey, is to see, and hear, and perhaps to meet Mr. Khrushchev. Because, of course, if you took him literally on what he says the result would be ridiculous.

But it may be that there is something behind all this: What is he getting at? Is he just bully-ragging the rest of the world?

That doesn't matter much to us: we are not easily bullied in Australia. Or is there something else behind it? I am looking forward with fascinated interest to discovering what there is behind that somewhat stormy facade.

QUESTION: Do you plan, Mr. Menzies, to make a defence of Australian policy in New Guinea?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't like the word "defence". I think that the Australian policy in New Guinea is first class. If it needs to be explained, I will explain it.

QUESTION: I was thinking in view of Mr. Khrushchev's attack on New Guinea.

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, I think he threw that in for good measure, that's all. We have a superb story about New Guinea and I shall tell it; but I assure you I won't tell it on the defensive: I'll tell it as a man who is proud of it.

QUESTION: Mr. Menzies, it has been reported that Mr. Macmillan has rung you from New York and requested you to come to the United Nations. Is this true?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I'm sorry to disappoint all the writers but I've had no telephone conversation with Mr. Macmillan whatever. I've been very familiar with his own mind about this because we've been in communication by other means over the last month.

And all I can say is that when I decided to go I advised him, and I have reason to believe he was very pleased. But all this rather picturesque stuff about "long distance telephone conversations" - "my dear fellow, do come" - this is the mere picturesque decoration that goes on. But I didn't start it.

QUESTION: Finally, Sir, would you comment generally about your feelings at this present stage of the position in the United Nations for the West?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I'm bound to say that so far as one can judge at present our friend from the Soviet Union hasn't been doing so well. He was set back pretty severely on the matter of the Congo. His own Embassy in the Congo had to secure protection from the United Nations mission which is a rather amusing fact, I think - well amusing in a sense - and he doesn't appear to have had any success over inscribing the item of Red China.

No, I would think that so far there has been more sound and fury than result from his point of view. Still I'll know more about that when I'm there.

I might even have the chance of having him thump the desk when I speak, which will be a great change from respectable political meetings.

QUESTION: Mr. Menzies when can we expect you back?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, I would think in 10, 12, 13 days. I don't want to be long. I just want to go. When the things that I need to do something about are over I'll come back very swiftly. I don't regard it as a holiday.

Thanks to Qantas and all these great people I leave here, I think at 5.30 today, Thursday, and arrive at San Francisco 25 minutes ago - 5 past 5 on Thursday.

Thank you very much.