

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

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WEST NEW GUINEA

Statement by Mr. J.W. Holmes of Canada, in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, February 27, 1957.

We find this debate distressing because it involves a conflict of views between countries which we consider to be our good friends. It is a difficult question, and one on which there are on both sides strong views sincerely held. We have studied these views seriously and earnestly, not just in preparation for this debate, but on many occasions during the years since the founding of the Indonesian Republic.

It has been our view in the past, and it still is, that if there is a genuine legal dispute on the status of West New Guinea, as there appears to be, it should be referred to the International Court of Justice for a decision. Although it has been said that this is a political rather than a legal dispute, we have listened to considerable and very well-reasoned arguments from both the Indonesian and Netherlands Delegations on the constitutional position of West New Guinea. It would certainly assist in reaching a fair judgment on this subject to have the opinion of the best international authority. Unfortunately, however, it has not been possible as yet to seek the decision of the International Court.

In the absence of such a decision, I am bound to say that we have not been convinced of the argument for a change in the status of this territory. I would like to assure the representative of Indonesia that we have listened to his moderate and reasonable exposition with great care, with sympathy, and with a strong desire to understand the point of view of a country in the position of Indonesia. My country has proved many times its sympathy with all countries engaged in the arduous endeavour to establish and develop their own governments, and I know that our friends in Indonesia will recognize that our views on this matter of West Irian are not the product of prejudice. It is just that we cannot, with all due respect, understand why the people of West New Guinea should be annexed to a country with which they have had only the most