



VISIT TO NEW GUINEA 1970

RABAUL (AIRPORT ARRIVAL)

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton  
in reply to Mr. John Kaputin

9 JULY 1970

Tolai, I come before you today at a time which should make us all sad and sorrowful for in this country, on this Peninsula, Tolai is divided against Tolai and brother's hand is raised against brother. And so people have been hurting each other instead of sitting down together to try and reach agreement with each other by discussion, to try and find out what it is that most of the people want. Surely it would be better for all the Tolai if that were done rather than that people should be spoken badly of and should hurt each other. Would not that be better... as it was?

For myself, I can say this. And, Tolai, do you not want to hear... For myself and for my Government I can say this. There has been disagreement on the question of a Multi-Racial Council. All we wish to do is to discover what it is that most of the Tolai want, and if most of the Tolai do not want a Multi-Racial Council, then there will not be one. But if most of the Tolai do want a Multi-Racial Council, then in the name of that democracy of which Mr. Kaputin spoke, there ought to be a Multi-Racial Council. I have said in Canberra, I have offered to Mr. Kaputin when he came to see me in Canberra.... "Let us discover what the people want. Let us have a referendum so we can see what their will is, and we will then follow their will as so expressed."

Would it not be better for the Tolai to decide peacefully and amongst themselves, in a democratic way, what sort of council they want so that can be the sort of council they can have.

The other thing which has been spoken of is self-government now, self-government for New Britain, because the Tolai are not the only people on New Britain, self-government for the Tolai if most of the Tolai don't want it - is that what is suggested? Would it not be well for each man to sit down in his own home and think what it is he really wants and what advantages he can get from being a part of the Territory which just recently has moved a great way toward self-government.

I am sure that the people of the Gazelle Peninsula would wish to share in the wealth coming from other parts of the Territory, would wish to get the benefits from the copper being discovered in Bougainville, would wish to get the benefits should oil be discovered in Papua, would wish to have the added economic advantage which being part of a unit means and which, as Mr. Kaputin said, is the essential basis for real political advancement. I believe the Tolai would want that. I ask each individual Tolai to sit down in his house and think whether that is not better for him.

I know that these are problems which are worrying many Tolai. I know that there are land problems too which are worrying Tolai. I have asked the leaders of the Mataungan Association to meet me today and to discuss these problems but they have refused to do so. Why?

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So that there can be continued economic progress, continued political advancement, I ask the Tolai members of the Mataungan Association to ask their leaders to discuss these things with us, so that the Tolai themselves can resolve their problems and so that the problems between the Tolai and the rest of the Territory can also be solved peacefully by discussion and with Australia's blessing. Thank you.

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