

VISIT TO THE US AND CANADA
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PRIME MINISTER, MR JOHN GORTON, ON ARRIVAL
AT MASCOT AIRPORT



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PRIME MINISTER : Good morning, gentlemen. I think I have been travelling for 26 hours, if my count is right. I will throw this open to anything you might want to ask me for a few minutes before I go to get some rest.

Q. What were the results of your talks with Mr Nixon, Sir?

PM: I think I would put it this way, that the real value of them, although it wasn't worked out to be that way, was that they laid the groundwork - they were preliminary talks - they laid the groundwork for further pursuit of the subjects in May, after there has been time for full American consideration of those subjects. I think their real value lay in opening up all these subjects so that in May there would be far more detailed consideration and I think, therefore, more valuable talks as a result.

Q. Sir, can you see any changes in American policy in the Pacific area as a result of Mr Nixon's conversation with you?

PM: I don't think so. I wouldn't presume to say that definitely, but I think the new American administration is re-examining problems in all parts of the world. But I am sure in my own mind that they are not putting the South-East Asian area - the Pacific area - away. They are not saying "Well, this is no longer important". I am sure they have a full realisation of the importance to the world of this region as well as the other regions which they are re-examining generally.

Q. What are the main subjects on which these investigations will be taking place and which you will be discussing later with the President?

PM: Well, we will be talking about. . . . I will be talking about the stability and security of the particular region in which we are closely interested, and of the American attitude towards that, towards the economic assistance in that area, towards trade assistance in that area, towards all kinds of assistance in that area. We will be talking about - though not reaching conclusions on, of course - the situation in Vietnam. There will be further matters to be reported there. Then there are trade matters as well

PM (Contd.)

which are by no means insignificant - the question of meat exports and wheat exports - and then with Dr Kissinger, or with the Secretary of Defence or the Secretary of State, there will be a number of "nuts and bolts" things. These will be not so much procurement in Australia of. . . . of buying sugar in order to feed the troops in Vietnam, but rather manufacturing parts here, the cross-fertilisation of military equipment - that kind of "nuts and bolts" talk.

Q. Did you discuss the Australian wheat freights with Mr Trudeau?

PM: I did mention that we knew there was alleged to be a problem. I had rather longer discussions on them with Mr Pepin who is the Trade Minister and who will be visiting Australia quite shortly. They, I think, have a view, although I pointed out it hadn't been demonstrated to us, that while Australia has not got this price below the IGA minimum for wheat, it is perhaps not working out its freight rates in accordance with some rather complicated formula. I don't believe that has been demonstrated and I said so, but it is the subject of technical discussion at the present moment, I understand.

Q. Can you see any change in the rates?

PM: Well, I can't, as I say, because this is a matter of technical discussion in Washington now, I believe, between our own representatives and others to see whether anything of that kind is happening. But what is quite certain is that Canada and the United States have dropped their wheat prices below the IGA minimum and the United States say they have had to do it because of this freight business. Well, this will all be worked out to see whether it is a matter of fact; whether it^{is} or isn't so. What is quite clear is that all three countries must see that the IGA works, that nobody does undercut, that it does work because it is to the benefit of all of us that it should.

Q. Judging from the press conferences that you had in Canada, they were very concerned by it.

PM: Well, wheat is of immense significance to Canada and ourselves and indeed to the United States. It is of great significance to all three countries, and there is an awful lot of prairie and wheatgrowing land in Canada.

Q. Sir, there were reports that you were discussing mutual projects recently. . . .

PM: We were talking, but not talking specifically, on the approach which Mr Trudeau had made clear he felt Canada should take that is looking rather more towards the Pacific countries and, I take it, South-East Asian countries and Asian countries generally. There were no mutual projects, but I took the opportunity to say where we thought things could be done of advantage to the region generally.

Q. In your talks with Mr Nixon, and Dr Kissinger, Sir, did the question of America's possible change of attitude to Red China come up for discussion and any possible effects it may have on our own attitude?

PM: No. It didn't come up for discussion at all. It wasn't raised. Are you basing this on the speech by Senator Kennedy?

Q. No. On the reports that were received back. Is it likely to come up at the next meeting?

PM: I haven't got it down, and I have had no indications myself that there is likely to be a discussion.

Q. Did you receive any indication of the progress of peace talks in Paris?

PM: I had an indication of what was happening in Paris, but this was in private conversation and I am afraid it must remain entirely private. I wouldn't make any comments of any kind upon it.

Q. Sir, what were your impressions of Nixon as a leader?

PM: Well, I think you know because I had an informal press conference with some of the Australian boys over there. I believe he will be a great leader of the United States. I liked him very much as a man, as you know. Sometimes you meet people and you really do like them. Sometimes - more rarely - you dislike them. Very often they are just people. I really did like him as a man and so I might be a little coloured in my judgment. But I think he should be great because they have terrific problems in so many parts of the world and in their own country, and they really do seem to be digging in to try to find out and define the problems and what the causes of them are, and this must be the first step towards trying to solve them. I would hate to have the burden of trying to solve them myself.
