



PRIME MINISTER

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REPRESENTATION AT I.L.O.

Australia would strengthen its labour representation in Europe and its relations with the International Labour Organisation and with other organisations concerned with manpower and social affairs in Europe, by appointing in Europe a Special Labour Adviser with the personal rank of Ambassador, to handle all labour questions, the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Whitlam, announced today.

This representative would be Dr. P.H. Cook, at present Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service. He has had great experience in the work of the I.L.O. and has participated on many occasions as Australia's representative at I.L.O. Conferences.

Dr. Cook would be attached for administrative purposes to the Australian Mission to the United Nations in Geneva but would have wide-ranging responsibilities covering the whole of Europe. As well as carrying out representation and continuing relations with the major organs of the I.L.O. and its Office, Dr. Cook would assist the Australian Ambassador to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as Australia's principal representative for manpower and social affairs questions with the Organisation. The O.E.C.D., of which Australia became a member in June 1971, has an important Manpower and Social Affairs Directorate within its secretariat and conducts meetings of Government representatives through its Manpower and Social Affairs Committee, as well as through seminars and other specialist meetings of experts from Western European and North American countries and Japan. For a number of years, O.E.C.D. has urged Member governments to adopt an active manpower policy, particularly through measures to facilitate and stimulate mutually beneficial adaptation between the labour force and the needs of a rapidly changing economy.

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Dr. Cook would generally keep in touch with manpower developments in Western Europe, especially those which may be of direct interest to the Australian situation. He would, inter alia, maintain regular contact with such organisations, as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

Mr. Whitlam emphasised the importance he attached to Australia's active participation in I.L.O. and to ratification of I.L.O. Conventions. He said that Australia had, at one time, led the world with some of the most progressive labour legislation but, during the last twenty years, had fallen far behind many of the countries in Western Europe. It was now time to catch up. In many instances conditions of work, social security, retirement benefits and many other things vital both to the individual worker and to the economy as a whole were now much more favourable to workers in European countries than in Australia. We must learn in depth and in detail just what European countries had managed to achieve while we had been standing still. The appointment in Europe of a senior representative with a great background of experience and expertise in labour matters would go a long way to help remedy the lack of progress in Australia in recent years.

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