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ECONOMIC COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY

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

The Prime Minister conferred this morning with the Members of the Committee of Economic Enquiry :-

Dr. James Vernon, C.B.E. (Chairman)  
Professor Sir John Crawford, C.B.E.  
(Vice Chairman)

Professor P.H. Karmel  
D. G. Molesworth, Esq., C.B.E.  
K. B. Myer, Esq., D.S.C.

There were also present Dr. F.B. Horner, the Secretary of the Committee; Mr. A.W. McCasker, the Executive Officer; and Mr. J.F. Nimmo of the Prime Minister's Department.

The purpose of the Conference was to discuss the arrangements that must be made to provide the necessary research staff for the Committee, and effective liaison between the Committee and those Commonwealth Departments from which a good deal of factual information will need to be obtained.

The Prime Minister indicated to the Committee that it was to regard itself as the master of its own procedure; that it should feel at liberty to accumulate such facts as it needed in its own way, being guided by its own judgment. He said that the Government's decision had been in favour of a committee rather than a royal commission, because of the greater informality of procedure which the former made possible.

The Prime Minister said, after the meeting :  
"Although the Committee will of course determine its own procedures, I am hoping for its sake that as much information as possible will be put before it in writing and not by oral evidence. Experience has shown that much time can be lost by the hearing of oral non-controversial evidence on some matter on which a written document would be more concise and valuable and more easily recorded and studied. In other words, it seems to me to be undesirable that the Committee should have to conduct its investigations in an atmosphere of public debate; it should rather be regarded as conducting a piece of highly important research with the best technical assistance it can get from any source that it desires."

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CANBERRA,  
7th March, 1963.