

CHAIRMAN OF COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION

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

The Prime Minister, Mr. Menzies, today announced the appointment of a new Chairman of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, the statutory body which makes recommendations to the Commonwealth for the payment of special grants to the claimant States - at Present Western Australia and Tasmania.

Sir Alexander Fitzgerald, O.B.E., who has been the Commission's Chairman for 15 years does not wish to be re-appointed after his present term expires on 30th of this month.

The Commonwealth Government has appointed Mr. P.D. Phillips, Q.C., of Melbourne as Chairman of the Commission for a period of three years commencing on 1st October, 1960. Mr. Phillips has had a distinguished career at the Bar from which he retired in 1958. He retains a lectureship in law at Melbourne University. The new Chairman has a wide knowledge of Commonwealth and State affairs and has been active in matters relating to public administration. He was Chairman of the Victorian Transport Regulation Board from 1934 to 1937; Deputy Chairman of the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel Control Board in 1944/45. He has also served as Chairman of the Australian Institute of International Affairs and of the Victorian group of the Institute of Public Administration and as President of the Victorian branch of the Economic Society.

The Commonwealth has re-appointed Sir Alexander Reid, C.M.G., I.S.O., of Perth as a member of the Grants Commission for a similar three-year term. The other member is Professor Wilfred Prest of Melbourne.

The Prime Minister said that as Chairman of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, Sir Alexander Fitzgerald had served Australia with distinguished competence. He had taken up the post towards the end of 1945, which meant that his work spanned the whole period since the uniform tax system had been established on a permanent basis. Those years had seen immense changes in the Australian economy and in the relationships of the States with the Commonwealth and with one another. At every stage new difficulties had emerged and these had often had a severe effect upon the financially weaker members of the Federation with whose position the Grants Commission was especially concerned. With his colleagues, Sir Alexander had brought to the solution of these problems great skill, tact and impartiality. Mr. Menzies concluded that the Commonwealth had always had the utmost confidence in Sir Alexander's judgment and so, he believed, did all the State Governments with whom he had to deal.

CANBERRA,  
13th September, 1960.