

NEW ZEALAND TOUR 1967

DEPARTURE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. HAROLD HOLT
FROM RAAF BASE, FAIRBAIRN, CANBERRA, A.C.T.

2ND FEBRUARY, 1967

Before departing on his tour of New Zealand, the Prime Minister made the following comments to the press in response to questions :

Q.: What is the purpose of your visit, Sir?

PM: Principally to get to know the New Zealand people better, to let them see the Australian Prime Minister, have talks with my friend, Mr. Holyoake, the New Zealand Prime Minister, meet Members of his Cabinet, discuss matters we have in common interest, and inform myself on some of their problems and get a better visual view of what New Zealand is looking like after an absence of ~~n~~teen years.

Q. Would your trip, Sir, have any possible relation to the fact that Britain might enter the European Common Market?

PM: My purpose is not to negotiate on any particular matter. I will be free to discuss with Mr. Holyoake and his Cabinet any particular matter they care to raise with me. But it is primarily a goodwill visit, an attempt to make more frequent contact with our good friends and allies of New Zealand. After all, we have been very close together in many matters in the past. We have fought together in wars. We are linked together now in Viet Nam.....

Q. Will Viet Nam figure largely in your talks?

PM: Well I am not raising any particular matter, as I said. I will hold myself available for discussion on whatever topics the New Zealand Government cares to raise with me. I am not discussing trade matters in any depth or detail. As you know, Mr. McEwen will be going to New Zealand quite shortly under the arrangement we have for annual discussions on the New Zealand/Australia Trade Agreement.

Q. Mr. Holt, New Zealand is quite famous for its big fish. Will you be doing any skin-diving over there?

PM: I don't expect so. The water is probably a good deal colder than that around Portsea and that is cold enough at times.

Q. You are not nervous about Dinah, are you Mr. Prime Minister?

PM: Well I have never been nervous about any member of the feminine sex. I hope that Dinah will treat me kindly.

Q. Your swimming experience may be useful today, Sir!.

PM: I would not like to contemplate that prospect, Harold. That is not a very cheerful thought to put into my mind as we take off! I, of course, have had in the last twelve months several opportunities for discussion with Mr. Holyoake. We have got to know each other very

PM (Contd.) well and we are on very good and friendly terms with each other. But as I said at the outset, this is primarily to enable Mrs. Holt and myself to get to know the New Zealand people better and to get to know through us, Australia better.

Q. It is quite an historic trip, Sir. According to reports, you are the first Prime Minister to visit New Zealand, is this true?

PM: No. Andrew Fisher visited New Zealand in 1914 and conducted some negotiations on mutual social security affairs, I understand. And Sir Robert was there in 1954 on a short visit. But still it is a long gap. We ought to be seeing each other more often. However, it must be borne in mind that the Prime Ministers of the two countries usually meet at the Prime Ministers' Conferences and other matters of that sort, so they have not been out of touch.

Q. Will you be meeting any of the people, Sir?

PM: Certainly, there will be various occasions on which this will be possible. But New Zealand people, after all, are very like Australians.

Thank you.
