

EMBARGO : NOT TO BE RELEASED OR CABLED ABROAD BEFORE 10 PM (EST)
TUESDAY, 14th DECEMBER, 1965.

FOR PRESS :

P.M. No. 95/1965

APPOINTMENT OF SIR MACFARLANE BURNET AS CHAIRMAN
OF THE COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION

Statement by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies

A statement is being released in London tonight concerning the Commonwealth Foundation. Commonwealth Governments have appointed Sir Macfarlane Burnet, O.M., to be the first Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. The statement is as follows :-

"At their 1965 meeting, the Commonwealth Prime Ministers approved proposals for the establishment of a Commonwealth Foundation.

The Foundation is to administer a fund for increasing interchanges between Commonwealth organisations in professional fields throughout the Commonwealth.

The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Commonwealth High Commissioners in London, and the Commonwealth Secretary-General held a meeting at the Commonwealth Relations Office on 9 December in order to consider appointments and other preliminary measures necessary to the establishment of the Foundation.

Commonwealth Governments have agreed that Sir Macfarlane Burnet, O.M., F.R.S., M.D., SC.D., F.R.C.P., shall be the first Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

This is an honorary appointment.

It was also agreed that Mr. G.W. St. J. Chadwick, C.M.G. should be the first Director.

Sir Macfarlane Burnet is one of the most distinguished of living Australians.

He is a world figure in the treatment of virus diseases and a winner (jointly with Professor Sir Peter Medawar of London) of the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1960.

He retired this year from the Directorship of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute and Professorship of Experimental Medicine in the University of Melbourne, posts which he held from 1944.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Society, President of the Australian Academy of Science, a member of the Medical Research Advisory Committee of the World Health Organisation, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences.

He was knighted in 1951, and awarded the Order of Merit in 1958.

Mr. G.W. St. J. Chadwick is an Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Commonwealth Relations Office.

...../2

He has served in London, Ottawa and Paris and is at present concerned with African affairs.

He has also made a special study of the professional links in the Commonwealth.

He is being seconded to the Foundation for an initial period of two years.

During this period he will be a servant, not of the British Government, but of the Foundation and the Commonwealth as a whole.

A Board of Trustees is being established by Commonwealth Governments.

Details of this will be announced later.

It will now be for the Chairman, the Board of Trustees and the Director to consider together the detailed arrangements for the setting up of the Foundation."

I am delighted about this appointment which is a great honour for Australia. The Commonwealth Foundation is one of the new initiatives in Commonwealth co-operation which has been agreed on by Commonwealth countries. There are already a number of useful interchanges between professional organisations in the Commonwealth and it has been demonstrated that these are an effective way of sharing knowledge and achieving agreement and co-operation. The Foundation will serve a useful and important purpose in furthering these interchanges.

The Foundation will have a permanent Director in London who is to be Mr. G.W. St.J. Chadwick formerly of the Commonwealth Relations Office. Sir Macfarlane, as Chairman, will be required to attend meetings periodically in London. There will also be a Board of Trustees and Australia's representative on the Board will be the Australian High Commissioner in London, Sir Alexander Downer.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Government and all Australians I wish Sir Macfarlane great success in his chairmanship of this new enterprise.

CANBERRA,
14th December, 1965.