

FOR PRESS:

P. M. No. 2/1970

PRIME MINISTER'S TELEGRAMS TO NEW GUINEA IN REPLY
TO COMPLAINTS OF DAMAGE CAUSED BY MR. WHITLAM

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Following are texts of telegrams received yesterday by the Prime Minister from the Planters' Association of New Guinea and Bali Plantations Ltd. :-

Planters' Association of New Guinea:

"THIS ASSOCIATION IS SHOCKED THAT THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION PARTY PUBLICLY SUPPORTS CONVICTED LAW BREAKERS WHO ARE AGAINST THE BASIC TENETS OF SELF GOVERNMENT THAT IS THE ORGANISATION ELECTION AND WORKING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS. FURTHER THAT IN VISITING ANOTHER COUNTRY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION AND HIS ASSOCIATES HAVE SHOWN GRAVE DISCOURTESY IN CRITICISING THIS COUNTRY'S GOVERNMENT AND LEADERS WITH LITTLE BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE PEOPLE'S CULTURE, UPBRINGING AND BELIEFS. MR. WHITLAM'S VISIT HAS CAUSED GRAVE DISQUIET LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE BY ALL RESIDENTS INCLUDING THE MAJORITY OF PAPUANS AND NEW GUINEANS AND IT IS THE CONSIDERED OPINION OF THIS ASSOCIATION THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE BY YOU TO VISIT THIS TERRITORY AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE TO COUNTERACT THE DAMAGE WHICH HAS BEEN DONE. WOULD APPRECIATE ACKNOWLEDGMENT."

Bali Plantations Ltd. :

"THIS COMPANY DEPLORES THE LABOR PARTY PROMOTION ACTIVITIES OF LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE GAZELLE PENINSULA AS A FURTHER AGGRAVATION TO RECENT TROUBLES HERE WHICH MUST RESULT IN A COMPLETE NEGATION OF COSTLY OFFICIAL ACTION IN RESTORING LAW AND ORDER. THIS HAS RESULTED IN AN INCREASED LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN INVESTMENT IN THIS AREA BY BOTH INDIGENOUS AND OVERSEAS INVESTORS. WE RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT THE PRIME MINISTER VISIT THIS DISTRICT IMMEDIATELY TO REFUTE THE PROMISES MADE BY MR. WHITLAM WHO IS REGARDED BY THE TOLAIS AS THE LEADING GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

TO VISIT RABAU FOR MANY YEARS PARTICULARLY
WHILST HE APPEARS TO SYMPATHISE WITH THE
REBELLIOUS ATTITUDE OF THE MINORITY REPEAT
MINORITY OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION. "

Today the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton, sent the following
reply to each of the above:-

"YOUR TELEGRAM RECEIVED. I BELIEVE MR.
WHITLAM'S STATEMENTS ARE CALCULATED TO
WORSEN THE DIVISIONS AMONGST THE TOLAI
PEOPLE IN THE GAZELLE PENINSULA AND TO
ENCOURAGE EXTREMISTS.

THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE LEGALLY
ELECTED MULTI-RACIAL COUNCIL, WHICH
INCLUDES 34 NATIVES AND 4 NON-NATIVES, IS
ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAJORITY OF THE TOLAI
PEOPLE AND IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF GOOD
GOVERNMENT IN THE GAZELLE PENINSULA. THE
GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO TEST THIS
BELIEF BY A REFERENDUM HELD BY SECRET
BALLOT. THE MATAUNGAN ASSOCIATION REFUSED
TO AGREE TO SUCH A SECRET BALLOT REFERENDUM
BEING HELD AND SAID IT WOULD NOT, IN ANY CASE,
ABIDE BY THE RESULT OF SUCH A BALLOT. THE
MATAUNGAN ASSOCIATION HAVE WITHHELD TAXES,
REFUSED TO JOIN IN DISCUSSION OF THIS QUESTION,
AND HAVE RESORTED TO VIOLENCE.

MR. WHITLAM'S SUPPORT OF THIS ATTITUDE AND
ACTION IS EMPHATICALLY REPUDIATED BY THE
GOVERNMENT AND WE WISH THIS TO BE KNOWN
TO ALL IN THE GAZELLE PENINSULA. THE
GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE HAS BEEN EXPRESSED
BY THE ADMINISTRATOR'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.
WE WILL NOT TOLERATE BREACHES OF THE LAW,
WILL INVOKE THE LAW AGAINST THE USE OF FORCE,
AND CALL UPON ALL GROUPS TO CO-OPERATE IN
RESTORING A PEACEFUL SITUATION.

I REGRET THAT I AM UNABLE AT PRESENT TO
ACCEPT YOUR SUGGESTION THAT I VISIT THE
AREA, BUT I HOPE THIS EXPRESSION OF THE
GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS WILL HELP TO
REPAIR THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY MR. WHITLAM. "

This afternoon, the following telegram was received from the Gazelle Peninsula Council:-

"GAZELLE PENINSULA COUNCIL EAST NEW BRITAIN DEEPLY CONCERNED AND DISTRESSED BY ILL CONSIDERED AND ILL INFORMED STATEMENTS MADE BY WHITLAM LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION. HIS SUPPORT OF THE MATAUNGAN ASSOCIATION HIS ADMIRATION FOR ITS LEADERS AND ITS AIMS CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY DETRIMENTAL TO THE PEACE ORDER AND GOOD GOVERNMENT OF THE GAZELLE PENINSULA AND TERRITORY. WHITLAM'S CONFIDENT STATEMENT THAT HE WILL BE PRIME MINISTER 1972 OR EARLIER AND WILL GRANT IMMEDIATE HOME RULE ACCEPTED BY VERY MANY TOLAIS AS FACT. IMPLICATION THAT MATAUNGAN ASSOCIATION WILL ACHIEVE ALL ITS OBJECTIVES WHICH INCLUDE DESTRUCTION OF MULTI-RACIAL COUNCIL RETURN OF ALIENATED LAND MUST BE REFUTED AT ALL COSTS. FAILURE OF WHITLAM TO SUPPORT DULY ELECTED MULTI-RACIAL COUNCIL PARTICULARLY IN COUNCIL TAX ISSUE WILL HAVE ADVERSE EFFECT THROUGHOUT TERRITORY. MATAUNGAN MEMBERS HAD EVERY OPPORTUNITY CONTEST JUNE ELECTIONS BUT DECLINED TO DO SO. WHITLAM'S STATEMENTS WILL DESTROY EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT THIS AREA UNLESS REFUTED. FURTHER BLOODSHED AND VIOLENCE LIKELY IF NO POSITIVE ACTION TAKEN. COUNCIL CONSIDERS THAT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT MUST RESTORE THE CONFIDENCE OF ALL PEOPLE OF THE TERRITORY AND IN PARTICULAR GAZELLE AREA BY CLEAR RESTATEMENT OF YOUR GOVERNMENT'S POLICY AND PLANS FOR OUR FUTURE POLITICAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. "

The Prime Minister has sent the following reply:-

"YOUR TELEGRAM RECEIVED. I BELIEVE MR. WHITLAM'S STATEMENTS ARE CALCULATED TO WORSEN THE DIVISIONS AMONGST THE TOLAI PEOPLE IN THE GAZELLE PENINSULA AND TO ENCOURAGE EXTREMISTS.

THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE LEGALLY ELECTED MULTI-RACIAL COUNCIL, WHICH INCLUDES 34 NATIVES AND 4 NON-NATIVES, IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAJORITY OF THE TOLAI PEOPLE AND IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF GOOD GOVERNMENT IN THE GAZELLE PENINSULA. THE GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO TEST THIS BELIEF BY A REFERENDUM HELD BY SECRET BALLOT. THE MATAUNGAN ASSOCIATION REFUSED TO AGREE TO SUCH A SECRET BALLOT REFERENDUM BEING HELD AND SAID IT WOULD NOT, IN ANY CASE, ABIDE BY THE RESULT OF SUCH A BALLOT. THE MATAUNGAN ASSOCIATION HAVE WITHHELD TAXES, REFUSED TO JOIN IN DISCUSSION OF THIS QUESTION, AND HAVE RESORTED TO VIOLENCE.

MR. WHITLAM'S SUPPORT OF THIS ATTITUDE AND ACTION IS EMPHATICALLY REPUDIATED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND WE WISH THIS TO BE KNOWN TO ALL IN THE GAZELLE PENINSULA.

THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE HAS BEEN EXPRESSED BY THE ADMINISTRATOR'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. WE WILL NOT TOLERATE BREACHES OF THE LAW, WILL INVOKE THE LAW AGAINST THE USE OF FORCE, AND CALL UPON ALL GROUPS TO CO-OPERATE IN RESTORING A PEACEFUL SITUATION. I HOPE THIS EXPRESSION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS WILL HELP TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY MR. WHITLAM. "

CANBERRA
9 January 1970