



EMBARGO : 6.30 p. m. Friday 17 July 1970

NEWS INTERVIEW ON CHANNEL 7 NETWORK
GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. JOHN GORTON

17 JULY 1970

Interviewer : John Boland

Q. Prime Minister, will police troops be used to clear the 1,000 Tolai Mataungan Association squatters from the Kerevat area twenty-five miles from Rabaul?

PM I hadn't heard that there were 1,000 squatters there, but I don't think the actual number matters very much. It fluctuated, I thought, between 100 and 400. And the actual use of police to clear the area would be a decision taken by the man on the spot, the Administrator. But I have little doubt at all that if this is the only way in which to clear people who are illegally occupying lands, then the police will be used to clear them from those lands. You must remember, this is land which was bought by the Administration for subdivision and allocation to Tolai through a Lands Board - Tolai and Bainings, the local people - and it is being illegally moved into by squatters. Should this become necessary, this use of police, then we would certainly back up the Administrator in whatever was necessary to see that the land is allocated to the people for whom it was bought.

Q. I understand the reports this morning say that 700 additional Tolai moved in there - there were 300 there. Now, that was a report.....

PM: Well, however many it is they will have to get off.

Q. Who ordered the 1,000 police into Rabaul? Reports are that Mr. Barnes said he received advice from the New Guinea Executive Council and reports are that the Executive Council of New Guinea says that they did not advise the sending in of extra police.

PM: I think this is a misunderstanding that stems from your proper use of the word "reports". All the information I have is that Mr. Barnes said that he had had two meetings with the Administrator's Executive Council and at both those meetings, the Administrator's Executive Council had strongly urged that law and order should be supported. Well, that got transmuted and translated by certain journalists into the Administrator's Executive Council asked that police should be sent in... which was quite a different matter - more definite matter - than saying we want law and order supported. And that having been reported, then some Members of the Administrator's Executive Council said, "Well, we didn't specifically ask for police to be sent in" and that is quite right to the best of my knowledge. What they said was : "We want law and order maintained".

Q. But there are about 1,000 police there?

PM: Oh yes, but a lot went there before I arrived because I don't think the Mataungan leaders make any secret of their willingness to resort to force, and there were fears of clashes between the Mataungan Tolai and the anti-Mataungan Tolai.

Q. Prime Minister, we are looking forward to having you and talking to you in depth about your tour of New Guinea, on Channel 7's current affairs programme, "This Week", on Sunday night.

BACKGROUND :

The interview with the Prime Minister about New Guinea will be telecast by HSV 7 Melbourne at 9.50 p. m. on Sunday, and by C. T. C. 7 in Canberra at 10.30 the same evening.

Copies of the transcript, embargoed until 9.50, will be issued in the Gallery on Sunday afternoon.