



SECOND VISIT TO US 1969

SYDNEY

RETURN PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME  
MINISTER, MR JOHN GORTON, ON ARRIVAL AT MASCOT  
AIRPORT.

14 MAY 1969

PRIME MINISTER : I am not going to be able to tell you anything much. You realise that, of course, because I will be making a statement to Parliament and I won't be answering questions concerning the trip until I have made the statement.

Q. Will there be any surprises, Sir, in your report to Parliament?

PM: Oh, I don't think so. I hope it will be of interest.

Q. When will you be making your report, Sir?

PM: I am going to try to make it tomorrow night.

Q. How would you describe the visit, Sir?

PM: Well, it was hectic but I believe it was well worthwhile for a number of reasons which I will be putting before Parliament.

Q. Is it too much to expect an explanation of your Waltzing Matilda statement?

PM: Why, does it need an explanation?

Q. Well can you tell us what the thinking was at the time you made that statement?

PM: My thinking is that Australia has always supported a resistance to armed aggression, has always supported attempts to raise material standards of living of the people in the world and I would be surprised if anybody thought we shouldn't continue to support that.

Q. Sir, can you tell us the topics you discussed while you were with President Nixon?

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PM: No. I don't think I should do that either at this point of time. This is really a bit awkward because after all I have only just got back. I have to report to Parliament and I will list all the topics we discussed and what we said about them and then it will be a subject for debate.

Q. I am certain Parliament wouldn't mind if you told us how you wrenched your back horse-riding?

PM: I didn't wrench my back horse-riding. I will tell you exactly what happened. I had a couple of pressmen up there. Of course they are all very good men - pressmen - but there were a couple of pressmen up there who said "Can we come and have a drink with you before dinner one night" and I said, "Yes". So they came and had a drink before dinner and I said, "I've got a bit of a stiff back. I was riding a rather rough horse today." The next thing I know I had fallen off the horse and broken my back. . . . and whatever it is, you've read it!

Q. Sir, while you were away, Senator Fulbright said that he had no doubt that any US Senator would be able to get into either Woomera or Pine Gap bases. These bases have been denied to Australian MPs. Have you any comment on this?

PM: No comment.

Q. What was your opinion of this man who is so critical of the Vietnam war?

PM: Well, I had met him before and I like him. He is a very forthright sort of a man and it is a pleasure to be forthright back to him.

Q. Sir, will any US Senators be able to get into these bases?

PM: I couldn't tell you that at this stage.

Q. Did President Nixon tell you what he is going to tell the nation today, Sir?

PM: No, but he will be doing this today, I believe.

Q. Before your official statement?

PM: Yes.

Q. Have you had any advice, Sir, of anything he is going to say in it?

PM: Oh, I think it would interest Australia but I don't believe it would be anything terribly significant at this point, but I haven't yet seen it.

Q. Prime Minister will your report to Parliament cover only your discussions with President Nixon or also, for example, your discussions with Mr Laird on the F111?

PM: The F111 will form a part of the statement.

Q. Broadly, Sir, how would you sum up your tour - as successful or more successful than you had hoped?

PM: I don't know that it is for me to sum it up. I believe it was successful. It is for other people to assess it themselves. I think it was successful. Indeed, I believe that the statement issued by the President alone was a fairly successful outcome in the reaffirmation and underlining of the ANZUS Treaty.

Q. Did you have any disappointments, Sir?

PM: No, I don't think so.

Q. Were there any matters that will have to be followed up in subsequent talks with the President? Were there any things that were left incomplete by these talks?

PM: I think probably not followed up in subsequent talks with the President. There are obviously technical matters which will have to be followed up.

Q. Any indication when President Nixon might be able to tour Australia, Sir?

PM: No definite indication, but I hope next year.

Q. Any plans at this stage for returning to the White House?

PM: Gosh no. Listen, I think in this last year - approximately a year - I've been to New Zealand, I've been around Asia, I've been to America, I've been to England, I've been to America, I've been to America again. I have just had thirty hours flying back. I would just as soon stay here for a while.

Q. Sir, to get back to this question of visits of US politicians to these bases. You said you were unable to tell us at this moment. Is that because the whole thing was.....

PM: No, I can't tell you at this moment.

Q. Sir, do you believe the Waltzing Matilda statement will be politically damaging to you as it was with Mr Holt with his "All the Way with LBJ"?

PM: No. In fact I would be quite pleased if somebody from the Opposition, for example, got up and said they didn't believe that Australia ought to resist aggression, and they didn't believe Australia ought to go along with people improving material standards of living. Australia has never reneged from doing this sort of thing before and I don't see why it should now.

Q. Did it come as a shock to you, Sir, that there was another major fault with the F111?

PM: I don't know which one you are talking about!

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