

From the Press Office

SUMMARY OF ABC'S NEWSVOICE

The Federal Opposition has called for the resignation of three ministers over their handling of the alleged Social Security fraud by more than 100 people. Mr. Bowen called for the resignations of Senator Guilfoyle, Senator Durack and Mr. McLeay. The call accompanies a demand for a judicial enquiry into the handling of investigations. Peter George reports: Today's attack in Question Time began in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Senator Durack admitted that it was apparently unprecedented for a police informer to be granted a pardon and to be paid a reward for information. He was referring to a pardon granted Mr. Nakos in 1977 for any illegal acts in the alleged fraud and to negotiations with the Commonwealth Police for a reward of up to \$200,000 on completion of a successful prosecution. Senator Durack said his Department was unaware that Mr. Nakos was the same man with whom the reward negotiations were being conducted. He expressed his concern of the matter and said he would pursue it tomorrow. In answer to further questions Senator Guilfoyle read a letter from her Department Head, Mr. Lanigan. Broadly he denies involvement in the negotiations on the reward but he does say a Department officer did find out in 1977 that a figure of up to \$30,000 might be available through the Department of Finance with the approval of the Treasurer. Later when the larger figure was suggested Mr. Lanigan said he feared a confidence trick and that lives of officers might be endangered if they became improperly involved in the negotiations. Senator Guilfoyle said Mr. Lanigan recalled mentioning a reward to her but she had no recollection of it and Mr. Lanigan agreed she would never have approved a reward payment. In the House, Mr. McLeay was subject to questioning by Mr. Bowen on the alleged use of phone tapping in the investigation. Mr. McLeay replied that there was a grey area developing on what was a phone tap and what was a 'listening device' and he would not become involved in questions of law. Then this afternoon Mr. Bowen made the call for the three ministers resignation, claiming they had failed in their ministerial responsibilities and he explained why to Duncan Fairweather.

Mr. Bowen:

The first gave untrue information to Parliament and then made the excuse she did not know that Senator Guilfoyle. (sic) The second one appears to be Senator Durack who said he didn't know to whom he had given the pardon. I would have thought you would have been able to at least find out to whom you gave a pardon, and on what basis, particularly when you are the chief law officer in Australia and the third one is Mr. McLeay, the Minister in charge of the police, who said he doesn't know what the law is and accordingly he really doesn't care whether his officers act in accordance with the law or not. It is a ministerial responsibility to Parliament. It means that minister's can't rely on answers that they don't know or they are ignorant of the situation, whether it be facts or law. They are accountable to their Departments, they are accountable to the people of Australia. If they don't perform they should be dismissed.

The Commonwealth Police Officer in charge of investigating the alleged Greek Conspiracy case, Detective Chief Inspector Donald Thomas, said in court in Sydney today, that Federal Cabinet would be the final arbiter on the amount of payment to be made to the police informant, Mr. Nakos.

Under cross examination Chief Inspector Thomas said Cabinet would consider the value of Nakos' evidence at completion of all court proceedings. He said Cabinet would make a realistic appraisal of Nakos' contribution whether or not the Crown was successful in obtaining convictions. Thomas said one of the criteria for the then Commonwealth Police Commissioner's approval in principal, that a payment of \$200,000 could well be a proper amount, taking all relevant considerations into account, was contained in the letter written by Nakos' solicitor. In the letter his solicitor wrote that the amount was .76% of what the Commonwealth would save over ten years if the fraud would stop. Thomas said any notes he had even taken of conversations between himself and Nakos had been destroyed. He said he did not want to risk revealing the informant's identity to anyone, not even Commonwealth Government officers. The Crown Prosecutor told the court earlier today that an application had been made to have Nakos recalled to give further evidence. Nakos would not be recalled until after the Christmas break. Susan Curran: Sydney.

A full bench of the Arbitration Commission today granted 26,000 Telecom workers, wage rises which for most workers mean an increase of between \$11- \$12 a week. The increases ranging from \$7.50 to \$20 a week were backdated to 17 July and will apply for 17 months. The Telecom workers had asked for rises of at least \$27 a week for tradesmen. After the decision the Federal Secretary of the Australian Telecommunications Employees Association said he was disgusted and there was a distinct possibility that his members would take further industrial action. Interviewed.

The stand-off between the United States and Iran continues amid intensive diplomatic activity at the United Nations and speculation that the deposed Shah may be well enough to leave the United States in ten days. In earlier developments Iran announced that it was withdrawing billions of dollars in foreign currency reserves from American banks and President Carter countered by saying that he was freezing Iranian assets and declaring the crisis a national emergency. Ian MacIntoch from New York: After a day of discussion the 15 members of the United Nations Security Council has yet to announce their decision on Iran's request for an urgent meeting to hear grievances against the United States. Further consultations are expected tomorrow but informed sources at the United Nations still expect the Council to reject the Iranian request or defer any such session until after the hostages at the American Embassy in Teheran are released. While Iran continues to demand the extradition of the deposed Shah and the United States refuses to negotiate until the hostages are freed it is understood that the Security Council members including the Soviet Union, China and non-aligned countries are in basic agreement with the American contention that they should not hear Iran's views whilst the hostages are being held. But it is not known why if such a concensus exists a formal announcement to that affect has yet to be made.

Senator Martin and Senator Ryan accompanied a United States delegation to Kampuchea and returned today. Senator Ryan was ill on the flight home but Senator Martin spoke to a reporter in Canberra about what she described as the incredible suffering and hardship she saw. Senator Martin said she would ask Australians to give money to the aid agencies as it is being very well used.

A big clean up is underway in areas of South Australia hit by wild storms which caused millions of dollars of damage late yesterday and last night. In the worst hit township Port Broughton an estimated 300 holiday shacks were smashed by the wind and another 200 damaged. Ten people needed hospital treatment for severe cuts and another 60 suffered minor injuries.

Another big mergure has been proposed between two leading Australian companies. Brambles Industries Ltd. is to join forces with the building supplies company, Acmil Ltd. The mergure involves a share swap arrangement in which Brambles will offer two of its shares plus 20 cents cash for every two shares in Acmil. At current market prices the offer values Acmil at \$143 million, the biggest offer for an Australian industrial-based company.