

DEPUTATION ON WAGES CLAIMS

Statement by the Acting Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. J. McEwen, M.P.

The Acting Prime Minister Mr. McEwen, received a deputation this morning from the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the High Council of Public Service Organisations, the Council of Professional Associations and the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations.

The deputation urged three things:

First, that the Government should direct the Public Service Board to negotiate with the Organisations with a view at least to interim increases in remuneration pending the final decisions by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission on the claims before it.

Second, that the Government should agree to any decision by the Commission being given retro-active application.

Third, that the Government should restore the independence that the Public Service Arbitrator possessed prior to 1952.

Mr. McEwen explained to the the deputation that their first request touched a question of high policy which had been considered by the Government on a number of occasions. The truth was that the Commonwealth had responsibilities which went beyond those of an ordinary employer concerned to do justice to his employees. Of course, the Commonwealth wanted to see justice done to its employees. However, decisions that the Commonwealth took had a far-reaching effect beyond its own employment. They bore upon the State Public Services and private industry.

It was clear that whatever decisions were arrived at by the Commission on the many and varied issues raised by the claims before it, they could have a profound bearing on the future standards of remuneration of professional and "white collar" workers throughout Australia. Doubtless that was why the organisations had elected to take their claims to the Full Commission. Certainly the circumstances required that the decision on these issues should be taken by the supreme Commonwealth tribunal, and that they should not in any way be prejudged by action by the Commonwealth.

Mr. McEwen pointed out that not dissimilar considerations applied with respect to the margins claims for industrial type employees.

Mr. McEwen explained that nothing that he had said derogated from the Government's concern to see conciliation practised to the full. The Public Service Board had, in fact, often engaged in conciliation.

Mr. McEwen was gratified to find that no one was alleging that such delays as had occurred in the hearing of the current cases could be ascribed to action on the part of the Commonwealth. He said the Government wanted the current cases to go ahead with the greatest expedition.

In reply to suggestions that perhaps the Commission might be disposed to make an interim Award, Mr. McEwen said that if such an application were made to the Commission, the Commonwealth would not automatically oppose it. It would carefully weigh the substance of the application and the whole of the circumstances and advance a responsible attitude to it.

1914

March 1st

Dear Mr. [Name] [Address] [City] [State] [Country]
I have received your letter of the 28th inst. and am
glad to hear from you. I am well and hope this
letter finds you the same. I am sorry to hear
that you are not well. I hope you will soon
be able to get on your feet again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

I am sure you will be able to do so. I am
very sorry to hear that you are not well. I
hope you will soon be able to get on your feet
again.

2.

As to retro-activity, Mr. McEwen said he was aware there had been occasions when there had been agreement to back-dating the application of an Award. If an application for retro-activity were made to the tribunal, the Commonwealth would determine its attitude in the light of all relevant circumstances.

Finally, Mr. McEwen observed that the decision taken by the Government in 1952 to provide for references and appeals to the Commission from the Public Service Arbitrator was a deliberate act of its policy in the field of industrial relations.

MELBOURNE,
18th June, 1959.