

PRESS BRIEFING GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR HAROLD HOLT, FOR THE HEADS OF BUREAUX IN THE PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

6TH OCTOBER, 1966.

MR HOLT: Well, gentlemen, I think you have had confirmation or at least the announcement about the dates for this Manila Conference being now the 24th and 25th.

As you are aware, the later dates proposed proved highly inconvenient for both Mr Holyoake and myself and I am very appreciative of the fact that the views which we put on this matter had the effect of bringing the date of the Conference back to a more manageable point from our view. Mr Holyoake was, I think, in even more difficulty than I over the matter in that his election campaign begins, I understand, a week before ours here in Australia.

In addition to that, I am very glad to be able to announce that President Johnson will be making a visit to Australia on his way to Manila. The likely dates of the visit are 20th October to 22nd October - that is Thursday to the Saturday. Exact times have not yet been worked out and will be affected by the detailed travel arrangements that he makes, and the probability that he will be making a short visit to New Zealand on his way here.

But this visit to Australia was, as you know, urged by me. I renewed the invitation to the President when I saw him earlier in the year, and when it became clear that he would be in this general neighbourhood, then I pressed our request the more strongly. I am sure it is very gratifying to Australians generally to learn that he has now found it possible to include such a visit in his itinerary. I am sure it will be a most valuable visit from our point of view, and in a sense it will be an historic visit as this will be the first occasion in Australian history that an American President in his period of office has made a visit to this country. We have had two visits by Vice Presidents, and several, of course, by Secretaries of State but this visit will be unique in our experience and all the more welcome on that account.

I can't give you any details as yet as to the programme. Not only will we need to clear that with the President but I shall obviously have to examine the possibilities open to him while he is here and make suggestions for consideration which will be designed to see that his time with us is employed to the most effective degree, at the same time taking into account his own wishes. I know, for example, that he would hope to renew his acquaintance with Melbourne where he spent so many happy hours while he was here during the way years, and I could hardly imagine him visiting Melbourne - and there would be something of a riot in the land - without him including Sydney also in the itinerary. Whether it will be possible to extend beyond those possibilities I don't know taking into account, of course, the fact that it would almost certainly be felt appropriate that there should be a Parliamentary function here in Canberra. Parliament will be in session still, at that time, and this would be a most appropriate way of giving a formal recognition and tribute in the course of the visit.

Q. Will he be staying at Government House?

MR HOLT: He may have a personal wish to stay at the Embassy so I can't say at this point of time. I may say that all this has only been cleared up quite recently.

Q. When did you know definitely that he was coming?

MR HOLT: Well, I thought it was highly likely yesterday, but right from the outset I have been hopeful that this could be arranged. At first it appeared that this would have to be done after the conference, but when the conference was postponed, I pointed out that both in New Zealand and Australia we were getting very close to the opening of an election campaign and I thought it was not desirable in those circumstances that the visit should come following the conference. It was preferable that it should take place before. I am glad it was possible to take this consideration fully into account.

Q. Is there a possibility, Mr Prime Minister, that the President might open North-West Cape?

MR HOLT: (Laughing) I think geography has a say in a matter of that sort. There are some complications that we have to sort out. For example, I understand that Sir Henry Bolte is opening the refinery at Westernport on the Friday, and there is a Civic Dinner for me in the Melbourne Town Hall that night. So there are all sorts of adjustments which several of us will need to make in our programmes if the maximum value is to be derived from the visit.

Q. You spoke of a Parliamentary function, Sir. Do you envisage the President addressing a joint meeting or a banquet, a State Banquet?

MR HOLT: Well, I would have thought as on certain other occasions when notable people have visited us we might have a Parliamentary function, either a Luncheon or a Dinner, at which speeches of welcome could be made, and in this case the President reply.

Q. : Sir, is Mr. Rusk coming as well?

MR HOLT: I think that's highly likely, yes. To the best of my knowledge he will be in the party.

Q. Is the visit being announced from Washington, Prime Minister?

MR HOLT: Yes, but I think a little later than here.

Q. Would you invite the State Premiers to any Parliamentary function?

MR HOLT: I would like to, more particularly as it is likely there will be several States he won't be able to visit.

Q. Do you expect Mr McNamara to be with him too?

MR HOLT: Well, I haven't got any detail of the composition of his own delegation, and I think I should leave that for him to announce. We have yet to work out fully our own, but I hope to do some work on that tonight.

Q. Will Mr Calwell have a chance of speaking with the President while he is in Canberra or while he is in Australia?

MR HOLT: Well, I think that is a matter to which the American Ambassador would need to give some attention. Certainly we would put no obstruction in Mr Calwell's way.

Q. He will be coming to Canberra first, will he Sir?

MR HOLT: I think that is likely, but again, he will be in his own plane and we'll need to work out a programme which fits in with his travel times of the flight from New Zealand to here - whether some period of rest

is desired before he embarks on official talks or functions. These things will all have to be sorted out.

Q. You don't think the timing of the visit, Mr Prime Minister, will involve the President in Australian political matters?

MR HOLT: Not at that point of time. Well, the political season never closes, in my experience, in this country! There are certainly no political motives behind the visit. It is a visit of goodwill, and I think illustrates the regard in which he holds Australia.

Q. You seem elated about the visit

MR HOLT: Well, it is an historic visit and I am glad to have played some part in adding this particular chapter to the Australian story. But quite apart from that, I do see considerable value in the visit. I think it will focus a good deal of world attention on the interest which the President has been displaying quite clearly now for some time in the problems of Asia. There is a very interesting speech, incidentally, on that, and the Asian situation generally, which I recommend the specialists amongst you to study in this last issue of the US News and World Report. This was the text of the speech by President Marcos to the Congress recently. Those of you who have been following what I said earlier in the year on some of these Asian matters will be interested, I think, to see how closely the views of the President of the Philippines worked out in relation to those which I expressed earlier.

Q. Sir, will the people of Sydney and Melbourne have every opportunity to see the President by way of open-car parades or something?

MR HOLT: Well, having brought him here, we don't want to keep him on ice somewhere. We would most certainly hope that there would be opportunities for him to see and be seen by as many Australians who find themselves able to take advantage of the visit. But we can't say at this point of time just what the programme is, but it certainly is not going to be designed as a programme confined to officialdom or to Parliamentarians.

Q. Mrs Johnson - is she coming too?

MR HOLT: I have no firm confirmation on that. I am still hoping that she will be.

Q. What about the "gals"? Are they coming?

MR HOLT: Well, they will be very welcome (Laughter) and we have made that clear. But, again, I will be able to fill you in on quite a few of these details later on

Q. Are you despatching a senior officer of your Department to the United States forthwith to discuss the detailed arrangements?

MR HOLT: Well, Waller, our Ambassador in Washington is right on top of this. In fact, we would probably bring Waller out here after there has been further discussion on the details. We have got thoroughly adequate staff there, and, of course, Mr Hasluck is currently in New York.

Q. What about the security arrangements? These would be fairly substantial.

MR HOLT: I have no doubt. And I am expecting a minor invasion of gentlement of the Press! Not merely of the United States Press, but I would think this would attract the interest of Asian Press as well. But, again, you are asking me about points of detail which have not been resolved.