

PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION CONFERENCE
GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT.HON.
SIR ROBERT MENZIES, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE,

CANBERRA

13TH JULY, 1965

PRIME MINISTER : I think, gentlemen, I ought to begin by asking you whether the procedures that I have adopted in the past are satisfactory to you.

I noticed one complaint somewhere that I had fallen into the bad habit, I gathered, of starting off by saying something for myself instead of confining myself to answering questions. Well, I am pretty sure you will agree that as there might be four or five topics on which you would be interested today, it would be a great mistake to have a question on one and then a question on another so that the whole thing became completely confused. I don't want to restrict your questions at all but I do think that it might be more orderly if I said something about the first topic and then heard your questions on it and then passed on to another, it being open to you, of course, all through, to raise questions that you have in your mind to which you think I might give a useful answer.

If that is agreeable, I think I would like to begin by saying something about the position in Viet Nam and our presence there and how it has come about. I wouldn't have thought there was very much doubt about this because this has been very freely debated in Parliament over quite a time but perhaps I might help by summing it up a little.

Some gentlemen who have communicated with me recently seem to think that I am doing something all by myself, that I am involving Australia in war, that I am helping to escalate that war into something bigger. Strange Christian sentiments indeed.

Well, of course, I can't plead guilty to that because as all of those of you who follow these matters know perfectly well, our attitude towards Viet Nam, the placing of Australian forces in Viet Nam was not just the decision of one man, it was a Cabinet decision, announced by me publicly in Parliament on April 29th and thereafter debated in the Parliament the better part of two sittings. So that the idea that this is a sort of one-man frolic is absurd.

On top of that, I think I ought to take the opportunity of saying that so far as the Government parties are concerned - both Government parties - every member of both parties entirely supports the action of the Government in this matter, so that it is rather foolish to talk about it as a sort of one-man decision.

I am not avoiding my own responsibility - the decision of the Government is entirely in line with my own view and I have never had any reason to make any apology for it or any qualification or put any qualification upon it. Not only did we make this decision and announce it in the Parliament but the President of the Security Council was informed and the SEATO Council was officially informed by my colleague.

It is perhaps as well to recall that Australian defence is not a solitary defence. It is a defence which is involved with certain international treaties under which we have rights and under which we have obligations. I don't need to mention them to gentlemen like you who are familiar with them - the South East

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1. The first part of the report describes the synthesis of a new class of compounds, which are characterized by their unique properties. The synthesis was carried out under conditions that were carefully controlled to ensure the highest possible yield and purity of the product.

2. The second part of the report discusses the physical and chemical properties of the compounds. It is shown that these compounds exhibit a wide range of behaviors, which are consistent with the theoretical predictions. The results of the experiments are presented in detail, and the data are compared with those of other similar compounds.

3. The third part of the report deals with the applications of the compounds. It is shown that these compounds have a number of important uses, particularly in the field of materials science. The results of the experiments are presented in detail, and the data are compared with those of other similar compounds.

4. The fourth part of the report discusses the future work that is planned for this project. It is hoped that the results of this work will lead to the development of new materials with improved properties.

5. The fifth part of the report discusses the conclusions that have been drawn from the work. It is concluded that the compounds described in this report are of great interest and importance, and that further work in this area is warranted.

Asian Treaty, the ANZUS Pact, our unilateral obligation to Malaysia, publicly stated and debated in this Parliament and in the Press - all of these things are matters which involve us - the defence of New Guinea and Papua which we have accepted as part of the defence of the mainland of Australia.

We have, as a matter of fact, a considerable variety of obligations but we are also, I am happy to say, in possession of a considerable variety of rights. In other words, there is mutuality about all these agreements and that has much to say to the safety of our own country.

South Viet Nam happens to be one of the protocol states under the SEATO Treaty and that means that the obligations under the SEATO Treaty, which include military obligations, extend to that country, but on one condition, of course, and that is that the government of the country concerned asks us to come in. We don't go in against the will of the government of South Viet Nam and we haven't done so. In the same way, the United States of America hasn't gone in against the will of the Government of South Viet Nam but is there by invitation. All this is an expression in action of the SEATO obligations.

Now I find that there are some people who say, "Well, why should Australia be in South Viet Nam?" It would be quite proper I think to answer that by saying, "Well, why is the United States in South Viet Nam?" Her obligations are no greater than ours. In one sense, her interests may be thought to be somewhat less immediate than ours. But I notice that those who query Australia's presence have not been so vocal in querying the presence of the United States.

Well, why is the United States there? Why are we there? Obviously to resist armed aggression and subversion - the very thing that SEATO is directed to and the very thing which is contemplated by the Charter of the United Nations, that any country finding itself under attack is quite entitled to defend itself and equally entitled to ask its friends to come to its assistance. And therefore everything that has been done here is in complete accord not only with the South East Asian Treaty but also with the Charter of the United Nations.

Now just let me pursue that a little further. Suppose the United States of America, now building up its forces in South Viet Nam so that they total, as at present, something of the order of 60,000 - suppose the United States said, "All right, we will withdraw." This would give great pleasure to the pacifists. No great pleasure to us in Australia if we value our own state of security.

Suppose they withdrew. Does anybody with his five wits doubt that before very long Chinese communism, acting through North Vietnamese communism, would sweep down through South Viet Nam, would put itself in an early position to control Thailand, to render the position of Malaya almost intolerable, putting Malaya between two fires and would therefore in the long run - and not so very long run at that - we would find ourselves with aggressive communism almost on our shores, just across the water.

And it is because of these elementary considerations of national safety that the SEATO Council when it met - and my colleague, Mr. Hasluck, was there on May 5th of this year - reaffirmed (I will quote their words) that "defeat of communist campaign is essential not only to the security of South Viet Nam but to that of South East Asia as a whole." That is what the

SEATO Council had to say and it is very well to keep it in mind.

We are not pursuing some strange warmongering eccentric activity of our own. We are grown-up people. We have an immense responsibility to this country and the best way of discharging that responsibility is to see that with our friends we stand across the path of aggressive communism.

It is very interesting to notice that this is a view not peculiar to us. The Foreign Secretary in the present British Government, Mr. Michael Stewart, made a notable speech about this in the House of Commons at the beginning of April. I wonder if I might try your patience by quoting just two paragraphs from it.

He observed that after the signing of the Geneva Agreement in 1954, both parts of Viet Nam - both parts, North and South - continued to endeavour to put themselves in order and to make economic and social progress. He continued - and now I use his words -

"These possibilities remained open until in 1959 there was a call by the Government of North Viet Nam for an intensification of the Viet Cong activities in the South and for full-scale guerrilla warfare against the Government of South Viet Nam. Not only did the Northern Government call for that; they then proceeded to help it with more weapons and military advice, as was made clear by the majority report of the International Control Commission in 1962.

Faced with that situation, South Viet Nam appealed to the United States for help, and the United States responded, but it is important to notice that in 1959, when this pressure from the North began, and even as late as 1961, two years later, there were still only 700 members of the United States armed forces in South Viet Nam. It cannot be claimed that the action taken by the North was the result of a considerable United States military presence in the South. The action from the North preceded the arrival of the United States forces in any considerable degree in the South."

Now, it won't be irrelevant for me to add to that that in 1959 the economy of South Viet Nam was beginning to flourish and the country was developing, at that time, a considerable stability. I would like to point out also that it is widely agreed that the Viet Cong has replaced its serious losses - because it has had them - by recruitment from the North. Up to the end of 1964 - that is only the end of last year - it was estimated that 40,000 infiltrators had come down from the North; in 1964 alone, 10,000 came in.

I reported to Parliament on April 29th that there had occurred the infiltration of a battalion of the North Vietnamese regular army. Well, I needn't go on. That's continuing.

And if we have those facts in mind, here is something..... I am not allowed to call it a war, I gather, because somebody thinks that there is a war only if there is a declaration of war. Strange, remote, academic notion that is, in the modern world. All I know is that there is fighting going on and the people involved in it might very well be mistaken enough to think they were engaged in operations of war; as of course they are.

The communists themselves from Hanoi and from Peking describe this, themselves, as a war of liberation.

But we are not allowed to call it a war, which is just too bad.

Well, it is a war of liberation from their point of view. This is the grandiloquent name they give to a series of military operations which are obviously designed to overthrow the Government of South Viet Nam, to convert South Viet Nam into a communist state and to extend the boundaries of communist influence so many miles, so many miles, hundreds of miles nearer to us.

Well, I am not going to engage in word-spinning arguments about phrases that can be used. I think it is quite foolish at a time like this for people to think that they can solve this great problem by what I now believe is called an exercise in semantics, because the facts are not that way.

There is a war going on, and United States forces are engaged in operations of war - defensive war - against an aggressor. And Australian forces are engaged in operations of war - defensive war - against aggression, side by side with the forces of South Viet Nam.

Under those circumstances, our position is - just as the position of the United States is - that until the aggressor is really prepared to negotiate for an effective peace which will leave South Viet Nam in command of its own affairs, then the fighting will need to continue.

We are all very conscious of the risks of this business. There are risks always in these matters. But the very notion that the contribution to peace is to abandon South Viet Nam and walk out on them is, I think, so fantastic that 95 per cent. of the people of Australia would find it entirely unacceptable.

Now, we had a look at this matter at the Commonwealth Conference. There are various views expressed in a Commonwealth Conference. There are now twenty-one of us - I was almost going to say with twenty-one different views but at least, let us say, a wide diversity of opinion. And let's face up to it, there are some of the new Commonwealth countries who are opposed to American action and therefore opposed to what we are doing who lean in the direction of China. I won't mention their names, but it is quite clear that some of them do.

And the Prime Minister of Great Britain said: "Well, don't let us thrash out our various views pro and con, because we will get nowhere. There will be complete opposition between A and B and between C and D. Could we make an effort to break this jam by sending a mission from the Commonwealth to Hanoi, to Peking, to Moscow, to Washington to see whether there is some basis on which a conference, a peace conference, could be held? That is all - to discover whether there is some basis on which a conference may be held."

And in the long run, with I think one dissentient, this was agreed to and the members of the mission were appointed.

It was quite extraordinary to me that one representative objected to Mr. Wilson being the Chairman of the mission. Why? Because Great Britain had and has publicly expressed her support of what the Americans are doing. Therefore we were told, "You, Great Britain, are committed" but the very remark was made by a gentleman who was equally committed by having made a joint communique with Chou En-Lai upholding China and denouncing America, and having been brought up in the old school, I still like words to mean the same kind of thing where they are used.

Of course most people there are committed in the sense that they had views pro or con. One or two of us were committed because we had committed forces, but that didn't make our commitment any clearer. It made it more practical, if you like, but it still remained true that we had taken our stand and we knew what side we were on, and the mission was appointed.

Well, you know what has happened. It is just as well to remind some of these people in Australia - there are very few of them of course - who think that I stand in the way. I - all important - stand in the way of any peaceful settlement. It is very interesting to remind them and perhaps to remind the public that there has been a score of attempts to produce some kind of settlement, settlement consistent with the freedom of South Viet Nam. Let us never lose sight of that.

It has been before the United Nations. They sent their Secretary-General, or they said to him that he might consider visiting Peking and Hanoi and he got the dusty answer which everybody else has had ever since: United Nations intervention in the affairs of Indo-China can't be tolerated.

This is the communist reply. "This firm stand of ours," they went on, "is unshakeable and admits of no exception." Well then, the co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference tried something. The seventeen non-aligned nations passed resolutions and sent them forward and got the same rejection. President Johnson has, of course, done everything I think that a man could, in all his statements, to encourage peace, but the only answer to him was that it was a swindle. (These genteel words are used quite freely - a swindle.) The British Government sent my old friend, Mr. Patrick Gordon Walker, around. He couldn't get through the door. "Nothing to do with you," they said. The President of India, he suffered a similar fate. The Americans, not long ago, tried a temporary suspension of bombing north of the line. This had no effect whatever. And in the case of the Commonwealth mission, well, as I don't need to tell you, the answer has been in the rudest possible terms: "Nothing doing. We will not confer. We are the people," they say, "who will not under any circumstances arrive at any peaceful negotiation unless all those people who are engaged in defending South Viet Nam get out."

In other words, unless there is surrender, there will be no negotiation. Strange, strange, bedlamite sort of idea it is, but that is the one that they have put forward.

I remember that at the conference - the Prime Ministers' Conference - one of the Prime Ministers, heavily influenced by the Chinese, I regret to say - objected to the mission because he said it would be putting China in the dock. I ventured to ask him why China, if China was a peace-loving country, should feel put in the dock by being asked to negotiate for peace. That was a little difficult that question, but he still persisted that this was putting China in the dock, and of course, in that sense, he was right, because although this mission hasn't achieved anything positive because it hasn't been received, it is perfectly true that it has made it clear to the world as to where the objection to peace exists and who are the people who are responsible for carrying on this dreadful operation of war in Viet Nam.

Now I don't know whether there is anything more that I need to say on that matter in general. I should tell you that the Department of External Affairs has put together a compendium, suitably indexed, containing the documents relating to Viet Nam

in the first half of this year and I am told that there are sufficient copies available for each of you to take one away at the end of the conference. They contain verbatim extracts from all the statements and documents and reports that are relevant to this matter.

Well now.....

QUESTION : Can you tell us, Sir, if there is any chance of the stalemate in Viet Nam ending in the foreseeable future?

P.M. Well, it would take a wiser man than I am to answer that question, you realise, with any dogmatism, because I had the great advantage of quite long discussion on this matter with General Maxwell Taylor in New York and, of course, in London and elsewhere. The monsoon season is on in Viet Nam and they have a north-east monsoon and a north-west monsoon and the clouds come over and the rain comes down and this is ideal hunting time for guerrillas. Therefore it is to be expected that the Viet Cong would in this period have some success from time to time. And they have had some successes. They have also had some failures. The casualties each day are quite formidable.

But there is a strong feeling of confidence that by the end of the monsoon season, the progress of the Viet Cong will have been somewhat disappointing from their point of view and that this might have its psychological effect on Hanoi.

It is elementary horse sense, I suppose, that as long as the other fellow thinks he is winning, he is not going to talk settlement. Well, whether he will still be thinking he is winning at the end of the monsoon season in the next two or three months, I don't know, but I saw no symptom whatever of any doubt, any weakening of resolution on the part of the United States.

They are increasing the numbers of their forces, they are devoting a tremendous lot of energy to this matter because they know, as I think most sensible people would agree, that you are not going to get a settlement on this matter while you are being - on the face of it - pushed around. You will get a settlement when the other man begins to think that there is no future in it, and therefore we have to make up our minds that we will go through a very difficult period.

Things may be worse before they are better - in fact I think the President said something to that effect in the last day or two. But this is no reason for any pessimism; this is one of the inevitable circumstances of an operation of war - you will notice I didn't say "a war" - an operation of war, conducted under these circumstances of weather and, of course, with all the advantage that guerrilla forces have of secrecy, choosing their own time to strike and of sheer terrorism against the civilian population.

These are tremendous advantages, but in the long run, they won't be good enough. You can put me down among the optimists on this matter.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, on the political side, some observers say that some kind of nationalist Viet Nam unified under a communist régime will be preferable to a South East Asia in flames. Could your Government contemplate a Titoist-type nationalist communist government at South Viet Nam ostensibly free of Chinese domination?

- P.M. I would contemplate a communist régime in South Viet Nam with the utmost horror.
- Q. Do you think it can be avoided, Sir?
- P.M. I do. But only if we stand firm. Only if we refuse to allow our morale to be whittled away by a lot of philosophic doubters.
- Q. Sir Robert, there have been reports from Viet Nam showing that the boots and clothing of members of the First Battalion have been literally falling apart. Does this suggest that our troops have been let down by bad planning and that they were sent to Viet Nam before the Army was ready to put them into the field properly equipped?
- P.M. I have no reason to suppose they weren't sent in a properly trained and equipped fashion. I read what you have referred to and no doubt the Minister for the Army, who is reported to have been there on the spot, will be back and taking an active interest in these matters.
- Q. Were you surprised, Sir, to read these reports?
- P.M. Oh, I can't say one way or the other about that. Every time I find myself in the tropics under much more comfortable circumstances I wonder how your clothing lasts anyhow. But everything that can be done must be done, that's quite obvious. There can be no beg pardons or excuses on this matter. None.
- Q. Sir Robert, you referred to the United States increasing its forces in South Viet Nam. Was there any suggestion in your discussions with President Johnson that we might be asked to increase.....
- P.M. No, none. None either there or anywhere else. I may tell you it is very well understood that we are in a rather special position. We have limited resources. We have our obligations that we are performing in Malaysia. We have forces in Viet Nam. We have our particular obligations in relation to Papua and New Guinea and, of course, our own defence. I found no lack of understanding. In fact, on the whole, there was great appreciation of the fact that we had rather stretched our resources to do what we did.
- Q. Sir, were you given any indication in Washington of how far the United States might go in terms of commitment of forces in South Viet Nam?
- P.M. Oh no. All I know is that they are increasing. But you mean to say did they tell me, "Well, we will build them up to X thousand"?
- Q. Yes, Sir.
- P.M. Oh no. They are not so silly as that. That's a piece of information of interest only to the enemy. They are not in the habit of doing that.
- Q. Apart from commitment of troops to Viet Nam, did you get the impression that the US administration would welcome - when we could afford to do it - an expansion, a general expansion of our defence base?

- P.M. It was never raised. They are very familiar with the very sharp expansion that we are now engaging in. I found them very clearly understanding of that problem.
- Q. Sir Robert, have you been informed of the Philippines' decision which amounts virtually to not sending 2,000 troops to Viet Nam?
- P.M. Well, I haven't been informed of this but at the moment I am not frightfully well informed. I have been in bed most of the time since I got back home.
- Q. Sir Robert, do you think the Malaysian situation and the Viet Nam horror are part of the same problem?
- P.M. All these things, I think, fall into the same pattern. As I said earlier, if South Viet Nam went and the communists came in, well, anybody can imagine the pressures that would arise, the internal subversions that would be promoted in Thailand and in Malaya proper, and that would mean that Malaya proper would find herself once more in the same sort of trouble as before with the guerrillas in the north and at the same time defending herself against confrontation on the Indonesian side. Therefore this is of tremendous importance to Malaysia and the position and defence of Malaysia.
- Q. Sir, if you think there is no doubt about Australia being at war in Viet Nam, how would you define the Australian position vis-a-vis Indonesia and Malaysian Borneo?
- P.M. In exactly the same way. There are operations of war going on along the frontier. You know, don't fall into the error that some of these gentlemen have fallen into of thinking that we are engaging in a lot of legal technicalities. We are not. I make a great distinction. There are operations of war because fighting is going on and fighting is an operation of war. What is the use of arguing a lot of stuff - who has declared war on whom. Some even had the impertinence to suggest that this has been a frolic of my own. Everything that we've done has been done by the Government of this country and with the entire support of all the members of the political parties who stand behind the Government. I am not arguing about words. They don't interest me for this purpose.
- Q. Relating to that, Sir, do you think it would clarify the situation as far as other countries perhaps are concerned if war were to be declared?
- P.M. For us to declare war? For America to declare war? For North Viet Nam to declare war? It would be an interesting exercise but purely academic. They would go on fighting in the same way and in the same places.
- Q. Sir, you have often said that the real aggressive imperialists today are the major communist powers.
- P.M. That's right.
- Q. Do you think that while this remains true of China, that the Soviet Union may be moving away from a policy of aggressive expansion?

P.M. I like to think it is. Yes, I rather like to think it is. I think there are material differences today between the Soviet Union approach and the communist Chinese approach, and I think that the events of the last few years have rather supported that idea. I think that it is reasonable to hope - one can't be dogmatic - but it is reasonable to hope that peaceful co-existence will become more and more real from the Soviet Union - outwards - but of course as I don't need to tell you, the communist Chinese have an entirely different view. They regard the Soviet Union as a lot of miserable revisionists. They are pure Marx-Engels-and-let-the-battle-go-on.

Q. Sir, a few months ago in this room you told us of a consultation you had in London aimed at getting some order of priority on strategic situations in our part of the world. Can you say whether you have made any advance in implementing.....

P.M. I have had discussions on them but they are not of a kind that I could announce.

Q. What you were saying earlier, Sir Robert, about the problems of being committed in several areas, do you mean to say we couldn't send any more troops to Viet Nam?

P.M. I didn't say anything of the kind. I simply said that the question had not arisen.

Q. Could we send more troops to Viet Nam?

P.M. That's a purely hypothetical question. I am an old man, as I have been reminded in the last two or three days, much too old to sit down here and prophesy about the future.

Q. Sir Robert, I will carry on that question. How far do we go in the situation of Viet Nam? America is a very very big country, we are a very small country.

P.M. That's right.

Q. We've got to follow the line, but where does the line draw? Where does it stop? How far do we go?

P.M. Well, we start off by trying to win.

Q. Granted. Where do we go from there?

P.M. Well, let's win first.

Q. Sir Robert, can you comment on a report that Mr. Wilson has asked for a British bomber base to be set up in Darwin?

P.M. I can't comment on that at all.

Q. Did you have any conversation with Mr. Wilson on strategic bases in Australia in this regard?

P.M. I had some discussions on defence, on common problems of defence in London but they were private.

Q. In those talks, can you say, Sir, whether the Viet Nam and the Malaysian positions were regarded as a common problem in England?

- P.M. I must say that I think that the British Government, and indeed I think all parties in Great Britain, are very conscious of the importance of South East Asia. I think that this occupies an increasing place in their minds and in their planning. I have no complaints about that at all.
- Q. Do you think the Americans appreciate this, Sir?
- P.M. Oh yes, very much.
- Q. Sir, at Mascot airport on Sunday night, you said that your conversations with the American President coming and going were of immense value to Australia.
- P.M. Well I hope so.
- Q. Can you enlarge on that at all or particularise?
- P.M. No, except on the old-fashioned view that our safety out here, our future - the question as to whether we will have free Press conferences in twenty years' time - largely depends upon how far the United States of America is prepared to continue to accept responsibility in this part of the world. I think this is of vast importance. That doesn't mean that we have to go and bow three times and say, "Yes, of course you're right" but it does mean that for us to be on terms which enable us to talk frankly and in a friendly way and in a receivable way is of tremendous importance.
- Q. This is not new, Sir.
- P.M. I know it isn't new.....
- Q. You spoke as though it were something special.
- P.M. Oh no, I think it is getting better, that's all.
- Q. Sir Robert, judging from Press reports that we have heard from overseas, there seems to be an increasing confidence amongst the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in the situation in Malaysia. Could you elaborate on this?
- P.M. I think on the whole the Malaysian section of the discussion worked out pretty well. You must get rid of the idea that we are now a monolithic structure in the Commonwealth. We are not. We exist to debate our disagreements, primarily, and therefore when one gets a decent amount of agreement on something that is a good day, and there was a splendid amount of agreement on Malaysia, the right of Malaysia to defend itself and the right of Malaysia to enjoy our support, not necessarily military support which we give, but support - diplomatic, moral, whatever it may be. Yes, I thought that portion of the discussions came out very well.
- Q. That's judging from the outcome of the previous conference?
- P.M. Yes, that's right. I thought this, on the whole, was rather better.
- Q. Sir Robert, is Australia using its offices to try and bring the fighting factions within Malaysia together - Mr. Lee Kuan Yew and the Tunku.....

- F.M. Oh, look, we have our diplomatic representatives in Kuala Lumpur and in Singapore. They both have the closest access to the people concerned. I think these differences, you know, can easily be exaggerated myself. Anyhow it is in our interests and in everybody else's interests to see them disappear and that is our constant desire.
- Q. In your discussions in Britain, Sir, did you get any indication as to whether Australia as a traditional and dominant outlet for British capital investment has any special status under Mr. Wilson's programme to curb capital outflow?
- P.M. I didn't myself engage in discussions on their financial policy. We just had no time in the complex of other matters.
- Q. Sir, at the beginning you said, "Some gentlemen have communicated with me recently who seemed to think that I was the one who was involving Australia in war in South Viet Nam." Could you enlighten us on that, whether you have had a large mail bag on this subject?
- P.M. No. One letter signed by sixteen people. Kept me awake all night.
- Q. This is since your correspondence with the bishops?
- P.M. Oh yes. But even that consisted of.....As I said, my epistle to the bishops made me feel quite like the New Testament except that the Apostle didn't ever get a reply and I did.
- Q. You've been quoted here as saying in London at the last Conference that certain people seem to be under the influence of communist China? Could you elaborate on that?
- P.M. I think there are distinct symptoms in East Africa, in particular, of Chinese communist penetration.
- Q. Does this mean that there is general concern within the Commonwealth?
- P.M. Oh, I wouldn't say it gave rise to general concern. My views on that problem are not necessarily those of a majority. I wouldn't know.
- Q. Are your views that this will hurt the Commonwealth?
- P.M. Assuming that all these countries remain within the Commonwealth, it would hurt the Commonwealth. Yes.
- Q. Do you see a future for the Commonwealth, Sir?
- P.M. Well I wish I knew. Look, the whole point about the Commonwealth is that now there are twenty-one. Twenty-one Prime Ministers arrive. That means that we meet in a room at Marlborough House and there are 100 people there. There is a new fashion that has arisen in the new Commonwealth - and you boys will be delighted to hear this - to engage public relations officers so that the speech made in private is in the press before it is delivered sometimes. It's a public relations exercise very largely, and all this I think is very puzzling.

P.M. There are twenty-one Prime Ministers today - what, in a year's time, twenty-five; something like that, and everybody wants to make a speech, except me, and that means that if they all have a go at everything, and there are set speeches made and duly published, the conference will last a month and nobody will be able to afford the time to attend it. There's a great problem here in these growing numbers as to how far we can devise some machinery by which you shorten discussions or perhaps work from committees or groups. I don't know. Some of us gave a little thought to it in London but without any finality. There is no doubt about it. It has completely altered the character of the meeting because now it is a matter of expressing views, of seeking to get support for some pressure on somebody else. There is a growing disposition to want to interfere with or sit in judgment on the affairs of other individual countries. This is not the old Commonwealth.

Q. Does this suggest, Sir, that your support of a Commonwealth Secretariat is waning?

P.M. My support of a Commonwealth Secretariat hasn't waned. It has always been pretty clearly defined. That is to say that the Secretariat ought to act as a Secretariat. It ought to act as a means of facilitating the exchange of knowledge, of getting papers prepared so that when people meet, they will know what the other man has in his mind and be prepared to discuss it intelligently. That's what a Secretariat is for.

 There are some who would like to see a Secretariat which in effect achieved executive action, which could work out economic plans and discuss the position of this country or that, what assistance it ought to have and from whom. And you know, when it gets to that, I think that will be the end of the penny section. In fact the penny section is rather a ludicrous reference because as a rule it is the million pounds section. It depends on how this works out. The Secretary-General appointed is well aware of this. I have great hopes that he will restrain it from too much empire-building, but if it became too formidable and too much disposed to go in on a variety of problems, like the Secretariat of the United Nations - which has to - I think that there would be great internal strains in the Commonwealth, considerable resistances which might not be favourable to its existence.

Q. Sir Robert, do you think that the Secretariat could usurp the moral leadership role the British Government now exerts?

P.M. Well if it tried to, that would be the end either of the Secretariat or of the Commonwealth, the new Commonwealth.

Q. What steps are being taken to stop this, Sir? How far did it go in the conference?

P.M. Oh, we had a discussion on this in the conference itself when we were settling the terms and conditions of the appointment.

Q. Any time period for the Secretariat? A testing period, a trial period set for it?

P.M. Well, the first appointment was made for five years for the Secretary-General. But we discussed this and I aired my views on the matter and Mr. Pearson of Canada took the same view and this was finally the received idea in the conference that it must have a modest beginning, it must not try to extend its jurisdiction in a hurry and that its usefulness will largely depend on how it conducts itself in the first year or two. But it is a highly experimental thing.

Q. Sir, as a result of your talks with President Johnson, is there likely to be a greater Budget appropriation for defence this year than there might otherwise have been?

P.M. Now! Harold.. (To Mr. Holt) He tells me the book is closed.

Q. Sir, did you return from London with the name of our next Governor-General?

P.M. I have nothing to say about that yet. I haven't met my Cabinet.

Q. Can we expect an imminent announcement, Sir?

P.M. I don't know.

Q. Sir, can you give us your views on the situation of the United Nations, the contribution towards the deficit that has been made by some nations about which I believe you said you reserved your own decision?

P.M. Yes, well the deficit in the United Nations of course arises from the fact that some of the countries, like the Soviet Union and France and so on, have declined to pay for these peace-keeping operations. It went to the Permanent Court. It was decided that they were liable to pay and there the question arose as to whether Article 19 ought to be enforced. No pay no vote. Good simple rule to which I subscribed heartily.

Well, in the meantime, they are not paying and the Assembly has been held up because they don't want to become involved in this imbroglio. The British Government announced that it would find ten million dollars as a voluntary contribution, and Canada offered a voluntary contribution. I said that we had never been backward in the past in making voluntary contributions but I did want to discuss with my colleagues one matter. If the people who are not in default make up the lag for those who are this year, is this going to be the rule next year? Does this mean that you abandon the enforcement of Article 19? Will it be conducive to getting them to pay up under Article 19 if they find that other people will pay instead? And I would like to think about that with my colleagues, not in any miserable piking spirit because we don't want to see the United Nations go broke, but we do want to have some clarity in our minds as to what it is we are doing. That's all.

Q. Do you think the United Nations can survive?

- P.M. You know, you are developing a fascinating interest in survival. This is the second question of that kind you have put to me. I am largely devoted at present to my own problem of survival.
- Q. Talking of that, Sir, there are a lot of rumours around that you are thinking of going out at the end of this year. Would you comment on that at all?
- P.M. Well, any self-respecting man of my age must give thought to his future and to his duties and I am doing that. I don't know what the result will be, but no doubt following my traditional practice, when I have arrived at a conclusion, I'll say it.
- Q. Do you think you will arrive at that conclusion within the next few months, Sir?
- P.M. I haven't a clue. Haven't a clue. I thought I might run a little Gallup poll around here. There was a Gallup poll wasn't there? I was fascinated to find that 70 per cent. of my opponents wanted me to retire. The nicest compliment they've ever paid me.
- Well any more, boys, any more?
- Q. One question, Sir, if I may. Joan Sutherland. Do you intend to see her during this.....
- P.M. Oh, look, I don't know. I'd love to of course. I got back two days late to see her opening in Melbourne which I had been invited to attend. Oh no, I am a Joan Sutherland fan.
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