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RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES LEGISLATION

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies

Hysterical statements by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Calwell, such as his comment on my address to the Dinner of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures, serve only to exhibit his over-excited state of mind.

It was made quite clear, when the first statement was made on restrictive practices policy in the House of Representatives, that it was a general description of the kind of ideas the Government had. That statement was deliberately designed and timed to give ample opportunity for criticism and discussion before a bill was drafted for consideration by the Parliament. Sir Garfield Barwick, the Attorney-General, has himself carried out this idea with enormous vigour. He has met organisations and groups of people in every State to elicit and discuss points of criticism, so that the Government might have them in mind before proceeding to the actual work of precise draftsmanship.

When we recently saw the representatives of the Manufacturing Industries Advisory Council -- which, I should point out, is a standing body set up by the Government to give it advice -- those present for the Government were the Minister for Trade, Mr. McEwen, the Treasurer, Mr. Holt, the Minister for National Development, Sir William Spooner, the Attorney-General, Sir Garfield Barwick, the Minister for Primary Industry, Mr. Adermann, and myself. We all thought that the views presented on behalf of the M.I.A.C. - on the precise nature of which neither the Government nor the Council has made any statement - were the most balanced and constructive that we had had presented to us. We will undoubtedly find them of great advantage to us in considering what the final shape of the legislation should be. As I said in Sydney, I regard this kind of consultation as of great value in clarifying issues and helping to achieve a sound and positive result.

In the light of the foregoing it is quite clear that Mr. Calwell's strange attempt to suggest that Sir Garfield Barwick has been in some way rebuffed is the product of pure imagination; or at any rate of imagination.

All Ministers had a hand in designing the original general statement and all will have a hand in the final outcome.

I repeat that nobody has done half as much in this matter as has Sir Garfield in seeking out the points of criticism and in trying to achieve ultimately a result which will be sensible and fair to the community as a whole.

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CANBERRA,  
15th September, 1963.