

QUEENSLAND TALKSJoint Statement by the Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) Deputy
Prime Minister (Mr. McEwen) and Premier (Mr. Nicklin)

The Prime Minister and Mr. John McEwen this afternoon had a most valuable discussion with the Premier and the members of his Cabinet.

As the Commonwealth Government, like the State Government of Queensland, is made up of both Liberal Party and Country Party Ministers, the discussions represented what might be fairly described as a "family" political conference. Various matters which have been under discussion in the past were clarified by the exchanges, to a genuine mutual satisfaction.

The Prime Minister made it clear that the Commonwealth Government, being determined to make an early and substantial reduction in unemployment, was not proposing to delay action until the meeting of Parliament. On the contrary, it would announce some urgent decisions at the earliest possible moment after the conclusion of its industry consultations next week. Long range measures are already under examination but this is not to prejudice or postpone short-term measures.

Queensland Ministers put several views of great importance. One was that 1960, though it was a boom year for most of Australia, was not one in Queensland; and that Queensland had in consequence been more affected than other States by the impact of the anti-inflationary measures taken by the Commonwealth. One of the results of this, they said, was that at present unemployment is much more serious in Queensland than in any other State. Ways and means of making a quick impact upon unemployment, particularly in the centres most affected, were discussed and several constructive proposals were made by Queensland Ministers. These will be conveyed to Commonwealth Ministers by the Prime Minister and Mr. McEwen and will be examined.

In addition to what have been referred to as "short-term" measures, action was taken to look at the longer term development of the industrial potential of Queensland, particularly in relation to the providing of employment and the earning of export income. It was agreed that both the need and the opportunity exist, but that further detailed talks are needed before ultimate conclusions can be arrived at.

The Prime Minister said that he would facilitate early visits or conferences by the Treasurer (Mr. Holt), the Minister for National Development (Senator Spooner) and the Minister for Shipping and Transport (Mr. Opperman). In addition of course Queensland Commonwealth Ministers, Messrs Davidson, Adermann and Swartz will be available for frequent consultations.

"We all thought our discussions were invaluable", said Mr. Menzies and Mr. Nicklin after the meeting. "We believe that we have established a splendid basis for co-operation in the interests not only of Queensland as a political unit but of the great actual and potential Australian resources which lie within the boundaries of this State. It is unreasonable to suppose that every suggestion made hereafter can be accepted by one side or the other, but we are quite satisfied that we have taken steps to eliminate misunderstandings and to enable each of us to help the other in our common tasks. The immediate task is to restore confidence, which is the vital condition of renewed prosperity".

BRISBANE,
26th January, 1962.