During the summer Parliamentary recess, which was extended long past the usual time because of the Queen's visit to Australia, we have witnessed some events which have been exciting and others which have caused a deep impression on the average Australian and which have brought us an acute awareness that our particular part of the world need not be immune from international rivalries.

ROYAL VISIT

The Queen's visit has been an unqualified success and I think everyone has been impressed by the comparative informality of this recent Royal Tour. I say comparative because no Royal Tour can really be informal in the Australian sense. However, the Queen has met a great number of people and has impressed them with her graciousness. The Duke of Edinburgh will always find a welcome place in Australian hearts because of his easy going manner and his ready ability to swap jokes with the people he meets.

Many examples of this could be quoted but I would like to mention one. During a reception in Canberra Senator Buttfield, who is a lady, and Mr. Buttfield were being presented to the Queen and the Duke. After Senator Buttfield had been presented, Mr. Buttfield followed, and quick as a flash the Duke said to him, or so it is reported, "It looks as if you have got the same sort of job as I have - how do you like it?" The story doesn't relate Mr. Buttfield's reply.

The recent Royal Tour was marked by two innovations. The Australian Parliaments did not meet while the Queen was here and this meant a wider circle of people could meet Her Majesty. If the Parliaments were opened by Her Majesty she would have to, as custom demands, give the Address opening the Parliament and then the normal Parliamentary functions would follow. In these circumstances the numbers who meet the Queen are pretty strictly proscribed. By keeping the Parliaments closed a wider number of people from different walks of life have been able to get a better opportunity to meet and see the Royal couple.

The second innovation was the use by the Queen of the Royal Yacht Britannia during her visit. This must have made the tour a much easier one for the Royal couple. The Britannia has been their home during the tour, their base from which they could branch out and make their visits to the Capital cities. With previous Royal Tours the Queen would usually stay at Government House in Canberra or the Government House in the different States or, occasionally, in other private homes. Under these circumstances the Queen would have no base and every roof under which she would sleep would be a stranger's roof. In these circumstances the Tour would be much more difficult for the Queen and the Prince than was actually the case.
March 31st, 1963

ORDER OF THE THISTLE

I think political friends and foes alike have all unanimously agreed that the granting of the Order of the Thistle to the Prime Minister has been a well deserved honour. It is well known that most Australian honours conferred by the Queen are made on the recommendation of the Prime Minister or of the Premiers of the different States. The Prime Minister has, in the past I believe, always had a certain pride in being plain "Bob Menzies", and I am quite certain he, himself, would never have done anything to alter these particular circumstances. However, this very high honour was conferred without any prior knowledge to himself and solely on the wish of the Queen. I am told that one morning he received a summons to the Queen and when he appeared he was told Her Majesty had brought something from Scotland for him. This particular honour can only be conferred on the wish of the Queen - it is not an honour which any other person can suggest the Queen should confer on any one and, apart from the Royal family, there are never more than sixteen people privileged to wear the Order of the Thistle at any one time.

While this is a great honour for the Prime Minister, whom we sometimes forget was a State School student at Jeparit, who educated himself entirely by scholarships, it is also an honour for this country and gives some recognition of the status with which Australia is held overseas and particularly in the United Kingdom. It was also a nice touch the way the announcement of the honour was made. Royal honours conferred on citizens of the Queen usually appear in the New Year Honours list or the Birthday Honours List, but this was a personal gift from the Queen, announced by the Queen personally to the Prime Minister. It is a fitting reminder of the Queen's visit to Australia.
While the Royal Tour has taken up much of our attention in recent weeks we have also had one eye turned northwards to the clouds which are possibly gathering on the not so distant horizon. The United Kingdom, Australia and her other Allies all support the Malaysia Federation. Some of the Colonies which are at the moment tied to the United Kingdom and which all form part of Malaysia are so small that they could never survive as independent States unless they joined in some wider Federation, and this is one of the reasons for the whole Malaysia idea. The proposal has the strong support of the United Kingdom and of the Malayan Government and of the Singapore Government. It is going to be an accomplished fact later this year - I think on October 1st.

The difficulties over this proposal have arisen because both the Phillipines and Indonesia have voiced objection to the Malaysian idea. Coming as this did shortly after the West New Guinea affair there will be some Australians who have been all too ready to say that this is another example of Indonesian Imperialism. While history may record that this is the position I don't believe that this is the real ground for Phillipine and Indonesian Opposition. It has been a task of Australian diplomacy and of Sir Garfield Barwick in particular to try and show that their objection to the Malaysian idea has no real substance, but very often in matters of this kind it is not a question of what is fact, it is a question of what people believe to be fact.

Several questions are at the base of Phillipine and Indonesian opposition to Malaysia. There is the relationship between the President of Indonesia and the Prime Minister of Malaya both of whom have said quite undiplomatic things about the other. The exchanges between these leaders, spoken from a distance have done nothing to calm the atmosphere between the two countries.

Perhaps the most realistic objection of the Phillipines and of the Indonesians is their fear that the Chinese population in the new Malaysia will become the most powerful group. Both the Phillipines and Indonesia dislike and fear the Chinese. Despite a strong Communist party in Indonesia the Chinese in that country are, to some extent, a persecuted race; they have been told to live in the towns; they have lost their trading businesses in different parts of the country and the Indonesians have no love for them. The Chinese breed much quicker than the Malayans and could clearly quite soon have a numerical superiority in the new Malaysia. The Indonesians may fear the Chinese in this area will gain a preponderance of political power.

These fears may be unrealistic but it is easy to see that this situation involves difficulties for Australia. We have got to learn to understand the Indonesians and to co-operate together for the advancement of the whole area if it is humanly possible. On the other hand, Malaya is a member of the Commonwealth supported by Britain. In the development of the Malaysian Federation we don't want to have to choose between one or the other and I am certain all our powers of diplomacy will be directed towards the smooth launching of Malaysia in October.

The long term interests of Australia and of the whole region will be best served if Indonesia and the Phillipines come to realise that their opposition to Malaysia is contrary to their own national interest and to the general progress of south-east Asia.
Author/s:
Fraser, Malcolm

Title:
Royal visit, Order of the Thistle, Indonesia-Malaysia

Date:
31 March 1963

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/40064

File Description:
Royal visit, Order of the Thistle, Indonesia-Malaysia

Terms and Conditions:
Copyright courtesy of Malcolm Fraser. Contact the University of Melbourne Archives for permission requests.