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THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE

AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 23 JANUARY 1973

PRIME MINISTER: Ladies and gentlemen: I haven't had time to see today's Australian papers yet, so I am not sure what cover there was given to the decision by the New Zealand Government at its Cabinet meeting yesterday which I attended to help the Australian Government get a start with a Dental Therapist Scheme in the schools - a School Dental Service as they call it in New Zealand. The sum total of it is that they will agree to take 50 Australian students in March this year and another intake of 50 in September. This follows the announcement I made a week ago after our own Cabinet meeting that we would be taking specific steps to accelerate the intake of pre-school teachers in this academic year. So, therefore, while we have been frustrated in undertaking any steps this academic year to increase the output of social workers or of youth leaders, we have succeeded in taking the necessary steps in respect to school dental nurses and pre-school teachers.

Today our Cabinet ratified the arrangements which I have been able to make over the last week with the New Zealand Government and the New South Wales Government to have a committee of inquiry to prepare a National Compensation Scheme in Australia to provide compensation for personal injuries including injuries sustained on the road, at work, in the home, in the school or elsewhere. I want to thank very much indeed the co-operation I have received from the Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Attorney-General of New Zealand and the Chief Justice of New Zealand and the Premier, Attorney-General and Chief Justice of New South Wales. Because of that co-operation, we have been able to secure the services, as members of this committee, of Mr. Justice Woodhouse, D.S.C., from New Zealand and Mr. Justice Meares from New South Wales. The third member of the committee will be Professor Patrick Atiyah, Dean of the Faculty of Law at the Australian National University here in Canberra.

Mr. Justice Woodhouse was the Chairman of a Royal Commission which in December 1967 brought down a report on compensation for personal injury in New Zealand. It was a pioneering and epoch-making report. It has been read with very great interest in all common-law countries, and we are very fortunate to have Mr. Justice Woodhouse serving on our committee. Mr. Justice Meares is the Chairman of the Law Reform Commission of New South Wales. He is a member of the expert group on road safety which was appointed by our predecessors. You will remember the report it brought down last September on the road accident situation in Australia, a national review.

Professor Atiyah is serving under Mr. Justice Meares on the New South Wales Government's Consultative Committee on Motor Vehicle Accident Compensation. He has given evidence to the House of Representatives Select Committee on road safety.

These gentlemen are acknowledged throughout the English-speaking world in every common-law country as being experts, innovators in this field. There have been, as you will appreciate, negotiations by letter and telephone on this subject with both the Prime Minister of New Zealand and the Premier of New South Wales and, in particular, the wording which I can read to you if you like of the proposed terms of reference have been drafted by the New South Wales Attorney-General as well as myself.

In fact the idea of having Mr. Justice Meares and Professor Atiyah on the Commonwealth's committee of inquiry came from a letter which the Premier of New South Wales sent to me at the beginning of the month inquiring about the proposals that we were making for a national compensation scheme.

Mr. Justice Woodhouse will come to Australia in about a fortnight's time and he will confer in Sydney with Mr. Justice Meares and, I trust, I haven't on this point had the opportunity today since the Cabinet rose to speak with Professor Atiyah but I would expect that he would also be able to be there with the two judges as they look at the terms of reference. They will be invited to make any other suggestions to make this report as complete and helpful as possible and it is quite likely that at that time they will be able to make some preliminary arrangements for the conducting of the inquiry, and where they should take evidence and from whom. The other members of the New South Wales committee will be invited to give evidence to this committee and, no doubt, the advice and documents which they have already been able to give will be very much in Mr. Justice Meares' mind as he takes part in this inquiry with Mr. Justice Woodhouse and Professor Atiyah.

Now I can read the terms of reference if you like or you can get them afterwards.

Well Mr. Walsh can give you the text of them afterwards.

Gentlemen; I very much appreciate, as I said at the beginning, the co-operation of the New Zealand and the New South Wales Governments and judiciary.

There were a couple of other decisions which Cabinet made.

One is to fix a price for the sale of the Nomad aircraft. We take quite a pride in the quality and the success which this Australian aircraft has achieved. We will welcome purchases at \$285,000 each. Mr. Barnard can give you further details of these arrangements.

You will remember that in my policy speech I placed particular emphasis on our desire to build up some basic industries in Australia for which there is certain to be a great demand in Australia, light and fighter aircraft was one subject, pipelines, rolling stock, shipping were the others I mentioned.

Also we decided to defer the hearing of the application for a second commercial broadcasting station licence in Canberra. Senator McClelland, the Minister for the Media, reported to us that there are quite serious deficiencies in the present act. There maybe conditions laid down for the grant of a licence. It is extremely doubtful if those conditions can be sustained if challenged, and we believe that before any new licences are granted that the statutory position should be clarified and re-enforced.

There is one other matter I should mention to you.

I am pleased to announce that arrangements have been made for Australia to ratify today two treaties relating to the control of nuclear weapons, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Seabed Arms Control Treaty.

The first one, the N.P.T. you will remember was supported by the Australian Labor Party over the last four years.

We have said that not only should the treaty be signed - which Australia did after some hesitation - but should be ratified. Well we are now doing that. The instruments of ratification are being deposited today by Australia's representatives in London, Washington and Moscow - the three depository capitals. This action fulfills a longstanding policy of the Australian Labor Party and the pledge, you will recall, that I made in my policy speech before last year's elections. It reflects my Government's strong and unequivocal support for efforts to check the spread of nuclear weapons and for the principles of arms control contained in both treaties. A press release on this matter is being issued to you by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Any questions?

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, may I ask you two related questions concerning the French nuclear tests in the Pacific. Firstly, Sir, were you disappointed that the Prime Minister of New Zealand didn't join you in your proposed approach to the International Court of Justice. And the second point is: you said during the election campaign that if this approach failed the next step would probably be cessation of relations with France. Does that still stand?

PRIME MINISTER: On the first one, the Prime Minister of New Zealand has not declined - I think that was your word - to join in the Australian approach to the International Court of Justice. The Prime Minister of New Zealand has already said that he will make available to Australia the considerable scientific data that New Zealand has collected on this matter. It's quite probable that New Zealand can make out a stronger case for nuisance - in the legal sense - nuisance - arising from the French tests than Australia can do. The Attorney-General of New Zealand, Dr. Martyn Findlay, is awaiting the return of Senator Lionel Murphy, our Attorney-General from London and Washington to concert further approaches in this matter. Senator Murphy, as you know, has been discussing this matter with likely witnesses and likely counsel in London. Dr. Findlay will be taking an early opportunity to discuss these matters with Senator Murphy and other matters which as you know Senator Murphy has been raising in London. I never used the word in the policy speech about cessation of diplomatic relations. I think I used the word suspension. This is one of the contingencies. I want to emphasise that we do not assume that France will in fact go ahead with these tests. And furthermore if a favourable decision is given by the World Court still less would we assume that France would not obey the Court's decision.

Q. Prime Minister, on that question can we take firstly that the ratification of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty is linked with the possible approach to the World Court in the sense that it will strengthen Australia's hand?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes. It's part of a pattern that we will adopt to strengthen all means of arms limitation - not least nuclear arms limitation.

Q. Well, sir, New Zealand I understand - one of the contingencies mentioned was the possibility of sending warships into the testing zone - if the tests go on. Has Australia ruled out any possibility of joining such a move?

PRIME MINISTER: This is a contingency. Australia has not ruled out co-operation in such a contingency. New Zealand, however, takes the same attitude as Australia. She does not assume that France will not heed the resolution of the General Assembly last November and particularly any decision by the World Court.

Neither country assumes that France will carry out further nuclear weapons tests in our hemisphere.

Q. Sir, on a different subject, there are suggestions that the submissions to the late Mr. Justice Moore in the Steel Price Inquiry will not be made public. Does this procedure meet with your expressed hope for open government and for a public prices justification - and in answering this question, I wonder whether you might go on and tell us whether you received any applications for similar inquiries from other industries and would you expect to, and would you like to?

PRIME MINISTER: I haven't heard any more about the B.H.P. matter which Mr. Justice Moore is reporting upon since last Friday. I don't know if there has been anything further on this matter. I haven't got the letter to Mr. Justice Moore with me. My memory is that we said that he could conduct the inquiry in any way he saw fit, and my memory is that he made a public statement saying that he would be sitting on one day in public when any interested persons could make oral submissions to him.

And I think this also involved oral submissions on written submissions which had been made to him. So whether these documents are made public before Mr. Justice Moore makes his report depends on Mr. Justice Moore. Furthermore, whether he refers to them in his report, of course, depends on him. Or if he incorporates them, or quotes them in his report. But the report will be public. There has been a letter from another company. I discussed what the reply should be with Mr. Crean and I haven't seen the reply - I imagine it's been sent - but perhaps I shouldn't say any more until I know whether it was sent or what suggestions or responses were made in it.

Q. You might answer which company, if you can, sent the letter to you and if you've replied to it, and I'd like to know whether the Government is going to put its own submission to Mr. Justice Moore on these?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, we hadn't prepared a submission last Friday. I don't know what the position is since then as I told you. I think the company's name was mentioned, wasn't it? Will you wait...has it been mentioned?..the name hasn't been mentioned, so I won't give you the name.

Q. On the same subject, it's been suggested that the B.H.P. inquiry is going to be somewhat self-defeating simply because if you want Mr. Justice Moore to report as quickly as you've suggested you won't really have time to do much more than look over the B.H.P. books - and the third term of reference of any other material he considers relevant is really quite meaningless in this context. Could you comment on that, and is it possible that although obviously you want to get this inquiry completed quickly, you might have a second run at it over a longer and more comprehensive look at B.H.P. and the steel industry in general before the next application for a price increase?

PRIME MINISTER: Gentlemen, I frankly didn't expect that you'd be asking questions still on this matter because it was announced I think on Friday week and we did have a press conference last Tuesday and I haven't got the letter in front of me. I do remember some criticisms such as you've stated. I don't believe that anything but good can come out of Mr. Justice Moore's inquiry. His report - clearly it can't be as effective as a report by a standing statutory commission, but it is the first time that any company has agreed to have such an inquiry - that the Government has been able to provide such an inquiry.

It will be open to the tribunal to look at the steel industry in the light of everything that has transpired in the last month and between then and the functioning of the tribunal itself. I don't think I used the word tribunal - I should have used the word tribunal. It will be open to the tribunal to take all these things into account, including the matters that Mr. Justice Moore is inquiring into and reporting on. But, unquestionably, Mr. Justice Moore's report will be very helpful to the Government in framing the legislation.

Q. Sir, did Cabinet consider the question of export incentives to manufacturers, which are worth about \$90 million a year, and do you feel that these should be retained?

PRIME MINISTER: Cabinet has not considered this matter. I'll express a collective view if and when the matter is considered.

Q. Sir, did Mr. Kirk approach you in New Zealand and ask you to modify your stand on the transit through Australia of the South African Rugby team to New Zealand?

PRIME MINISTER: No.

Q. It wasn't mentioned at all?

PRIME MINISTER: There was no mention about any modification of the Australian Government's policy in this matter - none at all.

Q. Are you agreeable to modify your stand, before that you wouldn't allow them transit through Australia?

PRIME MINISTER: Not at all.

Q. You won't modify it?

PRIME MINISTER: No. We will not condone the South African Government's policies of apartheid in any form.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, looking beyond the inquiry into the national compensation case would it be envisaged that this would replace Third Party Insurance or be in parallel with Third Party Insurance?

PRIME MINISTER: This is a matter for the committee to inquire into and report on. As you'll see from the suggested terms of reference, it is being asked to look into the question - whether rights under the scheme should be in substitution for all or any rights now existing. The Commonwealth Parliament - if I may venture an opinion myself - would not be able to pass laws which would preclude negligence actions in the Courts of the States. The Commonwealth Parliament can, however, under the social services paragraph of Section 51 inserted at the referendum in 1946 and, I hope, under the insurance paragraph which has been in the Constitution from the outset be able to provide attractive alternatives to such expensive, incomplete, time-consuming procedures as actions in court for injuries arising from accidents on the roads (Third Party) or at work (Workers' Compensation). Therefore, if I may hazard an opinion, it is likely that the Commonwealth's National Compensation Scheme will make other forms of compensation redundant.

Q. Sir, is the Commonwealth intervening or contemplating intervening in the oil tanker dispute in New South Wales in view of the fact that a national stoppage is being threatened?

PRIME MINISTER: The oil tanker dispute of course is one which only concerns governments insofar as they've been tardy, in fact irresponsible in bringing in legislation - Commonwealth and State - to cover this situation. The dispute arises through a demarkation or representational issue - this quite absurd position that we have in Australia where unions can be separate legal entities in the Federal arbitration system and in four of the State arbitration systems - New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. I've been appalled to see yet another instance such as this arising from this situation. The Labor Party's commitment as you'll know from the platform, as amended at Launceston in June 1971, is to pass laws for the integration of organisations registered under the Federal Act and their branches registered under State legislation, and the registration of a Federal registered union or its branch under any relevant State legislation. You might remember that Mr. Cameron and I have raised this matter throughout the lifetime of the last Parliament in questions and, in Mr. Cameron's case, in speeches. I'd like to quote from the judgment of the Commonwealth Industrial Court on 25 February 1969 in the leading case of Moore and Doyle: "A system of trade union organisation is urgently needed which would enable the one body to represent its relevant members in both the Federal and State arbitration systems and it should be possible for Federal and State authorities to examine the question whether organisations and trade unions can be provided with such a system. We have decided to refer our judgment in this matter and these remarks to the Attorney-General for the Commonwealth in the hope that it may be possible after consultation between Commonwealth and State Attorneys-General, the trade unions - both Federal and State - and other interested Government authorities to arrange for the examination of the important organisational matters to which we have referred". That was a unanimous judgment by Chief Judge Spicer, Mr. Justice Smithers and, I think, Mr. Justice Kerr, now Chief Justice of New South Wales, and I regret to say that Federal and State Governments have not given the necessary legislation to their Parliaments, and in particular, as I understand from inquiries I've made this afternoon through Mr. Cameron, New South Wales and Queensland are objecting to giving State legislative status to unions registered under the Commonwealth system. I have it in mind to communicate with the two Premiers about this matter which has been outstanding for four years, come one month and two days from now. South Australia has passed some legislation which helps quite considerably. The Commonwealth can not pass legislation which covers the whole position by itself. We'll do what we can. But frankly, if occurrences like this are to be avoided in the future, then the New South Wales and Queensland Parliaments have to pass laws as well as the Australian Parliament - and we will see if we can do something about it. There is a meeting of the Labor Ministers - Australian and State - a month from today when another attempt will be made to deal with this subject then. But it's my hope that I'll be able to write to the Premiers well before that, pointing out that the public is suffering once again from the failure in our Federal system of the State Parliaments to co-operate with the Commonwealth.

Q. Sir, when you mentioned the decision on the fixing of the price for the Nomad aircraft, you mentioned it in the context of an earlier statement of your own - the fostering of production of areas in which I think you said there would be clearly local demand - and you mentioned rolling stock, pipelines, shipping and fighter and light aircraft. Will policies relating to production in these areas be subject to strict analysis in terms of the economic efficiency of Australian production?

PRIME MINISTER: I hope so.

Q. And particularly in the shipping industry will you recommit the former Government's decision - its second decision - to go against the Tariff Board Report on the Australian shipbuilding industry?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't want to comment on the second one - the shipbuilding. I'd like to talk to Mr. Jones about this. I think he is considering this matter. But I am unable to commit him and it's not been discussed in the Cabinet. Can I give you the instance of rolling stock?

There can be no question that the metropolitan railways in Australia are becoming less attractive because of the age of the rolling stock. I forget the percentages, but it is something like 50 per cent of the rolling stock in Sydney and Melbourne is over 40 years old. In one State (I think it's Victoria) nearly half the rolling stock dates from the First War - and then we suddenly find a panic about wanting to order new rolling stock. There is a continuing need for decent rolling stock, signalling equipment and so on in the metropolitan railways and it will be our objective to consult with the States in having a proper program to see that there are carriages built suitable for all these metropolitan systems on an efficient, competitive basis for a continuing program. It's quite absurd for a State Government all of a sudden to call tenders, maybe only in its own State and without any consultation with the other States or any consideration of tenderers in other States. We all know that there is a crying need to have replenishment of all this rolling stock and we ought to have a program in which all the authorities running the railways collaborate. I myself believe that that would be probably the Commonwealth.

Q. Well, Sir, if I may ask a supplementary question to that on that specific issue of the rolling stock could you be a little bit more precise about what you mean by a program. Is this some Commonwealth aid to companies or are you envisaging...what do you have in mind?

PRIME MINISTER: No, no, no. The Bureau of Transport Economics has made a report you remember on some of the metropolitan railways systems. I think they're the systems of Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. The Victorian Government didn't give enough information about Melbourne's metropolitan system. One of the features should be rolling stock and I would believe that the Bureau of Transport Economics, which has reported on the age of the rolling stock, should make recommendations on a program for adequate vehicles to meet the demand, particularly the demand, if rail transport becomes more attractive and competitive. For instance, it is quite likely that we would be able to have a ten-year program to see that all rolling stock in the metropolitan areas was at least built since the last war. But there are several companies which would be attracted to tool up for such a program in several of the States and this could be....I can't myself see why the rolling stock can't be effectively planned on the basis of all the State capitals.

Q. Sir, in view of the failure of one of the engines on the two-engine BAC-111 to New Zealand on Friday, have you considered getting an aircraft with more engines - a larger aircraft for Prime Ministerial use and overseas trips?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, well these things don't worry me of course. I've flown as you know for so many years I'm quite inured to these things. The most distressing incident I can remember was coming from Sydney in a Friendship when both motors stopped. And there was another, I believe that some of you will recall, going across Bass Strait when all the motors in a Viscount stopped - a minister believed to be at the controls. But nobody could remain unmoved at the reaction of the young men and women who were travelling with me. They have their lives before them. I have an obligation to them and to those who depend upon them and those whom they may hereafter beget. There were some persons of more mature years - advisers from the Public Service - I thought that the Treasury would cop anything, but I was distressed how they went to pieces under this stress. I did my best to comfort them. Ladies and gentlemen; this is too distressing for me to discuss further. It's enough for me to say that I conducted myself with the usual savoir faire and aplomb. The only thing that distresses me is that so many of you gentlemen that were proposing to come with us to Djakarta in this type of aircraft have cancelled your reservations. I will consider the matter. But I can say that there was a Defence representative with us and the emergency concentrated his mind wonderfully on this incident. Dr. Johnson would be proud of him.

Q. Prime Minister, I'd like to go back to the oil dispute. You've mentioned long-term solutions to this type of problem but will you be taking any action in the short-term to get these men back to work?

PRIME MINISTER: I'm not contemplating any sudden ad hoc approach on this matter. It is a basic fault in our legislation, one which the Commonwealth Industrial Court highlighted and stressed in very strong terms which I quoted to you nearly four years ago. Well, the new Australian Government will be doing something about it and asking the State Governments which are in default to do something about it too. It is a very clear example where the public have been let down by inaction for four years.

Q. Prime Minister, on your Cabinet announcement regarding the commercial broadcasting licence in Canberra, am I correct from the way you expressed it, it seemed to me that you were saying that you couldn't proceed with it because Senator McClelland had indicated to Cabinet that any decision would be subject to legal appeal and that you were concerned that this legal appeal would perhaps be successful. Is that a correct interpretation?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I didn't forecast it would be subject to legal appeal but what I am saying is that the Australian Broadcasting Control Board has been reluctant, and many people would think ineffective, in insisting upon conditions which it has laid down for radio and T.V. licences because it believes, and I forget the name of the trade body concerned but it's the organisation of commercial radio stations, has given legal opinions to the Board saying, 'ah, you can't do that to us'. The Act is weak. Well, we want to oblige them. We want to strengthen the Act.

Q. Sir, Mr Gordon Bryant, during his tour of northern Australia just recently said that the Federal Government should take direct responsibility for the Palm Island Aboriginal settlement.

PRIME MINISTER: He's quite right.

Q. The basic response of the Queensland Government to this is...

PRIME MINISTER: Oh. It's all right. I haven't read the papers but I know what it'll be.

Q. What they've said is basically that they'd be prepared to accept this if the Commonwealth Government would take responsibility for all Aboriginal settlements. Have you considered this or are you likely to do this?

PRIME MINISTER: No, but I think it'd be a great improvement.

Q. You are likely to do this?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I haven't discussed it with Mr Bryant, but we are prepared to take all action which is necessary or desirable to discharge the obligations which the Australian people imposed overwhelmingly upon the national Parliament in the referendum in mid-1967. The national Parliament has the obligation - it certainly has the opportunity - we believe it has the obligation, to see that the Aboriginal residents of Australia have every opportunity that the Australian people as a whole can

make for them in their country.

Q. And this would include a direct Commonwealth financial responsibility?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, the Commonwealth can conduct any reservations insofar as reservations are still an appropriate form of advancement for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. I don't want there to be any suggestion that this is a matter of State sovereignty. That is garbage. The Australian Parliament was given this responsibility. We intend to discharge it.

By the way, I'm told that this is being broadcast and I should therefore make it quite plain that my references to my staff and to my advisers on the Tasman crossing were completely facetious. They didn't refer to any living persons.

Q. Sir, I hope this is non-political to the extent that...

PRIME MINISTER: Oh I'm sure coming from you... Is Channel 9 taking this?

Q. To the extent that both sides of the Parliament are involved, have you any views on the principle of employing close relatives on personal staff, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: You mean Ministers' personal staffs?

Q. Not necessarily Ministers, also the other side of the Parliament as well.

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, I mean people who are Ministers in a government of any political complexion. I accept that your remarks are completely bipartisan and dispassionate.

Whom a Minister appoints, or any parliamentary office bearer appoints to his staff is entirely a matter for him.

Q. I accept that Sir, but have you any views on the principle of it?

PRIME MINISTER: No. I just state the only principle there can be. In this case Ministers are given the right to appoint people of their own choice and to sack people if they like - and whom they appoint and whom they sack is a matter for them.

Q. Prime Minister, last month you wrote to the Premier of ...

PRIME MINISTER: I'm sorry, there's someone...

Q. Oh. It's all right - he's my boss.

Q. May I continue, Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, well I mean I don't want to come into any of these industrial disputes ...

Q. ... Last month you wrote to the Premier of Tasmania, Mr Reece, recommending an urgent joint Commonwealth/State inquiry into the preservation of Lake Pedder. Mr Reece has declined to join in that. Do you personally believe it is still important that such an inquiry be held?

PRIME MINISTER: I'm not going to express any personal views in these matters at all. I'll express a collective view. It doesn't come within my own ministerial responsibility and if - when - this matter is considered by the Cabinet I will express the Cabinet view.

Q: Sir, Mr Cameron, the Minister for Labour, has forecast that unemployment will rise to a record 150,000 this month. Does the Government consider that further economic stimulus is warranted?

PRIME MINISTER: I believe that if you want to have a more significant answer on this matter you ought to discuss it with Mr Cameron or Mr Crean in whose responsibilities this subject mainly falls. The great difficulty which has emerged, perhaps I myself can say is, that there can be a situation where economic conditions in general are favourable - but there is still a large number unemployed by Australian or Western European standards, and there is a particular difficulty of course in people of maturer years getting another job if they lose one. And they can still remain unresolved where general conditions are quite prosperous or buoyant. Now it is this sort of matter where Mr Cameron and Mr Crean are particularly giving their attention. They want to see that there are retraining schemes made available in Australia such as there are in many Western European countries - Scandinavia in particular - and I think now in the United States. There are new structural features about the unemployment situation.

Q. Sir, one question on staff again. Have you yet decided how big the staff of the Opposition should be. Have you approved any staff arrangements there and if so can you tell us how you see the proportions, the cut up say between the Liberal and Country Parties and the D.L.P.?

PRIME MINISTER: I've only given a general attention to this since our last Press Conference. I'm looking at the increased number and status of the staff accorded to the 27 ministers in this Government compared with the 27 ministers in the late Government and, I would offer - my present information is to offer to the non-government parties in each House a similar proportionate increase in numbers and status of their staff. I can't at this stage make any suggestion as to how this would be split up, but my general idea is that there should be a similar increase in numbers in - let me use the word non-government parties. I don't want to be drawn into this argument as to which party or parties constitute the Opposition.

Q. Sir, on that subject, you said that who a Minister appoints to his staff is a matter for him alone but we, the taxpayers pay the salaries, could I ask you the reasons for the appointment of Professor Harry Messel as a part-time adviser to Senator Murphy at I understand a salary of \$11,000 a year with overseas trips as optional extras?

PRIME MINISTER: Professor Messel is not a member of Senator Murphy's staff in the sense as are people about whom the previous questions were asked. Professor Messel is in the same position as any other advisers. He is of course very well known in his consideration and exposition of scientific matters and he has been engaged by Senator Murphy to advise him on scientific matters particularly of course the pending litigation about the French nuclear tests. He is helping in finding witnesses in this case. My memory is that his fee is not what you say, but I don't know

what it is. But anyway I shouldn't rely just on my memory of what his fee is in this matter.

Q. To clarify that, Sir, are you saying that the appointment is only while the fuss over the French tests lasts?

PRIME MINISTER: I think it's only for this year...

Q. Because I would have thought it would be more appropriate to advise Mr Morrison, the Minister for Science.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, but the litigation is in the hands of the Attorney-General.

Q. Sir, it's only a temporary appointment?

PRIME MINISTER: Well he's engaged for this year. There are a great number of advisers that the Government engages in all fields. This is one scientific adviser on litigation.

PRIME MINISTER: Gentlemen I think you have had a statement from me on the death of President Lyndon Johnson. I don't know if you want me to repeat it here.

Gentlemen, Lyndon Johnson will be remembered as one of the great reforming presidents of the United States. Nothing should be allowed to diminish the memory of his achievement. He came to office in the most difficult and tragic circumstances and he assumed his great responsibilities with valour and distinction. He went on to secure in the Presidential election in 1964 the greatest plurality in the history of the Republic. Under his administration the 90th Congress was among the most active in his country's history with a record of achievement and innovation in social and welfare legislation unmatched in our generation. In all such domestic matters he was the greatest president since Franklin D. Roosevelt. President Johnson involved his country more deeply in the Vietnam War than his predecessors. He was in a real sense a victim of this disastrous conflict yet no one would have welcomed more warmly the present steps towards a peaceful settlement. Australians have vivid and cordial memories of his visits to Australia in 1942, in October 1966 and in December 1967. He was the only American President to have visited this country while in office and he visited it twice in office. His presence at the memorial service for the late Prime Minister Harold Holt was a signal demonstration of his affection for the Australian people and his own high estimation of the value of the Australian-American alliance. On behalf of the Australian Government I extend to his family and to the American people our profound sympathy in the loss they have sustained.

Q. On that very question, is there any proposal by yourself, your Ministers or members of the non-government parties to attend the funeral?

PRIME MINISTER: At the moment I am inquiring to see what other countries are doing.