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SUBJECT



File No  
a R Pearson

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

22 February 1985

CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY THE NEW ZEALAND HIGH  
COMMISSIONER, 22 FEBRUARY 1985

The New Zealand High Commissioner paid an introductory call on the Prime Minister this afternoon. I enclose a copy of his letter of introduction.

Mr. Walding began by thanking the Prime Minister for the support which New Zealand had received from Britain over the years. The Prime Minister said that she could assure him that it would continue.

Mr. Walding then raised the issue of ship visits. Prime Minister Lange had given a clear and unambiguous electoral commitment to prevent visits by ships carrying nuclear weapons. He could not go back on this. There was no question of New Zealand telling the United States or the United Kingdom that they should unilaterally disarm. Britain's policies were no doubt right for Britain. Nor was New Zealand demanding to know whether or not particular ships were carrying nuclear weapons. They would form their own judgement on this. New Zealand wanted to be free of nuclear weapons. The problem would have to sort itself out.

The Prime Minister said that the New Zealand Government must be under no illusion: the United States was deeply upset by New Zealand's action. As far as they were concerned New Zealand was opting out. This was likely to rebound unfavourably on every aspect of New Zealand's relations with the United States. The Prime Minister continued that she fully shared the United States' alarm. The concept of a nuclear free zone was a facile one: a simple declaration was futile. Moreover the distinction Mr. Walding drew between asking us to say what was on our ships and reserving the right to reach their own conclusions was meaningless in practice. The worst possible outcome would be for a British ship to be refused admission to a New Zealand port. Mr. Walding asked whether the United States Administration had suggested to the Prime Minister that she

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lean on New Zealand. The United States' behaviour was not dissimilar to the way the Soviet Union treated the East Europeans. The Prime Minister said that it was quite unacceptable to us that one of our ships engaged in the defence of freedom world-wide should be refused access to a New Zealand port and she would not want to put the Royal Navy in a position where that would be a risk. Her advice was that the New Zealand Government should take a very low profile while the matter was sorted out.

Mr. Walding said that he had explained to Mr. Lange the Government's misgivings about his proposed participation in the Oxford Union debate on nuclear weapons. Mr. Lange had assured him that it was not his intention to stir up trouble or attack the policies of HMG. He would put New Zealand's case and hoped that what he had to say would be helpful. The Prime Minister commented that the very fact of Mr. Lange's participation was bound to be linked with developments over ships' visits and worsen the atmosphere.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



CFC



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

22 February, 1985

Dear Charles,

Ch. 2/2.

Call on the Prime Minister by the New Zealand High Commissioner

The newly-arrived New Zealand High Commissioner paid an introductory call on Lady Young this morning.

The Prime Minister may wish to have an account before her own meeting with him this afternoon. Mr Walding said that he very much hoped that a solution could be found to the problem of ships visits. The New Zealand government drew a distinction between the defence policy appropriate for Britain and NATO and that which was suitable for New Zealand. There was strong public resistance in New Zealand to the idea that the country should get embroiled in schemes involving nuclear weapons. Nuclear deterrence was probably the right policy for Britain, but the New Zealand Government did not think it was right for the South Pacific.

Mr Walding said that New Zealand was not seeking to break its defence ties with the United States or Britain. But the New Zealand Government had a sovereign right to determine its own defence policies and would not give in to public pressure on this issue either; indeed the latter would only be counter-productive. New Zealand sought security through the proposals for a nuclear free zone in the South Pacific.

Mr Walding said that there had been much discussion of New Zealand's refusal to accept a "neither confirm nor deny" policy as regards nuclear weapons on ships. The New Zealand Government was not asking the nuclear powers to tell them what their warships were carrying. It would make its own assessment of the capability of naval ships and looked to its allies to send those ships to New Zealand ports which met New Zealand's requirements.

Lady Young set out HMG's position on ships visits on standard lines.

Yours ever,  
Peter Ricketts

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

A very  
odd  
concept.