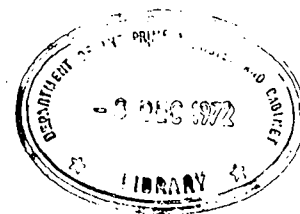


THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE

AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 1972



PRIME MINISTER: Ladies and gentlemen; you were told by way of a press release at two o'clock this afternoon that I had called on the Governor-General, at his request, at 12.15 this afternoon and had accepted his commission to form a Government.

I gave him the reasons why I believe that there should be an interim Government formed by the Australian Labor Party and that for the purposes of that Government two persons would be enough. The statement gives the reason, or some of the reasons, why it was urgent to have a Government to carry out the mandate that the Party received at the elections last Saturday.

The nature of the matters which I mentioned would show why it would be more effective to have these decisions made by an interim Government which sympathised with them rather than by an interim Government which had opposed them. It would be a more appropriate thing for both the incoming Government and the outgoing one to have the responsibility of those decisions.

At 3.30 this afternoon Mr. Barnard and I accordingly waited on the Governor-General and he swore us into the portfolios which you have.

Now, are there any questions?

MEGAN STOYLES, B.B.C.: Mr. Prime Minister, could you please give us the timetable of when people gaoled under the National Service Act will be released and also the timetable for ending conscription?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, first of all, I'll ask Mr. Barnard to give the matters which fall to him as Minister for Defence for ending the call-up.

MR. BARNARD: Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen. As you know, I have already had discussions with officers from the Department of Labour and National Service, the members of the Department of the Army and I have this afternoon released a statement which will be available to the Press and which discontinues the call-up. There will be no further call-up. Those who have already received a notice of call-up will not be obliged to act on them. So, as from today, notices will be going out to those who have received their call-up notice that they have no further obligation under the National Service Act.

PRIME MINISTER: Ladies and gentlemen, for the matters which fall to me for the time being as Attorney-General. Yesterday and today Senator Murphy, Q.C., who will be the Attorney-General when the full Ministry is appointed, has been in consultation with the officers of the Attorney-General's Department and has prepared the papers. Instructions have now been given that all pending prosecutions are to be withdrawn. The Commonwealth Police have been asked to withhold execution of outstanding warrants and papers have been prepared for the Governor-General to remit the sentences, the remaining portion of all prison sentences, of those who are now in prison and also the remission of all outstanding fines. Those papers - I've signed them - I have told the Governor-General that they will be submitted to him. At this stage I don't know when or precisely how they will be submitted.

JOHN LOMBARD, "MELBOURNE SUN": About the blokes who are already in the Army, national servicemen, what exactly will be the machinery for giving them the option for leaving the Army. Can it be done without an amendment to the National Service Act?

PRIME MINISTER: I'll ask Mr. Barnard.

MR. BARNARD: Yes. Again, Mr. Prime Minister, I have already made a move on this question. What I do want to ensure is that no national servicemen will be disadvantaged as a result of changes that we will be making to provide additional benefits to those who are serving in the armed forces but the machinery has already been put in motion. I expect that before the end of this week the necessary regulation will have been provided that will enable the discharge of those national servicemen who are now in the armed forces to take their discharge. Now, we would hope that they will be phased out after they have been advised of the additional benefits they would receive if they decide to continue their 18 months service as national servicemen. So they will receive that advice. Then they can decide whether they will elect to take their discharge or remain and complete their 18 months. Now the necessary machinery has already dealt with the requirements and they will be advised before Christmas.

FRANK CHAMBERLAIN, A.F.P.: May I ask a question of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister? Sir, does this first Whitlam Ministry mean that you will have a second Whitlam Ministry next week or the week after or is this to be called a two man dictatorship or is this an unprecedented move? That's my first question to you, sir, and to the Deputy Prime Minister, when you say the national servicemen are phased out, sir, do you mean they are phased out into unemployment or are they phased into employment by the National Service Department?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, first of all about when there is a full Ministry appointed. Perhaps I can enlarge on the reasons which were given in the press statement at two o'clock this afternoon for having to wait so long before there can be a meeting of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, the Caucus, to elect a Ministry.

The elections, which were held last Saturday, are very close in many electorates and the voting is very complex. Under the law it is not possible to distribute preferences until ten days after the poll, unless the number of votes which are still awaiting delivery by post would not affect the result.

Now, the complication in this election is that there are a very great number of electoral divisions where previously there was only one coalition candidate because that candidate was a Minister and the coalition partner did not oppose Ministers. In many of these electorates, however, the Minister retired and accordingly had both a Country Party and a Liberal candidate standing. The number of votes outstanding, therefore, has to be taken into account in determining whether it is the Liberal or the Country Party candidate who will be eliminated first.

The Liberal candidate, his preferences would be nearly certain to go all to the Country Party candidate. If the Country Party candidate was eliminated first, some preferences would go to the Labor candidate and so, therefore, it takes probably the ten days to do it. Furthermore, there are a considerable number of electorates where the Chief Electoral Officer has already been told there will be a recount and he advised me yesterday that in these circumstances he didn't see where he would be able to give a result in many of these electorates where the Labor candidate could be expected to win before Friday of next week, or even the weekend.

Now, in those circumstances, the Caucus could not be held at the present time until Monday week and then the Caucus will have to elect the Ministry and the Caucus will then have to decide, or the Ministry, if the Caucus so determines, will have to decide what will be the new Ministries.

FRANK CHAMBERLAIN: Do you think you will be automatically elected Leader, sir, do you?

PRIME MINISTER: I haven't heard that I will be opposed but whoever is the Leader will then have to allocate the Ministers among the portfolios then to be determined. It may be that not until tomorrow fortnight, the 20th of December, can a full Ministry be sworn to take the place of this interim one.

FRANK CHAMBERLAIN: And that will be a second Ministry?

PRIME MINISTER: I think it will have to be because it is not just a question of handing over some portfolios to new members who have then become Ministers. There will inevitably be some changes in the nature of the Ministries. There are to be some amalgamations, maybe, but also the Party is committed to creating several new Ministries.

MR. BARNARD: The discussions I've had with the officers of the Department of Labour and National Service have been on the basis to ensure that their re-employment rights are protected and, as you know, this is already of course included in the National Service Act. I wanted to, myself, ensure that their re-employment rights were protected and the machinery for providing for those who want to take their discharge will be, at the same time, looked at by the Department of Labour and National Service to ensure that the job opportunities are available.

DAVID BARNETT, A.A.P.: Last year during the visit to Peking you told the Chinese Premier, Mr. Chou En-lai that "If my Party wins the election, you will be able to see the first visit by an Australian Prime Minister to the Chinese People's Republic and its sole capital of Peking". Mr. Chou replied; "We will welcome that". What steps, sir, are you taking to bring about the recognition of China? When would you like to make this visit?

PRIME MINISTER: Our Ambassador in Paris, Mr. Renouf, has arranged to meet the Chinese Ambassador in Paris, Mr. Huang Chen, at, Canberra time, four o'clock on Thursday, a.m. - I meant Thursday morning, and cables have gone to him suggesting the terms upon which there should be full diplomatic representation by each country in the other. You ask when to visit. There will be, early in October, in Tokyo, a Japan-Australia Ministerial Meeting. It would seem appropriate before, or after, that meeting for me to visit Peking.

L. OAKES: Sir, on that subject, I think you have a message from Mr. Forace from Mr. Chou. Could you tell us the contents of that message?

PRIME MINISTER: No. I have received the message. I don't think it would be appropriate for me to state the contents of it.

ALAN REID, A.C.P.: Sir, you made employment a very high priority of your policy speech. Obviously the Parliament cannot meet until February. Are there any administrative acts that you could take in the interval to assist the school leavers and alleviate unemployment and also, sir, if I may ask an unrelated one, a lesser one, nevertheless interesting, what is going to happen to the New Year's Honours List?

PRIME MINISTER: First, school leavers. I expect to be seeing Mr. Crean within the next few days. On Sunday I'll be seeing both Mr. Dunstan and Mr. Tonkin - where unemployment in urban areas is considerable. As you know, unemployment relief up till now has been made for rural areas. In those two States there is the largest percentage of the population in the capitals and because of this unemployment is worse in those States because the rural areas bulk less. I'll be seeing them on Sunday. Mr. Crean I hope to see before then, certainly after that.

Honours Lists. This question is premature, if you don't mind me saying so. I am making a submission to the Governor-General on this matter since he raised it with me.

ALAN BARNES, "THE AGE": When you were Leader of the Opposition, sir, you

PRIME MINISTER: Mr. Barnes, "Age", and ageless.

ALAN BARNES: When you were Leader of the Opposition, you suggested that the Liberal Government should make a Christmas bonus, give \$100 to each of the pensioners as a means of stimulating the economy. Does your Government intend to carry through your own advice?

PRIME MINISTER: It needs parliamentary action and that cannot be done this year.

FRANK CHAMBERLAIN: Could you make it retrospective, sir, at Easter?

PRIME MINISTER: That would not enable any boost to spending, though.

JOHN O'FARRELL: But do you still intend to do it?

PRIME MINISTER: I will consult my colleagues on this matter. I notice it is one of the things which is suggested in the "Australian Economic Review" published by the Melbourne University Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research.

BENNELL, 7 NETWORK: Sir, you will have a 27 member Cabinet. I wonder how you are going to get over the legislative delays that Mr. McMahon recently complained of with his very much smaller Cabinet?

PRIME MINISTER: None of my Ministers will be slow, none of them will be without political perception.

BROWN, "COURIER-MAIL": Sir, you have won this election in the suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne. Apart from rejuvenating these areas, what priorities do you have for the rest of Australia?

PRIME MINISTER: We have won them in the suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne because that is where so many people live. We will, in fact, be aiming to do things which will be of benefit to all those areas where there are large concentrations of population and, as you know, we propose to involve local government for the first time in national financial arrangements. There are considerable growing areas already in some provincial centres and we aim, through measures of decentralisation and co-operation with the States, to make more such areas. In proportion to population we did, in fact, increase in quite a number of such provincial areas.

MICHAEL SCHILDBERGER, NATIONAL 9 NEWS: Mr. Prime Minister, can we expect any tax changes before the next Budget or perhaps have another mini-Budget before the next August Budget?

PRIME MINISTER: I would not expect there would be any tax changes other, I would hope, than maybe excise duty on wine and sales tax on contraceptives.

CHAMBERLAIN: Both eliminated?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes.

BARNES: Is that an undertaking on the latter? You undertook in your policy speech to immediately abolish the wine tax.

PRIME MINISTER: I am checking this at this stage to see whether, as I think can be done, the announcement can be made that legislation will be brought in retrospective to the date on which these announcements were made.

MUNGO McCALLUM, "NATION REVIEW": Prime Minister, you have not only made a number of appointments to your own staff and named a number of people who are obviously going to be close advisers to you. A number of men who are obviously going to be important Ministers in the coming government have also named people who are going to be important to them and perhaps personal advisers. To what extent is this going to affect the normal public service structure? To what extent is this going to mean that you are in fact running a presidential government with the people who are really giving you the advice and to some extent making decisions pulled in from outside both the electoral and public service structure?

PRIME MINISTER: This is not a matter upon which I would presume to make any decisions before a full Ministry is appointed. This is an interim Ministry and it will make those decisions which are urgent to carry out mandates. This is not a matter to which I have given any consideration. It is a matter which can wait until the Ministers are elected by the Party and allocated by the Prime Minister.

The objective, if it comes about, is to depoliticise the public service so that persons who are responsible for carrying out political decisions will be known to be appointed by a Minister at his whim and disposable at his whim. The public service, of course, will be less political if there are such personal advisers known to be appointed.

CHAMBERLAIN: Prime Minister, specifically following Mr. Mungo McCallum's question, there are some decisions made by the previous Government, urban development, decentralisation and what have you, and an organisation calling itself NURDS has been developed and big appointments been made. Now, do they unwrap themselves or do they go into suspense?

PRIME MINISTER: Here again, it is not a matter where we have to make a decision at this stage. There are some matters in the urban context which I did undertake in the Party's policy speech to make, if possible before Christmas, and I will be making these after consultation with Mr. Uren and, I hope, Mr. Jones on Friday.

I say I hope because I have not been in touch with Mr. Jones myself because of the pressure of other things today, but Mr. Uren will be here on Friday and if Mr. Jones is here we can discuss still more matters in this context, and NURDA will be among the bodies which we will consult on these matters which we want to get under way before Christmas. They involve, really, letters by me to the Premiers concerned.

ARMPFIELD, "AGE": Mr. Whitlam, under Labor's system of open government, will members of the armed forces, including the Military Boards, be able to make public their views on service matters such as the effects of ending national service?

PRIME MINISTER: This is a matter of Government policy where it would be improper for the opinion of any such Boards to be sought or tendered. The people have decided this matter.

DAVID SOLOMON, "CANBERRA TIMES": Sir, what are your priorities in the next two weeks? What does your Government in the next two weeks intend to do and what will be the major priorities of the Government which will be elected then?

PRIME MINISTER: I should only say what will be the priorities of this administration. The priorities of the following one are for it to determine, for Mr. Barnard and me to share in making. I have stated three matters in the press statement at two o'clock this afternoon - the abolition of conscription, the reference of colour television to the Tariff Board (I am seeing Dr. Cairns on this matter with the head of the Department of Trade and Industry, Mr. McKay, at 6 o'clock tonight), the application to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to re-open the equal pay case so that the Commonwealth, which had intervened, can now state support for the case. I have been in touch with Mr. Cameron about this. I mentioned some matters in foreign affairs. China I have already answered some questions about. There are also matters in the United Nations General Assembly which concludes its deliberations, I think, on the 19th.

TED BARKER, "WEST AUSTRALIAN": Sir, have you raised the question of revaluation in your talks with Sir Frederick Wheeler, and could you give an indication of what your government plans on the currency?

PRIME MINISTER: I have not raised it. This is not a matter which the present Ministry would deal with and, frankly, even if I had raised it, it would not be proper for me to tell you.

JOHN O'FARRELL, "SYDNEY MORNING HERALD": I was wondering if we could revert to China? Would you expect Dr. Stephen FitzGerald would be Australia's first Ambassador to China, and would you want this man to be our first Ambassador? Would you press him to be our first Ambassador?

PRIME MINISTER: I noticed that Dr. Stephen FitzGerald has been nominated in some journals for this purpose. I notice Mr. Ross Terrill has been nominated by some other journals. You will appreciate, ladies and gentlemen, that I could not discuss any person, man or woman, as a prospective Ambassador or High Commissioner until the person's name had been submitted to the receiving country and had approved. Before agrément - that's for your benefit, François Chamberlain - I could not make any comment on such matters.

KEVIN POWER, 2UE: Prime Minister, when will the Parliament meet next year to deal with the legislative content of your mandate? Will it be early or will it be in the normal time?

PRIME MINISTER: Here again, it is not a matter upon which this Ministry would presume to make a decision. It is a matter certainly for the next administration.

WARREN DUNCAN, A.B.C.: Prime Minister, what would be your first moves towards granting land rights to aborigines, and do you intend immediately to involve the aborigines in the work of their department?

PRIME MINISTER: Here again, this is a matter which must wait until the next administration. It is a matter upon which a full, distinct Minister for Aborigines has to be appointed. I have already discussed the matter this morning, half past ten, with Dr. Coombs, among other matters.

CHALMERS, ATN NETWORK: Mr. Prime Minister, will Dr. Coombs be an adviser to this administration?

PRIME MINISTER: He is.

TRUMBLE, "NEW YORK TIMES": Sir ...

PRIME MINISTER: Republican or Democrat?

TRUMBLE: On the fence, Sir. I am at sea, I was a Democrat for Nixon. In opposition, you and Mr. Barnard both raised the question of the American military installations in Australia

with particular reference to the secrecy surrounding them and then of course there is a question raised in the Labor Party platform on the matter of foreign administration of bases on Australian soil. Could you at this time, Sir, indicate the policy your government will take on these questions?

PRIME MINISTER: This is a matter upon which no consideration will be given or really could be given by this interim administration. I would like to make it plain, however, that there now need be no secrecy, because Mr. Barnard and I can find out whatever we want to. The fact that there has been secrecy up till now has not been a condition imposed by any United States Administration.

BARRON, "SYDNEY SUN": Why did you decide to restrict the present Ministry to two, why not spread the responsibility a bit thinner with some of the men you have already described as certainties, particularly the Senate Leader and his Deputy?

PRIME MINISTER: The difficulty is, where do you draw the line on this? There are some people in the Parliament, the fact that they are going to be elected is already quite obvious, who are in the House of Representatives, who have been in the House of Representatives longer than Mr. Barnard or I and who have been on the Caucus Executive longer than Mr. Barnard or I. Mr. Crean has been on the Executive since 1954, Mr. Cameron since 1958. Obviously if the test of seniority and service is to prevail, they would be entitled to have priority over anybody else, but you will appreciate that if I were to choose two persons from the House of Representatives there would be, what is it, ten other members of the House of Representatives in the old Shadow Ministry, all of whom have clearly been re-elected and it would be invidious for me to presume to pick out which of my House of Representatives colleagues would be senior in service, significance, portfolio, and accordingly it was most appropriate to choose two persons alone. Perhaps I might comment also - there is an appropriateness about having an interim Ministry of only two because any matters which have to be done by the Executive Council would require the Governor-General, who is not a partisan person, to be present. It is unusual to have a Ministry of two persons. There is, therefore, the public safeguard of having the President of the Executive Council constituting the Executive Council with those two Ministers. There is, you will notice, no Vice-President of the Executive Council.

CHAMBERLAIN: That means Sir Paul Hasluck has the casting vote?

PRIME MINISTER: In the case of disagreement between the partisan members of the Executive Council. As you know, there has not been disagreement between the two partisan members of the - what's the term, the active Ministers, the active members of the Executive Council, the Minister's Executive Council on Call, isn't that the term? - in the 18 years they have served in the Parliament together.

O'FARRELL: Those reasons you have given do not apply to Senator Murphy or Senator Willesee. Why haven't you included them as members of the Executive Council?

PRIME MINISTER: I have mentioned two members of the House of Representatives who, by any test, are senior to Senator Murphy and Senator Willesee.

O'FARRELL: Yes, but they are not subject to re-election. They are there now. They are safe Labor men.

PRIME MINISTER: I think they are all safe Labor men.

MAX HAWKINS, "BRISBANE TELEGRAPH": How urgent or how soon would you or Mr. Barnard wish to consult with the Five Power partners in South-East Asia and with the ANZUK partners on the arrangements there, the defence arrangements there, having in mind the party's proposal that we will withdraw our battalion group from Singapore in the foreseeable future?

PRIME MINISTER: There is no urgency in this matter for the present Ministry to determine. The battalion and the brigade which are in Singapore don't end their tour of duty, I think, until January 1974. This is a matter which clearly, not only can, but should be left till there is a full Ministry. In any case there is no urgency. As you know, Lord Carrington who was due to come out here at the beginning of this year, will, in fact, be coming in January and this is a matter which, among others, might be discussed with him.

BILL DARCY, A.B.C.: I was wondering if you could tell me whether you are hopeful that diplomatic relations between Australia and China will be established there prior to your visit later next year?

PRIME MINISTER: I would certainly expect so. I mentioned the Japan-Australia Ministerial Meeting early next October. I would certainly hope that there would be full diplomatic representations between the countries, between China and Australia, by then; an Ambassador resident in each capital.

L. OAKES, "MELBOURNE SUN": Prime Minister, you mentioned earlier that the urgency of some United Nations matters was one of the reasons for the establishment of your interim Ministry. Can you tell us whether any decisions have been made so far by your Cabinet on those U.N. matters, what are they, and what instructions have you issued?

PRIME MINISTER: There are two matters where I made a decision. One concerned Rhodesia. In Committee, on one resolution concerning Rhodesia, Australia had abstained, on another, Australia had opposed, voted against. In each case, when the resolution now comes to the General Assembly, Australia will support, vote in support. On the other matter, concerning the Sri Lankan proposal for a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, in Committee Australia had abstained. In the General Assembly, Australia will now vote in support.

CHRIS, REEVES, A.T.N. NETWORK: Prime Minister: Can you tell us please the terms that you have suggested for recognition of Peking?

PRIME MINISTER: Briefly, the Canadian.

BENNEL: Have you set a timetable, Sir, for the expulsion of the Taiwanese Ambassador here at the moment.

PRIME MINISTER: No.

CONNORS: Mr. Whitlam, could you give me a run-down of the likely responsibilities of the new Department of Northern Development and where its responsibilities may end and start geographically?

PRIME MINISTER: No, this is a matter upon which I have already had discussions with the relevant Departmental Heads. It is a matter upon which Mr. Barnard, Senator Murphy, Senator Willesee and I will be having discussions with some of our colleagues also, but we will be involved in the discussion of all the departments so that we will be in a position to make a recommendation to the Caucus when it is able to meet, or if it so wishes, to the new Ministry.

BRUCE MERCHANT, MACQUARIE RADIO NEWS: Mr. Whitlam: Could you tell me whether you intend to hold a full scale Premiers' Press Conference here in Canberra, Premiers' Conference before Christmas?

PRIME MINISTER: Nobody had suggested it. I don't believe it would be possible.

MERCHANT: After Christmas, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: There has been no such suggestion. I don't think I've had the suggestion, there might be in writing, I've not seen, I've not had any such suggestion from any of the Premiers.

WARREN DUNCAN, A.B.C.: How soon do you think it will be before your Government has an effect on the soaring land prices, not only in the major cities, but in the growth areas that you and the N.S.W. Government have nominated.

PRIME MINISTER: I hope to have discussions, as I said in my Policy Speech, with the Premiers of Victoria and New South Wales and Mr. Uren concerning Albury-Wodonga. The Hamer Government in Victoria has nominated Albury-Wodonga. This administration has been returned, among other things, on the nomination of Albury-Wodonga. I don't know what approaches might be made by any other State Government about any other centres. I certainly would be discussing with Mr. Uren and his Department of Cities any such matter, particularly this question of land prices.

BOB BAUDINO, NEWS LIMITED: Can ask this again, twenty six nations today moved a resolution in the Trusteeship Committee of the United Nations calling for Australia to prepare a new timetable on independence for Papua New Guinea. Australia as late as November 20, gave a timetable saying this would come in December 1973. Do you propose to update this?

PRIME MINISTER: Events are moving so quickly in Papua New Guinea that it is not inconceivable that that date of December 1973 could be reached. It is altogether probable that Papua New Guinea will be fully independent and, one trusts, admitted to both the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations before less than two years, no more than two years from now. You know that Mr. Somare has sent a message to me. This is a matter where I can repeat what I have said in the Parliament, what Mr. Somare himself believes, that the term as Minister of External Territories of Mr. Andrew Peacock made the development of the progress towards independence of Papua New Guinea very much easier than any of us could have expected when some of you came up with some of us at the beginning of 1970 and again, at the beginning of 1971.

CHAMBERLAIN: Relevant to that, Sir, the Queensland Premier is arguing about the boundaries between Queensland and Papua New Guinea and says he won't tolerate any Federal interference. Have you any view on that?

PRIME MINISTER: I have. It is well known but I think he can wait until the full Ministry is appointed. I haven't yet had time, I hope you will understand, to see what the position is in the Department of Foreign Affairs on this matter, but quite clearly, in the interests of good relations between Australia and Papua New Guinea, this boundary must be made acceptable in contemporary terms. The last visiting mission of the United Nations Trusteeship Council to New Guinea reported on this matter. It is going to receive increasing international attention. The boundary which has been fixed by agreement between Australia and Indonesia obviously forms a precedent for a boundary between Australia and Papua New Guinea. Queensland is part of Australia. Australia alone has any international standing.

BRIAN JOHNS: Prime Minister, you mentioned that Dr. Coombs had given you advice today. I was wondering if you could tell us has he joined your staff? If he hasn't, is he going to join it and the conditions on which he would join, because I noticed, and it is a supplementary question to an earlier question that Mr. McCallum asked, and you said that you were trying to depoliticise the Public Service by making these personal appointments. I was wondering would he relinquish his other public service posts by joining you?

PRIME MINISTER: He will be joining my staff. The conditions are a matter of discussion between him and Sir John Bunting. I think there were discussions today, but I'm not sure if, because of the visits to Government House, this has been done yet.

MAX HAWKINS: On regional development. During the campaign, you also mentioned Townsville as one of the key centres that you would like to see reasonably developed. Do you still hold to that view now that you haven't won the seat of Herbert which you hoped to win?

PRIME MINISTER: Of course. There was never any prospect of us winning Indi or Farrer, but what I've said about Albury-Wodonga stands. The significance, why I mentioned Townsville, of course, was it is a centre whose problems arise, whose advantages and problems alike arise from the Commonwealth's very great involvement there. It's always had the involvement of the Air Force base, but of course in the last ten years there has been the upgraded railway from Mt. Isa and the consequent copper refinery; there has been the Army base; there are two C.S.I.R.O. Research Laboratories; there is the University. Accordingly, the demand on services in Townsville has been brought about by Commonwealth involvement more than in any centre in Australia other than Canberra itself. The one particular thing where Townsville is deficient, where the deficiencies are exceeded only by those of Adelaide, is in the quantity of the water. Adelaide, of course, has problems of quality of water as well. The other significance about Townsville is, of course, that it is the natural point of entry for one of Australia's greatest tourist attractions, the Barrier Reef, and is much closer to those countries from which tourists are most likely to come, Japan and America.

ALAN RAMSEY: Prime Minister: I realise that this is not a matter of pressing urgency for the present administration, but do you share Mrs. Whitlam's views, publicised views, today on the legalisation of marijuana?

PRIME MINISTER: I have never discussed it with her. I think I will leave it to the new Ministry. In general, I would not expect on this matter any difference in approach from those which have been adopted or foreshadowed by Mr. Chipp. I would think this is one of those matters, such as Papua New Guinea under Mr. Peacock, where there will be no great differences between the outgoing administration and the full Ministry which will be appointed before Christmas.

PAUL WEBSTER, "THE AUSTRALIAN": Could I ask whether Australia will accept a limited form of representation from Taiwan as it has in Tokyo at present? Secondly, are you going to review your relations with South Vietnam and Cambodia, and thirdly, do you intend to seek some form of recognition in Hanoi?

PRIME MINISTER: The last one would not be regarded as urgent by the present administration. The middle one, about South Vietnam, this is not a matter which the present administration would regard as calling for a decision within the next ten or twelve days. The first one, the ...

PAUL WEBSTER: Taiwanese representation here in a limited form as it exists in Tokyo at present.

PRIME MINISTER: This would appear a reasonable matter that there should be unofficial contacts, commercial contacts, between Taiwan and Australia after full diplomatic representation between the People's Republic and Australia just as there are still between Taiwan and Japan.

JOHN STUBBS: As Minister of External Affairs, and Prime Minister, what are you going to do about our political appointments of the previous government such as Gordon Freeth in Tokyo, and Dame Annabelle Rankin in New Zealand? Will you replace them immediately, or have discussions with them?

PRIME MINISTER: The present administration would not deal with either matter. If, in the next administration, I'm Minister for Foreign Affairs, as I expect, I would not think these are matters of any urgency whatever. I have no reason to believe that Dame Annabelle Rankin or the Honourable Gordon Freeth would not carry out the policies of the new government with complete competence and loyalty. In fact, there was an occasion for me to send a message today to New Zealand via Dame Annabelle Rankin and I gave instructions that my personal regards should be passed to her.

DAVID SOLOMON: Sir, a multi-part question also. First of all, you mentioned Sir John Bunting. Could you say whether you have decided to keep him on as Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department and what other decisions you have made regarding senior Public Service appointments, and secondly, concerning open government, what do you intend to do to make open government a reality, and will you keep by your prior undertaking to have regular press conferences every Tuesday in Canberra?

PRIME MINISTER: I asked Sir John Bunting if he would be happy to continue in his present post, as I would be very happy if he were to do so. He said he would. I was pleased. It is my view that, whenever I am in Canberra on Tuesday, I should have a press conference. I suppose one would still have to work out what time suited the Press best. It may be that it might suit sometimes to have them in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, but obviously I would take the advice, I would try to meet the advice, the wishes, of the President of the Gallery on such matters.

Gentlemen, might I just say this; since there are quite a number of foreign policy issues upon which I have been asked questions. In the foreign affairs field there are a number of important questions I would like to discuss with my colleagues and my policy advisers rather than say things today which might have the effect of foreclosing some policy options open to this administration or the full Ministry. The change of government, however, does provide a new opportunity for us to reassess a whole range of Australian foreign policies and attitudes. In the weeks ahead, I shall, in consultation with my Ministerial colleagues and my policy advisers, be reassessing these policies with the general intention of developing more constructive, flexible and progressive approaches to a number of foreign policy issues. I wouldn't want to say more now than that the general direction of my thinking is towards a more independent Australian stance in international affairs, an Australia which will be less

militarily oriented and not open to suggestions of racism; an Australia which will enjoy a growing standing as a distinctive, tolerant, co-operative and well regarded nation not only in the Asian and Pacific region, but in the world at large.

I hope you don't mind me volunteering those comments. It is an early opportunity of me replying in general terms to the good wishes that I have received from a very great number of Heads of Government throughout the world, particularly heads of fraternal parties, other Social Democratic and Labor Parties, and Heads of Government in our region. Inevitably it will take me a few days before I can make an appropriate individual response to these expressions of goodwill which have been very heartening indeed.