

APPENDIX C

TEXT OF SPEECH MADE BY RT HON. W. NASH AT OPENING PLENARY SESSION, 28 JANUARY, 1947

MR CHAIRMAN, MR PRIME MINISTER, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

As the representative of New Zealand, I have come to-day to join in the warm welcome extended to you by the Prime Minister of Australia. The origin of our meeting goes back to 21 January, 1944, particularly with regard to the two countries which extended the invitation to come to this Conference. On that occasion there was signed the Agreement commonly known as the Canberra Pact.

It has been operating for three years, and during those three years there have been many discussions between the two Governments to find out how we could start along a comparatively new road to achieve the objectives at which we aim. In Section 31 of the Pact there are set out various objectives, associated with the Conference in which we are taking part to-day.

We, as a Government, are tremendously privileged to think that, with Australia, our invitations have gone out to four countries with great traditions, great responsibilities, and great achievements in connection with the advancement of the peoples of the world—socially, politically, and economically. It is a great privilege to join with the representatives of those countries here to-day.

In addition to the foundation laid in the Canberra Pact, we can now go a little further, because of the fact that the Charter of the United Nations also devotes three of its chapters to the same objective for which we are meeting here to-day. The objective, in a few words, is the welfare of the dependent peoples, but it could be, as I see it, more clearly expressed, if we were to get that new vision, which we have not always had—that is, to end, perhaps gradually but for all time, the exploitation of the Native peoples in the Pacific Area for the benefit of people outside that area. We are here to discuss ways and means in which we can benefit the residents of the South Pacific Islands themselves. That transcends everything else.

How can we benefit those peoples whose varying conditions we have come here to consider? We can improve the social, economic, education, and health facilities of these areas, all the time remembering that the interests of the Native inhabitants are paramount. It is not the Governments represented here whose interests are paramount. They are concerned only to meet the interests of the Natives. We must help them to live longer and more healthfully than they have in the past. For that purpose we have come to pool our experiences and to co-operate, to benefit, to create an organization for the purpose of investigating and advising, not another governmental authority in addition to those already in existence to-day, but an advisory body which will help the Governments concerned to do things for the benefit of the Natives.

I believe that we can do much by advice and research to increase the production of the areas concerned, but (I would stress it once again) to increase production for the benefit of the people who live there and not for the benefit of others. By these means we will increase their enjoyment of life, not exclusively their pleasures as we use the term, but by widening their horizons and promoting the enjoyment of life for the longest possible period in a healthy condition.