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1968 SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, RT.HON. J.G. GORTON. M.P

Prime Minister - Gorton, John

Q Peter Samuel: Mr Prime Minister, two months ago, our delegate at the United Nations spoke on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and he expressed a lot of strong reservations about this treaty, and this led to the expectation that we might join India and France in not signing the treaty, Since then, you have been to the United States, you have been to Asia,, I wonder if you can give us any more indication of your thinking on this treaty?

PM John Gorton: You will have noticed that the resolution which was passed by the General Assembly was to comment the treaty. You will also have noticed that we in Australia indicated that we agreed with the principle of such a treaty but wanted to be sure before we signed it that it was an effective treaty and that we would be requiring answers as to the method of withdrawing from the treaty, questions as to control over people from the international agency who might be sent to be stationed here to examine various defence installations, questions as to the rights one had for the civil uses of atomic energy, questions as to who in fact was going to sign the treaty and who in fact wasn't, and a large number of related questions, So, yes in principle, we think that a treaty of this kind, if it can be made effective, would be good, We have therefore voted to commend it, it is open to signature, but we would wish the answers to a lot of questions we raise to be given to our own satisfaction before we would sign what we commend in principle.

Q: Could I just ask a supplementary question to that one? Will this our decision whether or not to sign depend to any extent on the major strategic re-assessment that you spoke of and-expect in August?

PM: I don't believe so. No, I don't believe so. We have to look decades ahead on this particular matter you have raised. After all, as far as Australia itself is concerned, we have no nuclear capacity at all. We have no nuclear plants at all, nor are likely to have any chance of manufacturing any nuclear defence for at least a decade, so it is not an immediate matter with which we are concerned. It is rather a matter of seeking to see how it will work and, as far as one can, to look ahead to the future of not you or I but younger ones living in Australia.