



PRESS RELEASE

P.M. No. 75/1967.

POSTAL DISPUTE

Prime Minister's Reply to Mr. Monk

Following Cabinet consideration of the two telegrams received from the President of the A.C.T.U., Mr. Monk, the Prime Minister, Mr. Holt, today sent a telegram to Mr. Monk in these terms (full text of telegram follows) :-

The Government last evening considered your telegrams of last Friday and Monday.

The Postmaster-General and Minister for Labour and National Service will be ready to meet with representatives of the A.C.T.U. and the postal unions concerned next week at a time to be arranged with you.

As Mr. Bury and Senator Anderson stated on 4th July, the Government, believing that the public requires Saturday services, intends that appropriate services will be provided.

As to penalties, you will recall that Senator Anderson, as Acting Postmaster-General, met with the three unions on 19th June and undertook to examine the claims they submitted. Yet within days threats of stoppages were published. When the Minister sought assurances that there would be no stoppage he received evasive replies except from the Postmasters' Association.

Following Cabinet's consideration of developments, the Minister, on 27th June, i.e. before the 1st July stoppage, publicly indicated Cabinet's view that the unions' claims could not be considered under threat of a stoppage and Cabinet's direction that if a stoppage did occur disciplinary action would be taken under the Public Service Act.

Notwithstanding the continuing threat of a stoppage, I myself telegraphed Mr. Renaud on 29th June that Mr. Bury and Senator Anderson would meet the three unions concerned provided the U.P.C.T. and the A.P.S.U. cancelled the proposed stoppage. The text of this telegram was conveyed on the same day to Messrs. Slater and Baker.

Despite all the Government's efforts to have this whole matter discussed in a sensible fashion, a stoppage did occur on 1st July. The course taken could mean only one thing - namely that the leaders of the A.P.S.U. and the U.P.C.T. were bent on a direct confrontation with the Government. We were however glad to note that a large number of their members did not support the stoppage.

Relevant to all this, I must remind you, is the agreement of 8th April, 1964, to which you and Messrs. Waters and Slater were signatories. The relevant passage reads :

"For their part, the A.C.T.U. and the A.P.S.U. will not support any stoppage of work on any industrial issue in future but will negotiate and failing agreement, will go to arbitration. In the event of the men stopping work, the A.C.T.U. and the A.P.S.U. agree that the prescribed penalty provisions of the Act will be appropriately applied."

It so happens that the \$4 fines will not have been deducted by the time the Ministers meet you. You and your colleagues will thus have the opportunity to make to the Ministers any further representations you wish on the question of penalties.

CANBERRA. 19 JULY, 1967.