

DOORSTOP - WOOL DISPUTE

Question:

We were told you were leaving at 11.30.

Prime Minister:

...I was.

Question:

Prime Minister, it has been a terribly long meeting. One can only draw the conclusion there must have been some problems in there today.

Prime Minister:

I don't think there were problems in terms of a difference between any of the parties. The meeting was a long one because the matters and the issues that are involved are of immense seriousness and concern to the Government, and to all the participants at the meeting. It is important from the point of view of the well being of wool growers, of the brokers, important from the point of view of the well being of people in industry, the strikers themselves whose families are suffering and have probably lost what maybe \$1,000, \$1,500 over the last 10 weeks, and infinitely important in terms of Australia's trading reputation and capacity to supply markets overseas. And to keep a regular supply of wool onto the markets. All of these things of course, emphasise the importance of it.

Now, a wide range of matters were discussed. A number of options were discussed, and we have come out of the meeting with a completely unified position between all the brokers, all the grower organisations and the Government. There are a range of measures, which the brokers, because they are the specific employers running this part of the industry, will be implementing. Some of them are pretty forthright and determined measures. There are one or two very major matters which were put to the Government and the Government has accepted. Specifically, we were asked to bring down export control regulations that would enable us to control the export of wool. The regulations will be drawn - they should be ready by Tuesday - and they will apply to all raw wool, they will cover the export of raw wool because it is necessary to have a unified approach throughout the whole industry. It also needs to be stated that the sum of the decisions that are taken, and you will see the statement that is being dropped very shortly, does mean that pending the resolution of the dispute, and hopefully that could happen tomorrow morning or over the weekend, but pending the resolution of the dispute, the collective decisions that have been taken and to which all the parties have committed themselves, will bring the industry to a halt.

Question:

Are we any closer to an end to the dispute as a result of today's conference, do you think?

Prime Minister:

That depends entirely on whether there are the beginnings of reasonableness in the union itself. But, what has been demonstrated today with total and absolute commitment of all the parties present to uphold the allocations system, to uphold the principles of the Full Bench decision, and not to be pressed as a result of a straight out defiance of that decision into a very foolish result. You will see the statement shortly, and I think you will realise that there are effective measures in it.

The request put to the Government and the decision by the Government in relation to export controls is of course, fundamental to the whole arrangements. There are a number of very significant decisions that the brokers will be taking, but that, in a sense, is the linchpin around which the industry has prepared its case.

Question:

Are you basically saying sir, that you have convinced the farmers now, not to march in and take their wool?

Prime Minister:

I am quite certain that the farmers now understand that very resolute action has been taken, and they are, therefore, content with that. And that is what they wanted.

(Question inaudible...)

I have got no doubt that the union will learn of these new measures very, very quickly indeed.

---o0o---