

AA File. Series A 989,Item 1943 /600/5/1/5, Proposed Establishment of NEI Government in Australia,  
Van Aerssen Beyeren, letter to Evatt, 3 November 1944



PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT,

In reply quote No. A.X.4/1/3

CANBERRA,

19th March, 1945

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MEMORANDUM FOR 21 MAR 1945 The Secretary, Department of External Affairs. No. _____
--

I desire again to draw attention to my minute of 11th November, 1944, covering copy of a communication received from the Royal Netherlands Legation, Melbourne, regarding the establishment in Australia of a Netherlands Indies Government organisation to replace the existing Netherlands Indies Commission for Australia and New Zealand.

I should be glad of the favour of a draft reply in the matter at an early date.

*F. Stahan*

Secretary

*publ.*

*Mr. Bunker*

**COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY,**

**CANBERRA, A.C.T. 9th November, 1944.**

IN REPLY, PLEASE QUOTE NO. 664/44/1361

*Mr. Hood.*  
The Secretary,  
Department of External Affairs,  
CANBERRA, A.C.T.

Dutch Occupation of Camp Columbia.

I refer to Treasury memoranda of 14th April and 12th July, 1944, concerning the above matter and in the absence of reply thereto assume that you have no Departmental objection to action being taken to consider the question of adjustment with the Dutch Authorities on purely financial grounds.

*W. S. Rowe*  
for Secretary to the Treasury.



List of Officials in the NEI government-in-exile:

W 10/4049

ROYAL NETHERLANDS LEGATION

Melbourne 3rd November 1944.

44/600/5/1/5-8  
Indexed By *J. J. A.*

195/306/1

My dear Dr. Evatt,

With reference to our correspondence ending with your letter of 5th April, no. 1429, I have the honour to inform you that Dr. H.J. van Mook has been appointed Lieutenant-Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies by Her Majesty's Government in London, and that he has assumed his duties since his arrival in this country on October 23rd.

195/306/1

The establishment of a Netherlands Indies Government, as announced and explained in my memorandum of March 8th, 1944, has therefore become a fact. This Government will avail themselves with gratitude of the hospitality extended to them by the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, and have their temporary seat in Camp Columbia, Brisbane. As a result of this change the Netherlands Indies Commission is dissolved; their functions are taken over by the Netherlands East Indies Government. The Netherlands Indies trade commissioner will carry on his duties as before; his office remains at Melbourne.

The Netherlands Indies Government is composed as follows:

- Dr. H.J. van Mook, Lieutenant-Governor-General;
- and the Head of the Departments:
  - Dr. N.S. Blom, Director of Justice;
  - Dr. R.E. Smits, Director of Finance;
  - Mr. Ch.C. van der Plas, Director of Interior and Chairman of the Board of Department Heads;
  - Mr. P.A. Kerstens, Director of Education;
  - Dr. J.E. van Hoogstraten, Director of Economic Affairs and acting General Secretary of the Government;
  - ~~Mr. P.H.W. Sitsen, Director of Public Works;~~
  - Lt. General L.H. van Oyen, C. in C. Netherlands Indies Army and Head of Department of War.

In order.....

The Right Honourable  
Dr. H.V. Evatt LL.D., K.C.  
Minister for External Affairs.  
CANBERRA.

*Has Mr. Hood seen this*

*P.W.R.*  
*11.11.44*

W.D.7

National Archives of Australia

NAA: A989, 1943/600/5/1/5

On the new relationship between Australia and NEI:

NEI South East Asia

NEI  
communication

Mr. Forster  
I prepared the  
draft in consultation with  
with record. I don't  
know of any other work  
done on it. Ref 21/11

W27

FOR THE MINISTER:

Now that Dr. van Hook has arrived in Australia and discussions may be expected on the Netherlands Government's desire to set up a Netherlands Indies Administration in this country, it may be useful to examine how far Dutch co-operation may be secured for the aims of Australian national policy, and to have on record an account of Netherlands official activities in this country since the fall of Java.

2. Major aims of Australian policy in the South-west Pacific and South-East Asia are :-

- (1) The formation of a south-western Pacific zone of security, in the establishment of which Australia will act with the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand, Holland, France and Portugal;
- (2) Collaboration with other nations to promote the economic development of the South-eastern Asiatic and South-west Pacific region and the welfare and advancement of the indigenous peoples, looking to the long-term need of political and economic stability of strength in the area;
- (3) The development of communications, especially of air routes, involving terminal facilities for direct air lines to these territories and staging facilities there for international trunk routes.
- (4) Co-operation with other Powers with major interests in the area, especially with smaller powers, to ensure that major political decisions are not decided on a basis of power politics by the three great powers alone.

3. As the Netherlands Indies is the most important and the nearest of neighbouring countries, the place in Australian policy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (the whole Dutch policy, including Holland, the Netherlands Indies, Curacao and Surinam) is clearly of the first importance.

4. While it is very difficult to estimate the probable nature and strength of the Dutch hold on the East Indies after the war, or to estimate the importance of the Netherlands in world affairs generally, it is safe to assume that these will approximate closely to those prevailing before the war. The whole Dutch nation will of course have been considerably weakened. Holland will have been economically disorientated by the German occupation and the Indies by the Japanese, while in each territory the governing political and economic class will have been reduced in numbers and strength. On the other hand assistance in restoring the Dutch position both in Europe and Asia is likely to be forthcoming from the United Kingdom on strategic grounds. The United Kingdom government has already given a formal undertaking to restore the Netherlands and its

/possessions

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
44/6005/1/5-2  
checked by  
Indexed by

musc

National Archives of Australia

NAA: A989, 1943/600/5/1/5



possessions and although leading Dutch personalities have expressed concern at the possible development of United States policy, it is unlikely that the United States will depart greatly from the United Kingdom attitude in this regard, although the United States might well seek a considerable voice in the Malaysian settlement. It is therefore prudent to assume that the pre-war political shape of the Netherlands Indies will be in the main modified only in so far as this is brought about by the Dutch themselves.

5. The main indication of Dutch intentions in this respect is contained in a broadcast by the Queen of the Netherlands in December, 1942, announcing that a conference would be held after the liberation of Netherlands territory to discuss the structure of the Kingdom of the Netherlands "in order to adapt it to changed circumstances". The address contained this statement :-

"I visualize.....a Commonwealth, in which the Netherlands, Indonesia, Surinam and Curaçao will participate with complete self-reliance and freedom of conduct for each part regarding internal affairs, but with readiness to render mutual assistance. It is my opinion that such a combination of independence and collaboration can give the Kingdom and its parts the strength to carry fully their responsibility, both internally and externally. This would leave no room for discrimination, according to race and nationality. Only the ability of the populations will determine the policy of the Government."

6. The outcome of this conference can at present only be guessed. The creation as its outcome of a fully autonomous Netherlands Indian dominion is highly unlikely, owing to the economic dependence of metropolitan Holland on the Indies, the lack of political consciousness or of administrative experience of all but a very small number of Indonesians, and the possibly weakened position of the so-called "Blijvers", or locally-born European Dutch. On the whole therefore we shall probably have to deal with an administration in the Indies of European Dutchmen actuated by motives of self-interest, reluctant to delegate authority to Indonesians, severe in repression of nationalist agitation, and tenacious of the position in the Pacific of Holland as a western colonial power.

7. This rather unpromising prospect may present very difficult problems for the development of Australian policy.

8. A primary factor in this connection will be Dutch fear of a second Asiatic conquest, and a consequent willingness to enter wholeheartedly into any scheme of South-West Pacific regional security. The experience of 1941, when the Indies' inadequate supply of war material could not be augmented from Europe or America will also lead the Indies administration to look to Australia as a source of defence materials in time of emergency. Similarly a sense of solidarity with their western neighbours to the south may prove a considerable influence on the Indies Dutch in their relations with Australia, of which Australia may tacitly take advantage, while, of course, itself following no policy which would offend Indonesian aspirations, or compromise our long-term aims.

9. The second important consideration will be Dutch fear of United States imperialism, or alternatively of internationalist forces in the United States which would endanger Dutch sovereignty in the archipelago.

10. A third reason for expecting an accommodating attitude to this country on the part of the Dutch, both in the Pacific and

/in Europe,



in Europe, is the dislike of a small power of the present trend in which all major decisions are taken by the three great powers alone without consultation with other United Nations.

11. On both these points there is much to show that the Dutch agree generally with the Australian Government's views. The Dutch Foreign Minister on 25th November, 1943, while making it clear that he understood <sup>that</sup> "for Holland there can be no security if in the rest of the world no safety can be found" expressed the opinion that security should be ensured by "an organisation based on regions, not neglecting the universal factor of an indivisible peace. Such a thing can only be achieved by the collaboration of like-minded States". The Dutch have betrayed anxiety also at the tendency, mentioned in paragraph 2(4) for vital political decisions affecting smaller members of the United Nations to be taken by the three major Allies without those smaller powers being permitted to exercise an influence commensurate with their interest. The Australian High Commissioner in London said at the end of 1942 :

"I have gathered from recent conversations that members of the Netherlands Government have been perturbed by views held in certain quarters of the United States on European Imperialism and the future of the colonies in South-East Asia",

and the Netherlands authorities are known to be anxious at the views held by Mr. Cordell Hull and other American politicians concerning colonial reorganisation.

12. The commercial connection between Australia and the Netherlands East Indies was firmly established before the war, but the value of Netherlands Indies petroleum and tea imported into Australia greatly exceeded the value of imports from Australia, although Australian food products found a ready market in the Indies. There is clearly scope for an expansion of exports which would contribute not only to Australian commercial progress but also to the expansion of consumption which is necessary to "extend the frontiers of human welfare" as the Atlantic Charter envisages. The impossibility of obtaining supplies from Europe will be Australia's opportunity in the immediate post-war years, and the Dutch have already begun to place orders here in connection with U.N.R.R.A..

13. In the administrative sphere also, Dutch support may be expected for a policy of closer collaboration. Before the war scant attention was paid by the Dutch to their New Guinea colony and relations between the Dutch and Australian colonial administrations, although uniformly friendly, were not very close. However, unprecedented efforts are now being made by the Dutch to promote a more rapid development of the free zone of New Guinea, and it is to be anticipated that they will welcome the establishment of closer relations with the Australian New Guinea territories. The Dutch are already indebted to Australia for facilitating the establishment of a school for colonial administration in Australia.

14. The discussions with Dr. van Mook may present an opportunity for agreement on a common approach to the major questions with which the Government is confronted at this stage.

15. For the sake of convenience an account of Netherlands activities in Australia since the fall of Java is attached.

CANBERRA, A.C.T.  
6th March, 1944.



#### APPENDIX.

At the beginning of March, 1942, the Netherlands Consul-General at Sydney informed the Australian Government that the Lieutenant-Governor-General of the Netherlands East Indies, the Commander-in-Chief of the Netherlands East Indies Air Force, and Dr. Van der Plas, a member of the Council of the Indies, had arrived in Australia. On 4th March, the Consul-General advised that the Netherlands Government had appointed Dr. Van Hoogstraten as Commissioner for External and Maritime Affairs for Australia and New Zealand. On 20th March the Australian Government was informed that Dr. van Mook, in his capacity as Lieutenant-Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies, had been "specially authorised by the Netherlands Government in London to make such arrangements and enter into such agreements as were necessary to safeguard Netherlands East Indies interests in this country."

On 21st April the Netherlands Minister informed the Australian Government that the liquidation of transactions concerning cargoes originally destined for the Indies and the liquidation of orders placed before the Japanese invasion was a function of the "Netherlands Indies Commission for Australia and New Zealand", established by Dr. Van Mook before his departure for London. This Mission consisted of Dr. van Hoogstraten (Chairman), two Commissioners and a Secretary. Baron van Aerssen added that each Commissioner and also the Secretary were empowered to act on behalf of the Commission.

On 7th October, 1942, the Netherlands Minister supplied the Australian Government with certain particulars of the Commission's competence. He stated that the functions would be more comprehensive than formerly and would include direction of the Dutch war effort in the Pacific, the management and control of Netherlands Indies property in Australia and New Zealand, and collaboration in the external financial sphere with regard to reconstruction, shipping, Netherlands Indies Civil Aviation, publicity, and propaganda. The Australian Government, after receiving a satisfactory definition of the term "Netherlands East Indies property" recognised the Commission as performing these functions. The Commission acts as representative of the Netherlands Minister of Colonies in London, in whom a Royal Decree has vested all prerogatives of general administration in the Netherlands Indies; it acts under the general supervision of the Netherlands Minister in Australia, who co-operates with the Netherlands Minister in New Zealand. The Netherlands Indies Trade Commissioner in Australia works under the Commission's direction.

The Netherlands Indies Government Information Service which has been set up with headquarters in Melbourne is concerned with propaganda directed to the Netherlands East Indies and with collation of information from the Indies. It co-operates with the Australian Department of Information and Short-Wave Division and works under the general supervision of the Netherlands Diplomatic Mission in Australia.

In October, 1943, the Australian Minister to the Netherlands was informed by the Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs that General Van Oyen had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Netherlands Land Forces in the South-west Pacific and would be charged with the creation of a nucleus for an administration for liberated Dutch territories and with the establishment in Australia of a Netherlands Indies War Department.

/ General ...



2.

General Van Oyen arrived in Australia at the end of October, but the Department has no record of his subsequent activities.

A Dutch-Indonesian training school for colonial administrators has been set up in Australia.

Approximately 1,000 airmen of the Netherlands East Indies Forces have been or are being trained as pilots in Australia.

November 1843: About NEI government being posted in Aus

COLONEL HODGSON

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
C. 52059  
Sent: 20th November, 1943.

B/PA

DECRYPTER TO:  
AUSTRALIAN MINISTER TO  
THE NETHERLANDS,  
LONDON

**CABLEGRAM.**

43/600/5/1/5-2  
B.E. J.H.

N.2. Your N.36. MOST IMMEDIATE.

To Bruce from Evatt.

Please strongly discourage notion of sending Netherlands Indies Governor to this country. In the present situation appointment would be most embarrassing.

I regard it as an essential that Van Kleffens should attend Pacific Conference referred to in my recent speech and that future of Dutch New Guinea and Dutch Timor should then be discussed along principles already accepted by Portuguese Government in relation to Portuguese Timor.

These principles are stated in writing in certain letters between Eden and myself which I presume you have seen.

If you can obtain agreement with Netherlands Government to such principles or better still agreement for a long lease to this country which would not impair Netherlands sovereignty you would achieve a diplomatic result of tremendous importance to the future security of Australia.

As you know Timor and Dutch New Guinea were left practically defenceless with resultant liability of dire consequence to Australia.

The matter needs most delicate handling as in case of Portugal but I am confident you can achieve the results desired.

Above all you must put the Van Mook plan effectively but without publicity.

Copy: Dr. Evatt.  
Col. Hodgson.  
22/11/43

RECEIVED 22/11/43

National Archives of Australia NAA: A989, 1943/600/5/1/5