

SPACE RESEARCH AT WOOMERA

Joint Statement by Mr. Menzies and Mr. Thorneycroft

The United Kingdom Minister for Aviation, the Rt. Hon. Peter Thorneycroft, M.P., has had discussions in Canberra with members of the Australian Cabinet on the general question of conducting space research from Woomera with particular reference to the use of Blue Streak for the launching of satellites for communications and other purposes. The talks have been purely and necessarily exploratory; for no decision about proceeding with this matter has yet been reached by the United Kingdom Government. The United Kingdom Government has not at this stage been seeking firm commitments and consequently no commitment direct or indirect has been accepted. The subject matter is vast and no proposals could be formulated with precision at this stage.

The purpose of Mr. Thorneycroft's visit was to give the Australian Ministers an account of the way in which the United Kingdom Government has so far viewed the possibilities.

The discussions which ensued were concerned also with the feasibility which has been established of a space research programme based on Woomera and with seeking to get some picture of the eventual application of such activity.

Australian Ministers have been greatly assisted by the information and ideas laid before them by Mr. Thorneycroft and his advisers, and various aspects of the matter have been closely examined. A good deal of the discussion has directed itself to the very important issue of priorities having regard to the developmental problems which confront Australian Governments.

Mr. Thorneycroft has come first to Australia because of the close association of the two countries in other projects but he proposes to visit other countries in relation to these matters and, should occasion arise, further exchanges between the United Kingdom and Australia will occur.

During his stay in Australia Mr. Thorneycroft has made a visit to Woomera to inspect the Range facilities. He has also taken the opportunity to review with the relevant Australian Ministers the progress of the weapon development programme at Woomera. Irrespective of any decision which may be made about Blue Streak, there is a considerable load of work on the remaining weapon development. Talks have taken place about the planning of this work and also about the still further improvement of the arrangements for joint Australian/United Kingdom co-operation during the formative stages of new weapon projects.

CANBERRA,  
21st September, 1960.