

INCREASING AUSTRALIAN INDEPENDENCE

The Struggle to be Heard

Minister for External Affairs in the Curtin Government, Dr Herbert Evatt, put together a statement summing up international affairs after his 1942 trip to the USA and Great Britain.

S T A T E M E N T

ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

BY

THE RT. HON. DR. H. V. EVATT, K.C., M.P.

MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

3RD SEPTEMBER, 1942

Statement on International Affairs by Dr Herbert Evatt, 3 September 1942.

John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. UK – Australian view on UK Government; representation in UK, Jan-Mar 1942; Evatt Mission, March-May 1942. JCPML00869. Courtesy National Archives of Australia: A989, 1943/73/141

I propose to analyse some aspects of the international position with which Australia is specially concerned. I also shall take leave to refer to some of the work performed by the Mission to Britain and the United States, from which I recently returned.

As it is nearly six months ago since I left Australia, it is convenient to make some comparison of the position then and now.

In a period of about three months after its entry into the war, Japan had acquired nothing less than the physical structure of a new economic empire. On 23rd January Rabaul and Bougainville (in the Solomons group) were taken. By February 15th Malaya and Singapore had been occupied. On February 19th the invasion of Java commenced. The attack on Timor started on February 21st. On February 27th the battle of the Java Sea took place. By March 14th Java had fallen, and both Lee and Salamua in New Guinea were occupied.

What was the position of Australia at that time? Darwin had been badly mauled and was grievously threatened. An all-out enemy move against Moresby was expected daily. The North-East coast of the Continent itself was in great jeopardy. Our communications with the United States seemed likely to be cut as the enemy moved further southwards in the vital Solomons group. The ABDA strategic area under General Wavell had been dissolved, but responsibility for the strategic direction and control of the defence of Australia and New Zealand was not yet settled. We were weak in air strength; we were short of tanks and other equipment; our veteran A.I.F. units had not returned. Those were dark days for Australia and New Zealand.

Late in February a conference was held at Melbourne between the Advisory War Council and Messrs. Sullivan and Coates, representing the New Zealand War Cabinet. Future historians may well regard that conference as of special importance. As a result, a new strategic area was planned including both Australia and New Zealand, and it was suggested that, because of the special United States concern in the Pacific, the supreme operational command should be entrusted to a United States officer.

The suggestion was a bold one. There are few occasions in history when a self-governing nation will place its defence and all its military resources under the control of another Ally, no matter how powerful.

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The new proposal was finalized while I was at Washington. The joint plan of Australia and New Zealand was modified to this extent - that the actual jurisdictional area of the South-West Pacific including Australia was made separate from that of the South Pacific area including New Zealand. But each area was placed under the supreme operational command of a distinguished United States officer, each being responsible in turn to the United States Chiefs-of-Staff. Simultaneously, the President announced that the United States had accepted what was vaguely but deliberately described as the "responsibility" for both Australia and New Zealand. That primary responsibility still rests on the United States.

The case for Australia had to be stressed by the Mission from two distinct but converging viewpoints. First, to the United States the great significance of Australia was its strategic significance as the only remaining land base joining the Indian and the Pacific Oceans from which an offensive against Japan might subsequently be developed. Second, from an Empire point of view, a deadly blow to British prestige would result if any part of Australia or New Zealand was overrun by such an enemy as the Japanese.

Of course, there was nothing inconsistent in these two approaches, and in my view, our insistence and persistence on both have been justified by the event. Gradually, we have found that the Pacific theatre of war has been assessed at a higher relative degree of importance than many authorities were at first disposed to admit. The tremendous danger of Japan's strength, ambition and cunning is now realized to a greater degree. Further, there is a growing realization that, as a result of the battles of Coral Sea, Midway, and the Solomons, the United Nations may be presented with opportunities to strike further telling blows, and if such opportunities are not grasped, they disappear.

The directives in respect of both Pacific areas were drafted at Washington and agreed to by both Australia and New Zealand. As the Australian Prime Minister conveniently described it, the agreed strategy in relation to the South-West Pacific was primarily of a defensive or holding character, the defensive to be followed by offensive action at a later stage.

But it is clear that the strategical arrangements were provisional only. Plans of such a character have to be modified, contracted or expanded according to the changing developments of a world war.

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For instance, strategic arrangements made way back in January last, before Japan's thrusts had gathered their subsequent momentum, were not necessarily applicable to the situation in April, still less to that in September.

In the Pacific there are three theatres in form but really one in substance. In all three the executive authority over the Supreme Commander has been committed to the United States Chiefs of Staff. As Japan regards the Pacific as one great theatre of war, so must the United Nations.

Nothing is more remarkable than the magnificent recovery of the United States fleet since the disastrous attack on its capital ships at Pearl Harbour in December last. There were not a few who regarded that attack as putting the United States Navy out of the Pacific war for at least eighteen months. Events have proved otherwise. If I may say so, I believe that, while the immediate credit has gone in the main to others, the planning and determination of Admiral King, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Navy, have been largely responsible for the blows delivered against the enemy in the Coral Sea and at Midway. Further, there has not yet been an adequate appreciation of the boldness and ingenuity of the recent northern thrust of United States and Australian forces over a very great distance towards the Solomons. With regard to Admiral King, I remember vividly a discussion at Washington on the vexed question of the separation of operational areas in the Pacific. I was reassured and impressed at Admiral King's saying, "I don't care what or where the areas are. I'll hit this fellow wherever I can get at him - wherever the areas are. And I'll hit him good and hard". That he has succeeded in doing.

This illustrates and emphasises another point. The first task of our Mission was to obtain approval to the creation of a Pacific War Council at Washington so that Australia could meet Britain, the United States and the other Pacific nations at the same cabinet table with a view to co-ordinating our war effort against Japan. Thanks both to the President and to Mr. Churchill the task of creating the War Council was accomplished. The machinery was set up, and I had the honour of being the first representative of Australia on the Council.

But machinery is useless unless it functions efficiently. It has worked efficiently because President Roosevelt was determined that it should so work. The body meets at least once a week. The President always takes the chair and the accredited representatives of Britain, China, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and now the Philippines, are always present. While the Council is not executive in character, important matters on the political side, and to some extent also on the military side, are finalised at the Council. This is often possible because the President is also the Commander-in-Chief of all United States forces.

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The working of such a Council necessarily brings into sharp focus the claims and needs of all the Pacific theatres of war; it ensures that the Pacific shall not be overlooked in the measurement from time to time by the strategic authorities of the claims made by each theatre Commander to a fair proportion of the munitions and equipment in the common pool of the United Nations.

Another task of the Mission was to increase and accelerate the allocation and despatch of the supplies which early in March last we needed so desperately. As the Prime Minister has already indicated publicly, one result of our work was a very substantial flow to Australia and the other Pacific areas of aircraft, tanks and other vital equipment and supplies.

Of course it is obvious that the rapidly changing situation not only in various parts of the Pacific but in other theatres of war must lead to retardation as well as acceleration of supplies. The needs of actual battle are imperative. For instance, in the case of the Midway battle, temporary diversions from other Pacific theatres played a great part in the final victory which altered in our favour the balance of naval power in the Pacific. I cannot give figures, but the total number of combat aeroplanes which have actually been received in this theatre since March has been very substantial - far beyond our wildest hopes in the black days of February.

The assistance we have received from the United States is not measured in aircraft, munitions or personnel. At all times, both in London and Washington, the Mission was in close touch with Ministers here. As a result of constant communication with my colleague, the Minister for Supply, the whole position of essential and vital supplies of raw materials was kept in rapid motion. We made arrangements with the War Production Board, the Petroleum Co-ordinating Authorities and the Combined Raw Materials Board and other bodies in Washington. As a consequence the supply position in Australia has very materially improved. Again I cannot give figures, but comparing April last with the latest available data there has been a very great improvement in the Australian stock position in respect of such vital materials as tinplate, aviation spirit, motor spirit, power kerosene, illuminating kerosene, lubricating oils, diesel oil, cotton, raw rubber and aluminium.

In addition there has been an important increase since April last in the quantity of essential materials actually received from the United States for the manufacture of munitions in Australia. These increased supplies have arrived in Australia in appreciable quantities, thus improving the general

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situation. Included in the items referred to are machine tools which are so necessary for munitions production in this country.

From what I have said the House will be able to gather something of our fierce concentration on the vital problem of supplying Australia with aircraft, munitions and other materials of war.

From the United States the mission proceeded to Britain. Here I should say that much of the unity and strength of our common cause depends upon the close comradeship of Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt. Even before Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, these two leaders were working in the cause of democracy as witness their promulgation of the Atlantic Charter in August of last year. That association has become far more intimate in the exigencies of war and has been extended to include the leaders of Russia, China and the British dominions.

In London I made specific arrangements with Mr. Churchill bearing upon the defence of Australia. These arrangements included a special contribution of equipment in accordance with requisitions forwarded to me by the Service authorities in Australia. Another splendid contribution, which Britain agreed to, will be of inestimable value to our defence. I shall never forget the occasion when the matter was decided. We had discussed the problem of Australia for some considerable time when Mr. Churchill sent for a very high ranking officer and put the proposal to him. At first the officer was not over-enthusiastic. "It'll hurt so-and-so" he said, naming another distinguished officer. "What's that?" said the Prime Minister. "Yes, it'll hurt him a great deal," was the reply. "Very well," said Mr. Churchill, "unless it hurts him it is not going to be of much use to Australia. It has got to be done."

I must add this. The people of Britain are heart and soul with us. In Australia's anxieties and vicissitudes we all remember the sufferings and sacrifices the British people endured in 1940 and the never-to-be-forgotten valour of the airmen who then saved from alien domination not only Britain but the United States, Australia and all the world. The immensity of the British effort today - men and women alike - cannot be overstated. They all agreed that Australia had deserved help and must be helped. There was no need for argument. In every place I visited, every meeting I attended from the Parliament at Westminster to the factories in Yorkshire, the reaction was the same. The British people's desire was this - to be as much with us in the battle for Australia as Australians had been with them, not only in the battle of Britain but in almost every great battle in almost every theatre of the war.

While in Britain I had the opportunity of useful discussions with members of the special Russian delegation to Britain and the United States, led by the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, M. Molotov. I was impressed with their deep detestation of the Nazi invader, their tenacity, their fortitude, their confidence. Even then, they seemed to anticipate the possibility of serious military reverses during the present European summer. These have occurred. It is not for me to foretell the future, or make a guess at the outcome or duration of the struggle. But, as we look back and re-read the opinions of the so-called experts who, in June of last year, forecasted that only three or four, or at the most five, weeks would elapse before the German military machine crushed the Russian armies, and as we also remember the ups and downs of fifteen months of terrific fighting, it is clear that the continuance of Russia's titanic resistance is still one of the main hopes of this world.

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In connection with Russia, a striking incident occurred during the period in which I was representing Australia on the War Cabinet in London. During the spring months of this year, land based enemy aircraft operating from Norway were making the task of the convoys to Russia tremendously hazardous. Some losses were certain. Very great losses seemed probable. But the Russians badly needed the tanks and the aeroplanes. In a moment of some doubt and grave anxiety the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, gave the lead saying, "All the equipment that gets through on this convoy will be used by the Russians in the critical summer fighting. They will need every plane and every tank. We must aid Russia. The convoys must simply fight their way in". As it turned out, the old decision thus taken proved right for the first convoy fought its way in after comparatively small damage. The equipment got through.

While I was in London, the treaty of alliance between Britain and Soviet Russia was negotiated and signed. This treaty re-affirmed the principles laid down in the declaration of the Atlantic Charter of August 14th, 1941. Because the Soviet and Japan are at peace, the treaty was directed very specifically against Hitlerite Germany and Germany's satellite associates in Europe. But, in my opinion, the broader and more important features of the treaty are the provisions directed to the post-war period. Thus Article 3 binds the parties to adopt common action to preserve peace and to resist aggression in the post-war period. The Anglo-Russian alliance is to continue for a period of twenty years after the war. It was agreed that, during the post-war period, both parties should work together for the organisation of economic prosperity.

M. Molotov showed the liveliest and most friendly interest in this country, with the history of which he seemed well acquainted. As I told him, Australia regards Russia not only as a great European power but as a great Pacific power. It is essential to the future of the Pacific that Australia should always remain on the closest terms of friendship with Russia. The Government hopes that, in the very near future, that friendship will be evidenced and confirmed.

It is becoming more and more clear that the military overthrow of our enemies, although our primary aim, will in no way be obstructed but will be assisted if positive plans are now laid as to the course to be pursued in the post-war period.

In this connection the past declarations of the leaders of the United Nations are an important starting point, especially the principles of the Atlantic Charter and the President's subsequent declaration of the Four Freedoms.

While in the United States, I found many who were particularly anxious to have promulgated a special charter covering the future of the peoples of the Pacific and of South-East Asia. Why not, it was said, establish a Pacific and Asiatic charter on the lines of the Atlantic Charter? This question shows a misunderstanding of the true position.

By subscribing to the Atlantic Charter all the United Nations have now declared:-

"First: Their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other.

Second: They desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned.

Third: They respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."

The United Nations have also expressed their hope for a peace which will "afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want." (The sixth principle). They have also declared that, while they believe in the eventual abandonment of the use of force, aggressor nations must be disarmed pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security (eighth principle).

But the name "Atlantic Charter" which has been given to this declaration does not refer only to the Atlantic region or to powers having interests in the Atlantic. The Charter derives its name from the place where it was signed. The twenty-eight nations which have subscribed to it extend around the globe, and the declaration is universal in its scope and application. It follows that the future of the regions of the Pacific and of South-~~East~~ Asia are to be governed by the broad principles of the Atlantic Charter.

Some consequences of this may properly be suggested. The first principle which must be applied is that of security. Accordingly, in keeping with the eighth principle of the Charter, there should be established a system of general security which will be as effective in these Pacific and Asiatic regions as in all other parts of the world. Pending the establishment of such a system, the aggressor must be disarmed. And that aggressor is Japan - the only Pacific power which since 1931 has systematically employed its armed forces for the purpose of territorial aggrandizement.

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While security comes first, the Charter also assures to the peoples of South-Eastern Asia and the South-West Pacific that they shall be able to live out their lives in freedom from want as well as in freedom from fear. These peoples cannot be excluded from the system of economic collaboration which the United Nations have envisaged. Again, it is elementary that the future development of the people of China will no longer be obstructed by such restrictions on their self-respect and their right of self-government as are involved in the almost exploded doctrine of ex-territoriality. Equally we look forward to the people of India developing into a truly self-governing nation. It is to be hoped that they will soon understand that self-governing British Dominions like Australia are none the less self-governing because they owe allegiance to the King or because they are associated together as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations or because they are resolved to resist the invader to the death.

Australia, as one of the countries of the South-West Pacific, will have a particular interest in closer economic relations with her nearer neighbours. For some years past, Japan has propagated the notion of a co-prosperity sphere. But, ever since 1931, and increasingly so since she commenced to exploit the newly-occupied areas in Malaya, the Philippines and the East Indies, it has become plain that the so-called co-prosperity sphere means only this - that Japan is to get the prosperity while the subject peoples get a lower standard of living and the status of serfs or slaves.

In the post-war world the re-organisation of these regions cannot be on the Japanese system. We are now fighting to end that system. Moreover, our post-war order in the Pacific cannot be for the sole benefit of one power or group of powers. Its dominant purpose must be that of benefiting the peoples everywhere. If "freedom from want" means anything, it means that the age of unfair exploitation is over. If the attainment of a higher and better standard of life for all the Pacific peoples involves any changes in forms of government or administration, either as a means of progress or as a consequence of it, the United Nations must be ready to make the necessary changes. In short, we must found future Pacific policy on the doctrine of trusteeship for the benefit of all the Pacific peoples. That doctrine the Commonwealth has endeavoured to carry out in New Guinea under the Mandated system of the League of Nations. Japan's record as a mandatory power only proves that a solemn trust can be betrayed.

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I would therefore say this: It is impossible to rest satisfied for a moment with the present position of the forces of the United Nations in many theatres of the world war. The very serious position in Russia and the disappointing setbacks we have received in the Middle East are sufficient to banish the slightest thought of complacency.

But, in the Pacific theatre of war, the outlook is much brighter than seemed possible six months ago. Support and help have reached us in substantial quantities mainly from the United States, which is primarily responsible, but also in some important respects from Britain herself. So far, the Supreme Commander, armed with this support and with the enormously increased strength of Australian land forces, has been able to protect the Commonwealth itself against the enemy invader. The Japanese have not had many successes during the past six months. They suffered three tremendous reverses in the Coral Sea, at Midway, and recently in the Solomons. Australian forces have had a spectacular success at Milne Bay. Not so well known but great in importance has been the magnificent guerilla fight being waged by Australian troops in Timor. That story, when fully told, will be one of the epics of the war.

Certain broad questions may fairly be asked in relation to Australia's war effort since Japan's unprovoked attack on our territories. The first question is - "Has Australia's voice been heard in the Supreme Councils of the war?" The answer is - "Yes, to a greatly increased extent. Some of the new machinery has been described. But there is constant communication on the major matters of war policy between the head of this government and the leaders of the United Nations overseas."

Then it may be asked - "Has Australia's voice, though heard, been of effect?"

It is too early to give a final answer, but I venture to submit that here too the answer should be - "Yes, to a very substantial extent, and the effect will not diminish but increase as the days go by."

A final question may well be posed - "Is the Government satisfied with the position so far as this theatre of war is concerned?" I think the proper answer to this question is - "No, we are not satisfied; we dare not be satisfied while what we care for most is still in deadly peril; we shall never be satisfied until the enemy is thrown back and finally overthrown."

It is on that note of warning I prefer to finish, and, in support, I quote from a recent despatch from Sir Frederick Eggleston, Australia's Minister in China - a key post in these days of crisis. He said -

"All those nations whose destiny is involved in the fate of the Pacific area must be constantly on the alert to see that the strategy necessary to secure their safety is not forgotten in European pre-occupations and that the machinery for ensuring that decisions in this area are properly taken is kept functioning with adequate interest and support. I believe it is to the credit of His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia that vast improvements have been made. Why it should have been necessary for you to fight for it with such insistence I do not know, for more than nine million British people live on the Pacific and Indian Oceans and they have made most important contributions to the cause in this and the last war. The idea that Britain can survive if she loses all her resources and people in this area is a fallacy."

While therefore we note the improvement in the Pacific generally and here in particular, too much is at stake for us to ease up for a moment. Our efforts must be unrelenting. As has well been said -

"When everything is at stake, dear and valuable to man, as man; when there is but the one dreadful alternative of entire loss, or final recovery of truth and freedom, it is no time to stand up on trifles and moot points; the great object is to be secured first, and at all hazards."

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To many Labor politicians and ALP members the Bretton Woods Agreement was seen as a potential threat to Australia's employment and living standards and their party's traditional protectionism. Although the agreement was tabled in Parliament, it was left in abeyance until 1947 when it was finally ratified under Prime Minister Ben Chifley.

ER 46/12/2

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

FOR THE MINISTER.

NOTES ON THE BRETTON WOODS AGREEMENT.

CABINET AGENDUM 669C

1. The Bretton Woods Agreements have been considered previously by Cabinet which decided to defer any decision. The question of joining or otherwise was then, however, largely academic. The proposition is now concrete. Enough nations have adhered to bring the constitution into effect; the closing date for original membership has passed, and a meeting will be held in late January or early February to appoint the senior executives. The Fund and Bank are likely to begin operation within a few months.
2. It is not possible now to become an original member, and terms of admission will depend upon the other signatories.
3. As with the United Kingdom, the United States will almost certainly insist upon our agreeing to join the Bretton Woods scheme before making a satisfactory Lend-Lease settlement.
4. Since the major trading countries of the world (except Russia which is subject to special conditions) are now members it might in practice be very inconvenient from the ordinary trading point of view if we were not members.
5. There is unlikely in the long run to be any practicable alternative to joining. This being the case the sooner we join the more influence we are likely to enjoy.
6. The Bretton Woods Agreement, while not all we desire, represents quite appreciable concessions on the part of the United States and a triumph for their enlightened elements. The latter will move forward steadily but could be weakened by other countries rejecting their efforts towards close economic collaboration with the rest of the world.
7. In practice much will depend on the personnel in charge of the Fund and Bank. The best way of making our influence felt will be to participate. This is especially important in the formative stage.
8. We can always leave whenever we desire and recover our subscription. In circumstances when this would be necessary there would undoubtedly be other nations placed similarly.
9. If we are not clear on any points we can seek an interpretative declaration from the executive. The United States and United Kingdom have already announced their intention of doing so.

17th January, 1946

*Mr Secretary
please file*

*My Bury -
discussed with
Members*

INCREASING AUSTRALIAN INDEPENDENCE The Struggle to be Heard

After Curtin's attempt at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference to improve Empire cooperation failed, Evatt more strongly pursued the United Nations as an organisation that might give smaller nations, such as Australia, an opportunity to voice their concerns.

CABLEGRAM.

**MOST
SECRET.**

I. 18598/613/558.

JT/IB

DECYPHER FROM:

THE PRIME MINISTER OF
AUSTRALIA,
LONDON.SC 158
DATED 16th May, 1944.
2151
RECEIVED 17th May, 1944.No. 23. MOST SECRET & PERSONAL. MOST IMMEDIATE.

Addressed to the Acting Prime Minister, Mr. Forde.

Improvements in machinery for Empire co-operation.

1. I submitted to Conference yesterday my suggestions for improvements in machinery for Empire co-operation as outlined in the next following cablegram.

2. Unfortunately, Churchill and Smuts were not present but I was not enamoured of prospect of getting far with the matter after Mr. MacKenzie King's address to Parliament in which he said -

"From time to time it is suggested that we should seek new methods of communication and consultation. I believe very strongly in close consultation, close co-operation and effective co-ordination of policies. What more effective means of co-operation could have been found than those which, in spite of all the handicaps of war, have worked with such complete success!

It is true that we have no sitting in London continuously of a visible Imperial War Cabinet or Council. But we have what is much more important, though invisible, a continuing conference of the cabinets of the Commonwealth. It is a conference of cabinets which deal from day to day, and not infrequently from hour to hour, with policies of common concern. When decisions are taken they are not the decisions of the Prime Ministers or other individual ministers meeting apart from their own colleagues and away from their own countries. They are decisions reached after mature consideration by all members of the cabinets of each country with a full consciousness of their immediate responsibilities to their respective parliaments.

Let us by all means seek to improve where we can. But in considering new methods of organisation we cannot be too careful to see that to our own people the new method will not appear as an attempt to limit their freedom of decisions, or to peoples outside the Commonwealth as an attempt to establish separate blocs."

It will be evident from foregoing and from views expressed by United Kingdom ministers that an Imperial War Cabinet is not an attainable objective.

3. As you will see from my statement I do not agree with Mr. MacKenzie King's view that means of co-operation have worked with complete success during war. I point out in part three of my statement that Australia, which was not consulted on major decision of global strategy affecting its security, had a narrow escape. My statement proceeds to indicate that by our own efforts in local defence by co-operation with other parts of the Empire concerned and by co-operation with other nations with interest in South West Pacific we are resolved to do everything possible to prevent recurrence of similar danger.

4. In the discussion the Dominions Secretary threw in

George Brown would (Commonwealth Conference) 19.5.44

Cablegram from Prime Minister Curtin to Deputy Prime Minister Frank Forde, 16 May 1944.

John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. *Prime Ministers Conference 1944*. JCPML00869. Courtesy National Archives of Australia: A5954, 662/1

CABLEGRAM.

-2-

I. 18595. 16. 1944

**MOST
SECRET.**

some miscellaneous suggestions for consideration of Governments. Canada said that the question would have to be considered by their Government. New Zealand agreed with my statement. The following conclusions were recorded -

(a) There was general agreement with the proposal put forward by the Prime Minister of Australia that, there should be monthly meetings at which the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom would meet the High Commissioners of the Dominions and the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to give an opportunity for the Prime Minister to give review of current situation and problems and for Dominion High Commissioners to raise any questions which they consider should be subject consultation with Dominions.

(b) The Dominion Prime Ministers undertook to consult their Governments and to subsequently communicate with United Kingdom Government on various proposals put forward in discussion for improvement of defence co-operation within the Commonwealth and as to whether a small technical committee representative of the United Kingdom and of the Dominions should be set up to examine further any of these proposals.

5. If we cannot ultimately obtain general agreement I propose that we should develop our ideas with the United Kingdom Government and also with the New Zealand Government in matters where it may be concerned along lines indicated in my statement. The question can await my return, but I would like to let you know that my observations in part one relative to Australian representation in the United Kingdom War Cabinet need to be supplemented by a report which I shall convey verbally to the Government.

CURTIN.

17.5.44.

At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in May 1944, Curtin agreed with the British proposal that the Commonwealth nations give broad support to the principles stated in the Moscow Declaration, adding that the Commonwealth members should go to 'extreme lengths' to secure United States' support for the new international organisation. The Australia-New Zealand conference held in October 1944 gave rise to an important set of conclusions giving general support to the preliminary United Nations proposals but with an emphasis on certain principles deemed important to Australia, namely:

the territorial integrity and political independence of members should be preserved against change by force or threat of force from another power;

The success of such an organisation will depend upon the leadership of the Great Powers...it is essential that all members should actively participate in the general control and direction of its affairs and thus the General Assembly should be able to deal with any matter within the sphere of action of the Organisation and concerning the settlement of disputes and action to be taken against an aggressor, subject only to the executive powers of the Security Council; and

the need for the maximum employment of the International Court of Justice for the ascertainment of facts which may be in dispute.

These resolutions were approved by the Australian Cabinet on 10 November, 1944. The most controversial aspect of the Australia–New Zealand Agreement was Evatt's insistence that the Atlantic Charter principle of self-determination should not only apply to Europe, but to all colonial territories. Aside from the idealistic aspects of this policy the hope was that new nationalist movements in Asia might develop more moderately.

OUTWARD TELEGRAM

W.R. 208/3/-

CODE

O.D. -

FROM: D.O.

TO: CANADA (GOVT) -
AUSTRALIA "
NEW ZEALAND "
SOUTH AFRICA "

(Sent 12.05 p.m. 13th Apr., 1945)

MOST IMMEDIATE

D.No.604

Following is statement. Begins.

"The meeting of representatives of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa and India, preliminary to the San Francisco Conference closed to-day. The following statement has been approved by the Delegates".

"On the eve of the meeting of the United Nations at San Francisco which is to consider the establishment of a new World Organisation to secure and maintain peace, we, the representatives of the countries of the British Commonwealth, have met together in London.

We are convinced that only the maintenance after the war of the close co-operation between the United Nations which has brought and is bringing success to their arms can prevent the recurrence of strife between the Governments and peoples of the world. The countries of the British Commonwealth stand ready to play their full part in an International/

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International Organisation for the purpose of preserving international peace and security and promoting human welfare.

We have examined, generally and in detail, the tentative proposals resulting from the Dumbarton Oaks conversations, and we have had a valuable exchange of views. We are agreed that the proposals provide the basis for a Charter of such an Organisation fully recognising that in certain respects they call for clarification, improvement and expansion. Each of the countries assembled here will be represented at the San Francisco Conference. Through their representatives, it will be the purpose of the peoples and Governments of the British Commonwealth in all the continents to work for the establishment of a World Order which will be worthy of the immense sacrifices made by our peoples and designed to unite the nations in assuring to all men in all the lands economic and social advancement in conditions of freedom, peace and concord". Ends.

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Cypher telegram sent to the Department of External Affairs. Canberra

12th August 1941

No. 1.

FOR PRIME MINISTER. PERSONAL.

Reference Dominions Office cablegram No. 25
information here extremely fragmentary as to form of contemplated
joint declaration by President and Prime Minister. I set out
below all I have been able to find out about its form and my
impression is that nobody here knows very much more. -

1. Declaration of fundamental principles leading to better future in the world.

What are the fundamental principles is not revealed, but may be related to Roosevelt's Four Freedoms embodied in his January message to Congress.

2. No territorial acquisitions
3. No territorial changes against the will of the peoples concerned
4. Restoration of self-government
5. Right to every nation to form of Government it desires.
6. Reduction of hindrances to trade
7. Safety of the sea after the war
8. Policy of abandonment of force and lightening of burden of armaments.

Urgent communication has been sent to the Prime Minister asking him to clarify position and telegraph text. Full information will probably be cabled tomorrow but I felt you would like to have what is available immediately.

BRUCE.

Cablegram from High Commissioner Bruce regarding the resolutions of the Atlantic Charter which laid the foundation for the United Nations, 12 August 1941.

John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. *Postwar Reconstruction – Inter-Allied meetings and declaration 1941; Churchill-Roosevelt Meeting and Atlantic Charter; Hopkins in UK, 1941.* JCPML00869. Courtesy National Archives of Australia: MIOO, August 1941