

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SPEECH

BY

The Rt Hon. J. G. GORTON, M.P.

ON

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT OVERSEAS

(Ministerial Statement)

[From the 'Parliamentary Debates', 15 April 1969]



Mr GORTON (Higgins—Prime Minister)—by leave—As honourable members are aware, news of the death of the late President Eisenhower on 28th March reached Canberra on Saturday, 29th March, a few hours before I was to have left on a visit to Washington for discussions with the President of the United States of America. Necessarily, these discussions were postponed but I continued with my journey to represent Australia at the funeral ceremonies for the late President and to make the official visit to Canada which had been arranged in response to the invitation of the Prime Minister of Canada. However, on 1st April, when I was received by President Nixon, we were able to re-schedule our postponed discussions for 6th and 7th May. This call provided the opportunity for us to review the topics which we are later to discuss and the President has arranged for further preparatory work relating to a number of topics to be undertaken in Washington prior to my return.

Subsequently I had separate and preliminary discussions with the Secretary of State, the Honourable William P. Rogers, the Secretary of Defence, the Honourable Melvin R. Laird, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Honourable David M. Kennedy, and President Nixon's special adviser, Dr Henry A. Kissinger, on matters of mutual interest in defence and foreign

affairs including the conflict in Vietnam and future stability and progress in the region of which we are a part. Even in this introductory stage of our discussions I found a continuance of the deep interest and the warmth of friendship that characterises the Australian-American relationship and I look forward to resuming the talks with the President of the United States and his Administration on my return to Washington in three weeks' time.

Since the discussions so far held are of a preliminary character and since they are not yet concluded, I think the House will agree that it would be more appropriate for a full statement to be made after my return from the concluding talks. There was, however, value in the opportunity to open up discussions on matters which will be the subject of further study in the United States before our second series of talks are held.

On the afternoon of 2nd April I flew to Ottawa and was welcomed to Canada at a dinner given by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Pierre Trudeau. On the following day I had a series of discussions with the Prime Minister and attended a meeting of the Canadian Cabinet. I also had separate discussions with the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Trade and Commerce, the Honourable Jean-Luc Pepin, the Minister

of Finance and Receiver-General of Canada, the Honourable Edgar J. Benson, and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the honourable Mitchell Sharpe.

The Canadian Cabinet expressed their interest in the various forms which their own participation in the region could take. We emphasised our joint and mutual interest in making the International Grains Agreement work and we had already arranged discussions about these matters between experts which were taking place on that very day in Washington D.C. The

Minister of Finance discussed with me Canadian experience with overseas investment in Canada.

The principal purpose of my visit was to foster closer relations between our two countries. In addition to Mr Pepin's presence here this month I hope that a visit to Australia by Mr Trudeau will not be long delayed and both our Governments were delighted that a representative party from the Australian Parliament will be visiting Canada in June.