

FOR PRESS RELEASE AT 6 P.M. SUNDAY MAY 1st

"EMPLOY THE HANDICAPPED" WEEK - MAY 1 - MAY 8.

Statement by the Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies

(The Prime Minister, Mr. Menzies, who is in London to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, sent the following message to the National President of the Australian Junior Chambers of Commerce, Mr. Leslie M. Perrott, Jr.).

A job of work is much more than a source of income - it is also a source of personal satisfaction and individual dignity.

For this, among other reasons, I commend the Australian Junior Chambers of Commerce for their drive to "Employ the Handicapped."

In Australia about 300,000 people are now receiving Repatriation or Social Service benefits for disabilities, and of these more than 100,000 suffer permanent disabilities.

However, it does not follow that all of these people are incapable of undertaking a job of work - indeed, the facts quite clearly show otherwise.

Last year the Commonwealth Employment Service found jobs in commerce and industry for 8,700 physically handicapped people while, since 1948, the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service has trained for employment more than 12,000 allegedly "hopeless invalids."

There are two factors to consider when discussing employment of the physically handicapped:

First, from a cold commercial point of view, payment of benefits to this large body of people represents a substantial charge on the public purse; while the loss of their productive capacity represents a heavy drain on the nation's resources.

Second, and perhaps more important, is the factor I have already mentioned: the sense of individual dignity which doing a job gives to the doer - the personal satisfaction of helping one's self, rather than having to rely on an impersonal repatriation or social service benefit. The pursuit of happiness lies along a self-made road, seldom along a road made by others, no matter how good their intentions.

Employment of the physically handicapped is not a simple matter of Governmental legislation. It depends on the moral judgment of the community and the policies of organisations which might employ these people.

However, the organisation which employs or which, as a result of this drive decides to employ, physically handicapped people has no cause to think it is performing a mere act of charity: the record shows quite clearly that the physically handicapped worker, placed in a suitable job, is a productive, efficient, safety-conscious, and loyal employee.

During "Employ the Handicapped" Week I hope the Junior Chambers of Commerce will reach all sections of the community with an imaginative programme of public information and education.

In doing so, in this first national venture of its kind, the Junior Chambers will be filling a national need.

My Government commends their efforts, and the existence of the Commonwealth Employment Service and the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service will ensure that their work will be followed up.

CANBERRA

May 1, 1960 - P.M.