

N A T I O N A L P R E S S C L U B

LUNCHEON AT HOTEL CANBERRA REX, CANBERRA

20 JUNE 1968

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, RT. HON. J. G. GORTON, M.P.

Mr President, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:-

This must necessarily be a truncated report on visits recently paid to the United States, Viet Nam, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Being brief, it can only touch on some of the matters discussed and that without going into the matters in any depth. Indeed, if it were to do anything else, it would deprive you of that which you have come along to do, and that is to ask such searching questions as may have occurred to you before this Luncheon took place.

One of the main purposes of the visits to these countries nearest us, Mr President, was to demonstrate that although there had been a change of Prime Ministers in Australia, there had been no change in our interest in or desire to co-operate with those Asian countries in our region. I wished to demonstrate that that policy, furthered so well by my predecessor, was a continuing policy of the Australian Government and, as I believe, of the Australian people. This, I think, the visit succeeded in doing.

A further purpose was to make personal contact with the leaders of the countries visited and with other senior people in the Administration of those countries. It is always a good thing if you are at some later stage to speak to, or to write to an individual, to have met that individual face to face and for him to have met you.

A third purpose, and indeed not third in point of importance, was a desire to see and meet with and bring greetings from Australia to those Australian forces which are serving overseas in various areas and which are, in point of numbers, the greatest forces we have had serving overseas since the conclusion of the Second World War.

These visits, Mr President, took place against an international background of change.

Firstly, the President of the United States was trying to bring North Viet Nam to the conference table to see whether a just and honourable peace could be negotiated in that war-torn country, and to that end, he had ordered at some considerable military sacrifice, a cessation of bombardment over a large area of North Viet Nam. He had announced that he, himself, would give up any hope of being re-elected as President of his great nation, so that he could devote his efforts to that end and so that he could not be accused of devoting his efforts to that end for personal political purposes. This had led to a flood of speculation that the United States might withdraw altogether from Asia, might withdraw altogether from Viet Nam, might accept, in the words of the President of the United States, a "fake" peace which was merely a prelude to a takeover by North Viet Nam of the South, and might lose all interest in involvement in this area of the world.

An assessment of the answers to these questions was clearly of importance to Australia's future planning, and I sought to make this assessment in personal talks with the President and with such of his likely successors as I was able to meet, and I have reported on this.

Secondly, Mr President, there had been a fundamental change in the basis on which Australia's strategic planning had for more than two decades been predicated. This was caused not only by the accelerated British withdrawal from the Malaysia/Singapore area, but also - and this is of at least equal importance - by the uncertainty that surrounded the questions as to when, and with what forces and under what circumstances the British would contribute to the defence and stability of the region to our Near North after their withdrawal.

Clearly, a concept of forward defence by troops stationed outside Australia, valid when based upon participation with local forces of a major power, needed minute examination when the forces of that major power were to be withdrawn and the circumstances of their re-entry were unknown. Clearly any contribution by us to the stability of the region after 1971 cannot be fixed until we know what Britain, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore will do, or are likely to do, in the future.

Against this background I have asked before the visits took place that our Defence Committee should prepare a new strategic assessment, a new strategic appreciation, taking into account those fundamental changes which had occurred some four to five months ago, and which had so radically altered those assessments which, for more than two decades, we had accepted.

These journeys, and the initial meetings of the Five Power Pact countries in Kuala Lumpur, have provided some of the answers to the questions that we have to ask ourselves. The new assessment from the Defence Committee when it is presented to Cabinet, as I expect it will be by August at the latest, will enable us, together with the facts gathered on these journeys, properly to assess what the far future role of Australia should be - and I say "far future" because the end of 1971 is still three and a half years away.

But against this background, and until we get that appreciation and assess it and set it up against the facts gathered in the conferences and the journeys that have taken place, until we have examined a number of various possible alternatives for long-range planning, it would be irresponsible to settle long-range military planning. We would not propose to do it until we have the full facts on which to settle those plans; which is not to say that our forces will not grow greatly in capacity next year, for they will.

Against this background, there was added value in meeting personally the leaders of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. In the case of Indonesia, this was not because she was involved or is in any way likely to be involved in such decisions as we may make in conjunction with New Zealand, Britain, Singapore and Malaysia, but because she is our nearest neighbour, because she is a significant power in this area, and because that being so, I thought it proper and right that these matters should be the subject of discussion between her President and myself.

Now, I turn very briefly to the countries visited on this Asian tour.

In Viet Nam, the fighting is as fierce and as cruel as ever. There are indications that since the partial embargo on bombing of North Viet Nam, there has been a very great build-up of North Vietnamese regular forces in South Viet Nam. It is believed these forces will be used over the coming months in co-ordinated attacks on Saigon and other centres of population, designed primarily to influence public opinion outside South Viet Nam, and designed in the hope of influencing the talks at present going on in Paris. These are talks which it is all too easy to describe as peace talks, but which in fact are not, but merely preliminary talks to see whether there is a basis for the negotiation of a just and lasting peace; talks which regrettably have so far made no discernible progress, talks which, as I said when they were initiated, contained the seeds of hope, but talks which so far have not shown any indication of the germination of those seeds.

I found an intention on the part of the South Vietnamese Government to increase their own armed forces, to make a stronger contribution themselves to the war, and I found, too, a nagging fear amongst all with whom I spoke that there might be in Paris some further military concession without reciprocal concession by the North Vietnamese which would undermine the morale of the armed forces of South Viet Nam and of the population of South Viet Nam. I do not believe these fears are justified.

Turning now, Mr President, to Singapore, I had long talks with Lee Kuan Yew and with the Foreign Minister Rajaratnam. There was evidently a lively appreciation there of the need to build up Singapore's capacity to defend itself, and a determination to do this, side by side with the successful efforts presently being made to provide better living conditions for the people of Singapore.

There was a purposeful attempt being made to tackle the problems of unemployment, which are still great, and a conscious attempt to forge the divergent races living in Singapore into a unified whole owing allegiance to that city state, giving loyalty to that city state and not to the origins from whence they sprang.

There is no doubt of the genuine belief of Lee Kuan Yew that the defence of Singapore and Malaysia is indivisible and there is no doubt of his intention to contribute to that defence and to do what he can to see that this indivisibility is not in any way divided.

For ourselves, it seemed to me that what we could do best to help was to provide technical assistance, defence aid in the form of equipment and matters of that kind, to encourage private investment in Singapore and to continue that government assistance which we already are contributing.

In Malaysia, too, there was an equal awareness of the indivisibility of defence between Singapore and Malaysia and an equal awareness of the need for defence in adequate strength in in that area, defence to which they must contribute.

There I had the opportunity to speak at some length with the Tunku and his Cabinet in private on these matters, and had the honour of being the first Commonwealth Prime Minister to be received on the floor of the Malaysian Parliament and to receive an address of welcome by the Prime Minister and by the Leader of the Opposition. Although I should point out to this gathering that there are so many different parties in the Opposition that they have been unable to agree amongst themselves who is the leader, so the leader is designated by the Prime Minister.

Sir, if I have spoken largely of defence, it is because the question of defence looms so largely in the minds of the leaders, both in Singapore and in Malaysia. I found in these countries no acceptance whatever of the proposition that what they need is economic aid in lieu of defence, but rather the reverse, although, of course, they need both.

In Indonesia, on the other hand, the emphasis in all our talks was on the economic conditions, particularly in Java, and what might be done by the Indonesian Government itself - for that must play the primary part - and by other nations in conjunction with the Indonesian Government to improve those conditions. This will take a massive effort by the major powers and will require careful selection of projects and effective administration in order to be successful.

I found there, too, complete acceptance by the Indonesian Government of Australia's peaceful intentions and complete acceptance of any decisions we might make to contribute to Singapore's and Malaysia's defence after 1971.

Now, Mr President, I know you wish to get to questions, and I would merely conclude on this note, because after all, the question of what is happening in Viet Nam is of major importance in this country.

I see no reason for any change in Australia's attitude to this struggle. We believe the Americans are right to seek for the South Vietnamese the right to elect their own government, to carry out that election free from invasion, terrorism or threat and to have such decision as they may make respected by all.

We believe that we have a stake in demonstrating that armed aggression must not succeed. We believe we now contribute sufficient forces from Australia to carry out our duty in this respect, and we have the will to continue this contribution in concert with our Allies until the political objective which the military operations are aimed at is achieved; and until, if such political objective is achieved, we can turn, as I would like to turn our efforts, to rebuilding that country and providing to its people that kind of life which I feel under their own control they can achieve.

I think I had better stop so that you have plenty of time for questions.

Thank you.

QUESTION SESSION:

Q. Bob Baudino: Mr Prime Minister, if I may be forgiven, I intend to indulge in the fashion of the Indonesian press conferences and to ask you two entirely unrelated questions. You have referred to our defence planning and mentioned it would be irresponsible to go ahead with forward defence planning of this kind. You have also added that our forces will continue to grow in the meantime. Could you give us further details of the interim plan for defence. Secondly, at Nui Dat, when addressing our own troops, you told them that for every nut who held up a placard or sat on the road in Australia, there were one hundred others behind them. I think there may be points of clarification needed here.

PM: Thank you, Mr Baudino. The answer to the first question you have asked is this. As a result of decisions already taken on defence, there will in the 1968-69 financial year be significant growth in the Australian defence capacity. There will, during that period, be delivered the 24 F111 strike aircraft which will be arriving and be put into service. There will be 36 Macchi jet trainer fighters delivered (which have an operational capacity). There will be delivered one new corvette to the Navy. There will be delivered a large amount of new Army equipment. There will be delivered to the Army, apart from the ordinary equipment - from memory, I think some 36 light aircraft and light helicopters. And the size of our Regular Armed Forces will grow by at least 3,000 men. In addition, there will be very large works programmes carried out for the Army, the Navy and the Air Force in areas spread throughout the whole of Australia. Even that is not a complete list of the new equipment to be delivered during this period of time. For example, another Oberon submarine will be delivered and put into service during 1968/69. So there will be during the coming year great accretion of defence hardware, if I can put it that way, and an increase in defence forces. There will also be a considerable increase in defence expenditure, for it will, on any estimate I can make, go up to at least \$1,250,000. The overseas requirements that we will have to extend will rise from round about \$350 million this financial year to something like certainly well over \$400 million next financial year. So there is no interruption to defence planning; there is no interruption to the accretions to the strength of our Forces. But seeking to look a long way ahead, it will probably be towards the end of the year before some new Three-Year Programme, to be operative not in the next financial year but in the one after and in the two years after that, will be able responsibly to be brought down. That would be the answer I would give you to the first question.

On the second question, that relating to 'nuts', I would like to make two things clear. One is that this is not to be taken as a reference to those who oppose a course a government is taking, and who use the proper channels to express that opposition - the proper channels being the newspapers, being any media of public expression that can be attained, being the holding of public meetings, being seeking to influence public opinion against the last expression of majority public opinion; for this must be maintained as a right of any minority. As Voltaire indeed said: "I disagree with what you say, but I would defend to the death your right to say it" But if that minority opposition is extended to actions, actions such as throwing things at people with whom the disagree, actions such as throwing paint over the cars of representatives of nations with whose policies they disagree, actions such as carrying placards and lying down in roadways to disrupt traffic, then that, I think, is something not known and not proper to a democratic society, because it is not an assertion of minority rights to seek to change majority opinion. It is the beginning, an incipient requirement of a minority to force a change in majority opinion by breaking the law and by disrupting the rights of the majority. This kind of thing, beginning in this way, can ultimately lead to the sort of tragic consequences we have seen in other countries, and I believe that perhaps 'nut' is rather too mild an expression for those who break the law and disrupt the traffic and throw and threaten those representatives of majority opinion with which they disagree. A minority has rights which must be protected, but it has no rights to seek to impose its will by any degree of force on a majority which disagrees with it.

Q Herschel Hurst, Melbourne Sun: Prime Minister, you said in your speech here today, in effect, that you believed the South Vietnamese people wouldn't be sold out at the Paris talks. In the course of your discussions with President Johnson in Washington recently, did the President indicate to you just how far the United States was prepared to go in concessions to the communists to end the Viet Nam war?

PM: The President of the United States indicated to me both privately and in public that he would not be prepared to accept anything which he described as a 'face' peace; a "fake" peace as I understand him to mean being a peace which was a formula designed to cover a withdrawal without obtaining the objective of giving the South Vietnamese people a change in freedom to express their own views. He has said this privately, he has said this publicly, and I believe that as far as he and his Administration are concerned he will not make concessions which would lead to such an outcome. This Administration, of course, has some six or seven months to run. He spoke for himself as President. He made it clear he could not speak for his successor as President and neither can I, but I did gather the impression from the likely successors to whom I spoke that there, too, there would be unlikely to be concessions which led to a disguised surrender and a disguised abandonment of the objectives which were initially sought to be attained.

Q Chris Forsyth: Sir, you mentioned a whole list of defence hardware deliveries that we were going to get this year. It was before your time that the decisions were made several years ago. Your Government has delayed the Three-Year Defence Programme by a year, Sir. Does this mean that Australia will have a year's pause in defence hardware buying and planning with obvious repercussions for deliveries in the future?

PM: Well, some of that hardware that you refer to wasn't before my time. In fact the submarine was ordered while I was Minister for the Navy, if you don't mind my saying so. Oh, you mean before I was Prime Minister ... but I do claim the ordering of some of that hardware that will be in service during the coming year. The point of your question is should we not already have ordered a lot more hardware for the subsequent year, and I don't believe that that is a valid suggestion. When you order a ship, you are seeking to case your mind forward to see what you want that ship to do for the next twenty to twenty-five years, what part you want it to play in an overall defence plan. When you order an aircraft you are seeking to cast your mind forward to see what that aircraft is going to do for the next ten to fifteen years, what part it is that you want it to play in an overall defence programme. With such fundamental changes as we have had and with the new strategic assessment coming up, and with further matters to be resolved in the Five-Power Pact, then I think it would be irresponsible until all the data is in to order further hardware for immediate delivery. It is more responsible to wait until we have been able to assess and announce where it is we believe we are going in five or six years time because, after all, up until 1971, three and a half years' time it is known what will happen there. It would be irresponsible to assess beyond that time before we have had a proper assessment and appreciation, and if that is disagreed with, then it is disagreed with but it is the view that the Government takes.

Q Frank Chamberlain, Agence France Press and Macquarie Radio: Can you tell us, Mr Prime Minister, whether this steady rise in defence expenditure will lead to a steady decline in social services and in national development?

PM: No. I don't believe the steady rise in defence expenditure does mean a steady decline in social services - and your other point was national development - because there will be a steady rise in GNP, there will be a steady rise in national production and in its value. Indeed, we are now going through what I call the tantalising years because two years ahead or two and a half years ahead, that kind of period of time, we can see coming in to us the full benefits of the minerals which are now being mined throughout the length and breadth of this continent. We can see coming into us the import replacement value of the oil which is being discovered. We can see coming in to us the benefit of the increased employment and the increased industrial muscles which these will generate and which other things will generate. So I not only see no decline in social services, but it is as I have said before, essential that we should look at the areas of most need in social services and seek to overcome them as part of a project of complete overhaul of our approach to social services. Having said that, it is also clear that resources spent on defence cannot be spent in other areas of national development whether they be social services, whether they be education, whatever they may be. It doesn't mean a decline. It does mean less capacity to increase.

Q Jack Commins, ABC: Sir, has your recent visit led to any rethinking on defence on your part? I refer to your initial statement after becoming Prime Minister that the facts and future defence expenditure must be balanced against internal development. I suppose you answered that to a degree in the previous answer, but overall, I think the question in all our minds is whether an increase in expenditure will lead to an increase in taxation in the new Budget?

PM: Now, really, do you honestly expect an answer which may forecast Budget possibilities . . . taxation. (Commins: It was worth a try!) So you've tried, so thank you.

Alan Wood: Bearing in mind your reply to Mr Forsyth's question, I wonder if you could tell us where the defence hardware already on order and ordered on the basis of an out-of-date defence assessment, will fit into the new assessment?

PM: Before I answer that question, I would like to say that I don't accept your statement that what has been ordered has been ordered on an out-of-date defence assessment. For example, I would believe that the strike aircraft ordered would be necessary whatever the future defence assessment may be. They have been ordered in the United States - you asked me. I think, where they had been ordered. The submarine to which I referred and which also, I think, is an integral part of a Navy however we may imagine that Navy to be operating, has been ordered from the United Kingdom, as has its predecessors. The Macchi jet trainers have been, or rather will be built in Australia itself. The 12 Mirage fighters, which I omitted to mention will be added to our defence capacity in the next year, will be built in Australia itself. All the works programmes to which I referred will obviously be handled in Australia itself. I cannot give you them item by item because I haven't got it in my mind all the pieces of defence hardware, but that would give various examples of where this is coming from, and you will perhaps have noticed that we have recently placed orders for electronic equipment for defence purposes, again with Australian industry.

Q

Stan Hutchinson: Mr Prime Minister, when you were abroad, you made an enigmatic reference to an Israeli-type army. Now the Israeli-type citizen soldier depends for his emotional stimulus on virtually being able to look out his window and see what he can identify as an enemy. What would you substitute for that to keep the Australian citizen soldier keen and enthusiastic?

PM:

We have had two world wars in which we have from the beginning relied very considerably on that citizen soldier to which you refer. Indeed, I think, at the beginning of both the First and the Second World Wars, we had no regular army worth the name to put into the field. In both those cases, we had time to prepare to call the citizen soldier into camp, to weld him into a unit, to then send him abroad whether he had chosen to join the AIF at the beginning or whether subsequently he went as reinforcements. Now we do have a Regular Army stronger than before, but it needs, I believe to be backed up by Citizen Military Forces, adequately trained, able to be quickly mobilised. I think it unnecessary to suggest that they need to look out of a window in order to be galvanised into giving their services in this way. I believe there are many Australians who are prepared to devote their time to Citizen Military Force training so that there will be able to be a back-up force for a Regular Army. It appears to me, particularly in a country which for decades will have a requirement to build its strength through development, that this kind of back-up force is good, is effective and is necessary.

Q

Harry Stein: Mr Prime Minister, during your recent journey, you were not able to obtain a non-aggression pact with some of the nations, which you had indicated you would like. I put it to you, Sir, don't you think that at a time when there are no Australian troops fighting against Asians as they are doing now in Viet Nam, that it will be easier to establish a non-aggression pact with our Asian neighbours?

PM:

Well I would put it back to you that I don't think anything of the kind. In the talks that I had with the leaders of the Asian nations to whom I spoke, that is in Singapore, in Malaysia and in Indonesia, I had no indication whatever that there was any suggestion that Australian troops should not be engaged in seeking to protect, as I believe they are seeking to protect, the rights of the people of South Viet Nam. It would have been a little strange, would it not, had it been otherwise, because after all, the people of Singapore and leaders of Singapore and of Malaysia are interested in their own defence and in exercises to help their own defence, which will involve Australian troops. So it would be quite an odd volte face if what you suggest were so. By whatever name you call it, I don't think it matters, but I would agree with what Mr Hasluck said in the House before I went away - or rather, what I think he said in a conference before I went away - that non-aggression pacts in this area and the area fairly close to us could do no harm and could indeed do good. This was not a major objective of my visit, but I have some hopes that as time passes, we could at least obtain declarations from the countries in the region that they respect, the one to the other, the territorial integrity and sovereignty of each other. While the cynics may say this means nothing, at least it is, I think, something which it would be hard to attack as wrong to seek to obtain.

Q Mr Prime Minister, do you believe a resumption of the bombing of North Viet Nam would necessarily jeopardise the Paris preliminary talks?

PM: I haven't had any conversations or any suggestions concerning hypothetical questions such as that.

Q Chalmers: Mr Prime Minister, this week Mr Holyoake was quoted as saying that in lieu of a visit he was contemplating to Canberra, he had a long telephone conversation with you. I was wondering whether you could tell us anything of the telephone conversation, particularly what he may have said, and in particular whether that conversation contemplated a meeting between yourself and Mr Holyoake either here or in Wellington?

PM: No, not really. Mr Holyoake stayed behind in Kuala Lumpur rather longer than he had intended in the hope that we might have had a discussion there on what had transpired at the Five-Power Talks and what he saw as the future after 1971 and matters of that kind. But there was a fairly split-second schedule arranged and except over a dinner which was not a completely appropriate occasion, this kind of discussion was unable to be properly developed. So he did ring me up on the morning that I returned and he put to me then his own tentative views, his own forecasts and asked me for mine and they were purely discussions, exploratory and tentative in character. He was seeking to find out what was in my own mind and I was seeking to find out what was in his for some considerable time in the future.

Q Peter Samuel: Mr Prime Minister, two months ago, our delegate at the United Nations spoke on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and he expressed a lot of strong reservations about this treaty, and this led to the expectation that we might join India and France in not signing the treaty. Since then, you have been to the United States, you have been to Asia. I wonder if you can give us any more indication of your thinking on this treaty?

PM: You will have noticed that the resolution which was passed by the General Assembly was to comment the treaty. You will also have noticed that we in Australia indicated that we agreed with the principle of such a treaty but wanted to be sure before we signed it that it was an effective treaty and that we would be requiring answers as to the method of withdrawing from the treaty, questions as to control over people from the international agency who might be sent to be stationed here to examine various defence installations, questions as to the rights one had for the civil uses of atomic energy, questions as to who in fact was going to sign the treaty and who in fact wasn't, and a large number of related questions. So, yes in principle, we think that a treaty of this kind, if it can be made effective, would be good. We have therefore voted to commend it, it is open to signature, but we would wish the answers to a lot of questions we raise to be given to our own satisfaction before we would sign what we commend in principle.

Q Could I just ask a supplementary question to that one? Will this - our decision whether or not to sign - depend to any extent on the major strategic re-assessment that you spoke of and expect in August?

PM: I don't believe so. No, I don't believe so. We have to look decades ahead on this particular matter you have raised. After all, as far as Australia itself is concerned, we have no nuclear capacity at all. We have no nuclear plants at all, nor are likely to have any chance of manufacturing any nuclear defence for at least a decade, so it is not an immediate matter with which we are concerned. It is rather a matter of seeking to see how it will work and, as far as one can, to look ahead to the future of - not you or I - but younger ones living in Australia.

Q David Solomon: Prime Minister can you see any end to the Viet Nam war coming other than through the Paris talks?

PM: Well, Mr Solomon, so far, I can see no end at all to the Viet Nam war coming through the Paris talks because up to this stage there has been nothing but an exchange of polemics, a refusal on the part of the North Vietnamese to admit that there are any North Vietnamese troops in South Viet Nam, a refusal on the part of the North Vietnamese to admit that they are providing the rockets and mortar shells to bombard Saigon in return for Hanoi being freed from bombardment, and this all carried on in public. So that is answer to a part of your question. The answer to the second part is that it must merely be an impression and an assessment. It cannot be taken as a clear indication of what will happen. Of course it can't, looking ahead. But I believe, given sufficient will, that the military objective of obtaining political freedom for the people of South Viet Nam can be attained.

Q In the light of that answer, Sir, and in the light of your earlier statement about the bombardment of Saigon and the build-up following the cessation of American bombing, would you like to see, as the American newspapers have suggested, some deadline put on the bombing halt?

PM: I have already had a question similar to that from, I think, the "Sydney Morning Herald". This is a sort of hypothetical question which I would not wish to give an answer to.

Q Sir, on the question of taxation, which you dismissed earlier, can I put it to you, how would it be possible to increase defence expenditure by such a large amount and not neglect social services and national development without increasing taxation.

PM: I thought I had endeavoured to give an indication of the answer to that, and I am not to be taken as forecasting anything concerning the Budget - this or future Budgets - one way or the other, but as a country grows, and as its population grows and as its GNP grows and as its taxable income grows, so there is a capacity to increase not only one facet of expenditure but a number of facets of expenditure. Now, it is a matter for decision as to whether they are increased sufficiently, or which ones are increased sufficiently. But there is not a fixed sum of Government revenue which remains fixed year after year so that taking from that sum a greater amount for Project A leaves less for Projects B and C and D, rather there is a growing sum which year after year grows, and from the growth, there can be distributed to Project A, B, C, or D that part of that growth which it is believed contributes best to the national good.

Q David Gilmorgan: Mr Prime Minister, as there is no embargo on culture, what is the point of having a cultural pact between two countries?

PM: I think it a little surprising, Sir, that you should suggest there is no value in a cultural pact merely because there happens to be no embargo as you put it - on culture. I would have thought that if two countries, who are as close together as are Indonesia and Australia, both indicated publicly that they were interested in and would do what they could to exchange artists, whether they be manual artists or performing artists, to exchange teachers, to exchange visits, to (in the case of Indonesia) make known in Australia the materials they produce - if you like, the special batiks they produce - the kind of ballet telling the stories long rooted in Indonesian history, the sort of music which comes from parts of that country and in exchange to receive the opportunity to hear music of a different kind from our own symphony orchestras, to see dancing of a different kind from our own culture, that this could do nothing but good, and that it was rather a negative approach to say there is no embargo on culture so let us do nothing. It is rather a positive approach to say both our governments think that the more that can be done to see that each country sees the culture of the other, the more each country may tend to understand the other, and that if that happens, this is not an insignificant advance.

Q Stewart Harris: Sir, I think next year Indonesia is going to give West Irian an act of free choice to decide whether to stay under Indonesian administration or become independent. In the last six years since Indonesia took over the administration of West Irian, Australia has received in New Guinea about sixty-three refugees and their dependants from West Irian. Next year I think it is possible that the number may increase for one reason or another. The frontier between West Irian and Papua/New Guinea is not defined on the ground and is not agreed to by the Governments of Indonesia and Australia. There could be problems on the border. I was recently up there. There is no contact at the moment between the Administrations of West Irian and Papua/New Guinea. There was in the time of the Dutch. Australia's relations with Indonesia are now excellent. You were in Djakarta yourself recently, Sir, so I was wondering if you could get contact going on the ground between the Administrations of West Irian and Papua/New Guinea so that any problems that might occur next year could be understood in advance?

PM: I think that is a matter, Mr Harris, that I would need to discuss with the Minister for External Territories and the Minister for External Affairs. You surprise me a little because - perhaps - wrongly - but nevertheless certainly I was, and am, under the impression that the boundary between West Irian and Papua/New Guinea is on the map agreed between the Government of Indonesia and ourselves. Certain exercises have been carried out to demarcate the boundary and to seek to mark it insofar as it can be marked. Cairns of stones have been built on the particular parallel which, I think, is accepted by both countries. But in between those cairns, of course, there is just wild jungle, and so indication of boundaries as one would find in more heavily populated areas, so that one could easily wander across the boundary without knowing it, from Papua/New Guinea into West Irian or from West Irian into Papua/New Guinea. It will take a long time before this can be stopped. All I can say in answer to your specific question is that I would have to take that up with the Minister for External Affairs and the Minister for External Territories. But I do think that our relations with Indonesia are so good that if there are problems there they are more likely to be overcome now than they might ever have been likely to have been overcome in the past.