

PRIME MINISTERTUESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 1979

From the Press Office

SUMMARY OF ABC's NEWSVOICE

Rupert Murdoch announced today he was making a takeover offer worth about \$126 million for the Melbourne based media group, The Herald and Weekly Times. Mr. Murdoch, the chief executive of the News Limited Group, said today he wanted to get control of just over 50 per cent of the group. Among its interests the Herald and Weekly Times publishes and Herald and Sun in Melbourne, owns two radio stations, and controls a Melbourne television station. News Limited publishes the Australian, the Mirror and the Daily Telegraph in Sydney, the News in Adelaide and a number of Sunday, country and suburban newspapers. Don Lang reports from Melbourne. Mr. Murdoch walked unannounced into the Herald Office this morning and demanded to see the Chairman. He told Mr. MacPherson of the takeover and at 10 am the Stock Exchange was informed. Mr. Murdoch then went to the Age Building to inform its Managing Director, Mr. McDonald. Mr. Murdoch said the takeover had been his subconscious ambition for some time but it had only become a possibility in the last few weeks. At the bid of \$4 a share Mr. Murdoch valued the Herald at about twice of what would become the parent company, New Limited. He claims to have raised the \$126 million to realise his ambition to control marginally more than half the Herald's shares. The deal is subject to approval from the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal and under Tribunal regulations, the Herald would have to sell off its interest in television stations in Brisbane, Adelaide and Hobart. This would leave Mr. Murdoch with control of Channel 10 in Sydney and 7 in Melbourne. Mr. MacPherson said a board meeting would be held as soon as possible and advise the shareholders not to sell. Despite that Herald shares rose sharply in Sydney and Melbourne on large turnovers today. In Melbourne it rose \$1.01 to close at \$3.76 and it was up \$10.2 in Sydney to \$3.78. Mr. Murdoch says he is confident he will be able to get control of the company and if he does he will control the largest selling newspapers in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, two capital city television stations, radio stations in Victoria, chains of country and suburban newspapers, a number of printing companies, magazines and journals, as well as his interests in American and English newspapers.

Federal Opposition has called for the immediate freeze of transfers for television and radio licences as a means of at least temporarily blocking Mr. Murdoch's acquisition of channel 7 in Melbourne and several radio stations. The Opposition spokesman on the Media, Senator Ryan said such action should be taken until a Royal Commission of Enquiry or some other high level enquiry could be set up to look into media control in print, radio and television. Senator Ryan interviewed. There are very fundamental dangers in a democratic system where you have a situation with more than 50 per cent of all media outlets being owned by one person. I think if we really believe in things like freedom of speech and the importance of diversity of opinion and views in our society then we must be worried about such a situation.

The Federal Opposition today tried to censure the Government in Federal Parliament for abusing proper standards of ministerial responsibility over the Greek Conspiracy Case and the controversy surrounding the transfer of the Federal Narcotics Bureau to the Federal Police. Moving the censure motion, Mr. Hayden said the doctrine of ministerial responsibility was dieing the death of a hundred cuts. Replying, Mr. Viner said the Opposition was trying to rehash matters already debated and the Government had no hesitation in rejecting the motion. Graham Dobell reports from Canberra. Mr. Hayden said the Government was ignoring grave defects of administration in several ministries. He called for the resignation or dismissal of four ministers. Mr. Fife - because of his handling of the Narcotics Bureau and because of their involvement in the Greek Conspiracy Case, Senator Guilfoyle, Senator Durack and Mr. McLeay. Mr. Hayden said the scandalous behaviour of the Government was equal to the worst excesses of early colonial parliaments. He said the Government had broken down in its administration of law and order. The Narcotics Bureau had been scrapped. The Commonwealth Police had been discredited because of the Greek Conspiracy Case and the Hope Report had exposed Asio as totally defective. Mr. Hayden said the Government had defiled the concept of ministerial responsibility. Replying Mr. Viner said that Parliament had already rejected censure motions against Mr. Fife and Senator Guilfoyle. He said Mr. Hayden had putforward a laboured and turgid argument that lacked sincerity of approach. It was a desperate attempt by the Opposition Leader to lift his profile. Mr. Hayden he said was sensitive about criticism within the Labor Party of his leadership. Mr. Viner said the Social Security Department and the Commonwealth Police had to investigate allegations of fraud. He said there was no reason whatsoever to accept the censure motion. The motion was defeated in a division on party lines 72 votes to 36.

In Teheran Moslem students have released another ten hostages from the United States Embassy. The hostages, four white women and six black men left the Embassy for Teheran airport where a Swiss airliner was waiting to take them to West Germany. There they will join three other hostages released yesterday. 49 hostages remain in the Embassy. Meanwhile Mr. Waldheim has spoken out strongly against any suggestion that the remaining hostages would be tried as spies.

In Melbourne more than 5,000 Telecom employees today accepted wage rises of between \$7.50 and \$20 a week. Ken Hickey reports from Melbourne. Today's meeting paves the way for similar meetings of members of the Australian Telecommunications Employees Association in all other states tomorrow.

Queensland's Opposition Leader, Mr. Casey said today he would try again tomorrow to tell Parliament about the connection of senior Government members with the drug scene in Queensland. This followed the gagging of a statement today in reply to a statement by the Minister for Police, Mr. Camm. Mr. Casey said he had evidence from a Narcotics Bureau agent that three members of the coalition Government including a senior member, were involved. As well Mr. Casey said police were involved in the State's drug scene which he estimated at being worth \$60 million a year. David Coombs spoke to Mr. Casey this afternoon.

The mineral exploration company Beach Petroleum has found natural gas in Victoria's western district, just north of the seaside resort of Port Campbell. The gas flow was estimated at 7 million cubic feet a day. Duncan Ness asked the company's chief executive, how significant was the find. He replied that it was significant to the western district of Victoria.

---000---