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TEXT OF CABLE FROM AMBASSADOR CLARK (Canberra, 2462)

SUBJECT: Australian Government Reaction to Manila Conference

Prime Minister Holt, who is still in a state of euphoria as a result of the President's visit, has commented to us that Manila was "a great meeting that just couldn't have been better." His enthusiasm, however, is not shared by Bunting, Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, who was more relieved that no serious problems arose during the Conference than impressed by solid accomplishments. He had been apprehensive that the Filipinos might carry peace too far and press for a communique implying peace at any price, which fortunately did not happen, although he is still concerned that the Government of the Philippines may pursue this theme in other forums. He was also concerned that the Thais might press for a "Pacific Charter," or that the Koreans would adopt too belligerent a posture. He was pleased that no country took an extreme position and that a feeling of unanimity prevailed. Beyond this, however, he doesn't feel that a great deal was accomplished.

On the other hand, Jockel, First Assistant Secretary for External Affairs, who participated in the drafting of the communique, considers the Conference achieved some very positive results. He shared Bunting's criticism of the Filipino's "peace communique" and their rather erratic behavior generally, but said other delegates had made very useful contributions. Among Asian participants, he was especially impressed by Ky and others from Vietnam. Jockel considers the communique, for which he gives the U.S. delegation the most credit, is a very good document. He said it is in complete harmony with Australian policy on Vietnam.

Jockel feels the Vietnamese made a number of commitments on land reform, local elections, respecting the 17th parallel, and other matters which got a great deal out of the Conference in terms of a firm commitment on the part of the participants to see the war through and the absence of any reference to participation of the NLF in peace negotiations or other "peace gestures" which South Vietnam would have had great difficulty accepting. He was also impressed by the feeling of unity which existed and the fact that participants took the Conference seriously and not for show.

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Both Bunting and Jockel agree the Manila Conference plus ASPAC and the President's visit have helped give the Australians an increased sense of participation in Asian-Pacific affairs and brought them to realize they have an important role to play in the region. They also believe an important by-product of the meeting is that Asians are more convinced than before that the U.S. has deep and abiding interests in Asian affairs and that we are not going to tire of the struggle for peace and progress.

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