

FOR PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTERRESIGNATION OF THE MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Some months ago, Senator Sir William Spooner, Minister for National Development and Leader of the Government in the Senate, and Acting Prime Minister in September 1962, told me that, after an uncommonly long, continuous and arduous period of Ministerial service, he would like me to agree that, at some convenient time towards the middle of this year, he might resign from the Cabinet, while still continuing to serve in the Senate.

We discussed this at considerable length. I knew that he had made great and patriotic sacrifices of his personal and professional interests, and that he had every right to return to normal family life. On the other hand, I was, as the head of the government, conscious of my own natural desire to retain the services of a Minister who had, with unsurpassed devotion and concentration of effort, achieved so much in the establishment of a firm foundation for the great Snowy Mountains Scheme, in the development of water resources along the Murray and elsewhere, in the improvement of the coal mining and marketing industries, in the encouragement of bauxite mining, of uranium production, of oil search, indeed of mineral development generally, particularly in the North of Australia. His name will always be remembered in connection with Northern Development, from the Ord River to the new beef roads of Queensland. To these I must add his persistent activity in the field of housing, in War Service Homes, and in the periodic negotiations of Commonwealth-State Housing agreements, and in the provision of funds for Building Societies.

But, conscious and proud as I was of these notable achievements, I did not feel able to deny his request. I felt, and feel, that so long and sustained and successful an effort of public service had earned him a period of private or semi-private life.

Accordingly, Sir William has today tendered his resignation from the office of Minister for National Development. This is a great loss to the Government. It is for me a real deprivation. Our close association and friendship have been a source of strength to me over the years. No Prime Minister could have had a more faithful colleague, or one more devoted to the highest interests of the growth of the nation.

CANBERRA

2nd June, 1964.

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I received the following letter from Senator Sir William Spooner:

"My dear Prime Minister,

I now formally tender my resignation to you as a Minister of State.

As you know I have had it in mind to do this for some months past.

After my lengthy service in Cabinet now in its fifteenth year and permitting insufficient time to attend to my own personal affairs, I would wish to be relieved of Ministerial duties so that I could, under less continuous pressure, pay more attention to my own professional and business interests.

I have been happy to have your understanding of my desires and your agreement to permit me to give effect to them.

I know that I will miss the interesting work of my portfolio and of Cabinet. I will however continue as a Senator and be able to assist the Government in that capacity.

I take pride in having been one of your Ministers for so long and in the friendships which I have made with you, our mutual Ministerial colleagues, and so many others."

and have sent the following reply:

"Thank you for your letter of 29th May. I am issuing a statement to the press in the terms which I attach; that statement will, I hope, reasonably express my feelings on this occasion. You carry with you, of course, my warmest friendship and good wishes.

As, in point of practice, it will be necessary to have a formal letter of resignation from yourself to the Governor-General and as there will be some Ministerial re-arrangements to be made, I would be grateful if you would allow me to hold your resignation for a few days before actually presenting it to His Excellency.

Kindest regards."

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JUNE 2, 1964.