

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

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

The four Government women Senators - Senators Rankin, (Q) Robertson, (W.A.), Buttfield, (S.A.) and Wedgwood (Vic.) - today made representations to me on matters affecting the conditions of employment of women in the Commonwealth Public Service. Their representations dealt more specifically with proposals which they first raised last year and again a few weeks ago, and on which Senator Buttfield already has a question on the Notice Paper of the Senate.

The proposals fell into three categories:

- (a) Equal pay for women for work of equal value
- (b) Equal opportunity for women
- (c) Elimination of the marriage bar in respect of women who are permanent officers in the Commonwealth Public Service

The four Senators advanced strong arguments in respect of the three matters and I have promised that the points raised in our discussions will be brought before the Cabinet.

On the question of equal pay for women for work of equal value I pointed out to the four Senators that the discrimination which existed at the present time related only to the base rates of payment and that where margins for skill were involved there was no discrimination on the basis of sex.

I also pointed out that the Government had always been most reluctant to interfere in the function of industrial tribunals to determine the question of base rates.

With respect to the continued employment of women after they had married I pointed out that the High Council of Public Service Organisations had expressed the view last year that because of the employment situation and other considerations there should not be any change in the present attitude of the Public Service Board.

I told the Senators that some of the suggestions they had made warranted further examination and that I would seek information from the Public Service Board to place before the Cabinet for a thorough discussion of the issues.

CANBERRA,  
10th April, 1962.