LIBERAL PARTY FEDERAL COUNCIL

A week or two ago the Liberal Party Federal Council met in Canberra. This Council is composed of seven delegates from each State. It is chaired by the President of the Liberal Party. The Prime Minister was present through most of the Conference as were many of his Ministers, particularly when there were resolutions concerning particular Departments. This Council cannot bind the Government or tell it what to do; indeed, it does not attempt either of these things. It can, however, express an opinion and draw the Government's attention to various matters.

A good number of politicians are members of the Federal Council, i.e. the Premier of Victoria attends as part of the Victorian Delegation. Up to the present point, the Young Liberal Organizations in each State had been entitled to send observers to this Federal Council of the Liberal Party. For some time, however, there has been a feeling that these Young Liberals should be able to speak and vote as full delegates. They have been people who have shown quite a great interest in politics and national affairs and are just as competent to cast an intelligent vote as anyone else. The matter was debated by the Council and a resolution was carried unanimously which will enable the Young Liberal Organizations in the different States to send their own full representation to future Councils.

In a small but important way this is recognition of the place that young people play in Australia. In addition, of course, to one special representation from the Young Liberals, there's nothing to stop Young Liberals from being included in the general State representation.
AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE FOR MALAYSIA:

Ever since the Government announced its support for the Malaysian Federation, Australia has tried to be firm but not provocative in her statements and actions on this matter. We did not immediately send more forces to Malaysia but we did send military experts to the Federation to examine the kind of aid that they required and that we could supply.

On March 17th, the Minister for Defence announced the Government’s decision to give Malaysia assistance in the form of material, training and secondment of Australian officers to assist Malaysia in expanding her own forces. Since then there has been a renewed Malaysian request and thus the Minister for Defence has announced that small Australian forces will assist Malaysia in the Borneo territories. Naval coastal mine-sweepers will be made available to patrol coastal waters and possibly further vessels will be sent to the area in June. An Army Engineer Squadron will be provided to construct air-strips, roads and bridges in the Borneo States and R.A.A.F. helicopters with pilots and technical personnel will be made available to support operations on the Thai-Malay border, thus releasing other helicopters for service in Borneo. Air transport assistance will also be made available. This additional assistance may still be small in total content but it indicates resolution which should not be mistaken by Indonesia.

The significant statement concerning this matter was made by Sir Garfield Barwick on his return from the SEATO Conference. Sir Garfield said that Indonesian attacks on Australian military personnel in Borneo would bring action from ANZUS Treaty members. This is our defensive Treaty with the United States that commits the various countries to go to each other’s aid if their territories or forces are attacked in the Pacific area. Borneo is included in this area. Sir Garfield said that on this aspect of the matter America felt the same way as Australia and that Indonesia was well aware of the fact. This, of course, increases the chances of American involvement in the Malaysian crisis.

I welcome the action that has been taken by the Minister for Defence and the statement by Sir Garfield Barwick. While Australia does not wish to be provocative, it is essential that we be firm.

Under the auspices of the Philippines a cease-fire had been arranged some time ago between Indonesian insurgents on Malaysian territory in Borneo and the Malaysian security forces. The purpose of the cease-fire was to enable negotiations to proceed. The negotiations have not got anywhere because the Malaysians, understandably, have said that these Indonesian forces must be withdrawn from Malaysian soil before any settlement can be reached and the Indonesians have replied that they can only be withdrawn after a political settlement. Not only have the Indonesians refused to withdraw their troops or guerillas, but they have used the cease-fire to reinforce them with materials and additional personnel.

Nobody can tell where this sorry matter can end. Indonesia cannot be allowed to succeed. It remains as to whether her President has the good sense to recognise this. The tragedy of the matter may be that even if he does recognise it the internal forces that he has aroused in Indonesia may make his withdrawal difficult, if not impossible. The important thing for Australia is not only to remain firm but also march in step with our Allies on this matter so that they will know what we are doing at every stage and support it.
NEW GUINEA ELECTION:

The counting has now concluded in the Papua-New Guinea first general election.

The new House of Assembly, which will be opened on the 8th June, will have twenty-six European members and thirty-eight indigenous or mixed race members. Of the twenty-six Europeans, ten will be official members representing the Administration and ten more have come from special electorates at which all people vote but for which only white people could stand. This provision was included at the request of the people of New Guinea and, by people I do not mean white people, because a desire had been expressed to provide for white experience and participation in the new Assembly. It had been feared that if all electorates were open to all people, the overwhelming preponderance of indigenous voters would prevent any white people from being elected. This special provision will probably not be permanent but will be helpful in assisting New Guinea towards full self-government.

However, the most interesting result of the election was that six white people were successful in what are called open electorates. These are the majority of electorates in which indigenous or white people could stand and for which all people in the area could vote. When you look at the overwhelming preponderance of indigenous voters in these open electorates it can be taken as a mark of confidence in what Australia has done to find that six white candidates have been elected; in other words, many of the indigenous people have not voted in accordance with colour, they have voted for the man.
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Fraser, Malcolm

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Liberal Party Federal Council

**Date:**
3 May 1964

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