

COFY

Minister for External Affairs.

CONFIDENTIAL

C/- Australian Mission to the
United Nations,
750 Third Avenue,
New York 17, N.Y., U.S.A.

23rd September 1958

(My dear Minister,)

The Australian authorities have been considering in Canberra the suggestion which you made to me in The Hague that the talks by the Dutch and Australian officials next October should result in a publicly announced statement by our two Governments that they envisage a consultative body for the whole of New Guinea, in which the indigenous populations of both Dutch and Australian Territories would participate.

While the Australian authorities would not exclude the possibility of such a body being eventually developed, they feel that the progress towards it should be built up by bringing natives into consultations on individual subjects. Valuable work on these lines could be performed in such fields as local government, co-operative associations, labour, education, agriculture and health. Native representatives would thus be enabled to discuss particular subjects within their present comprehension and experience. Progress along these lines could well lead to the formation, in due course, of a wider consultative body.

The Australian officials will be ready to discuss our approach fully with Dutch officials at the October meeting in Canberra, when other Dutch and Australian suggestions for co-operation can also be discussed. The present view in Canberra is that we should be cautious about establishing a body with more publicity content than substance. Governments that wanted to be critical would expose its deficiencies, and it would be a cause for embarrassment if it were demonstrated in the United Nations that the "consultative council" was a political facade. We incline to the view that the best results would follow from publicising concrete performance in native participation in specific acts of co-operation. These less ambitious forms of native consultation will, we hope, show at an appropriate time that a more comprehensive and developed form of native participation can be brought into being.

-You-

You will see from the foregoing that, though the Australian authorities do not favour a consultative council at this stage, they do agree with the principle that you put forward at our talks in The Hague, namely, that the conference of officials in October should result in some public announcement of native participation in the measures of co-operation between Dutch and Australian Territories in New Guinea.

We understand also from the Netherlands Ambassador in Canberra that you might wish to make some reference to this matter in the Dutch Parliament before the October conference takes place. If you were to refer in Parliament to the fact that an officials' meeting will take place in Canberra next month, the Australian Government would be quite agreeable to your saying that arrangements for consultative and administrative co-operation between Netherlands and Australian New Guinea will provide wherever appropriate for participation by representatives of the indigenous population of both Netherlands New Guinea and the Australian Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

(I am
Yours sincerely
sgd. R.G. Casey)