

PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE

PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA,

TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER, 1973

PRIME MINISTER: Gentlemen, there have been some appointments made I would expect about half an hour ago by the Executive Council to the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. Mr Barney Williams - R.D. Williams - and Professor J.E. Isaac, have been made presidential members and Mr Jack Heffernan a member of the Commission. Mr Barney Williams has been Federal Secretary of the Australian Bank Officials Association since 1950 and at ACSPA since 1956. He was recently, you will remember, appointed to the Bank Board. Professor Isaac holds the Chair of Economics at Monash and has been on the Civil Aviation Tribunal - I forget the name of it. Mr Heffernan is one of the joint Secretaries of the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union and Secretary of the Metal Trades Federation of Unions. A Deputy President of the Commission, Mr Chambers, who for very many years before that was the Public Service Arbitrator and Deputy Public Service Arbitrator, has been appointed Deputy Chairman of the Prices Justification Tribunal.

A couple of things of interest to Canberra. Cabinet has agreed to proceed with a new building for the High Court. You will remember that the winning design was announced last week. The National Capital Development Commission was authorised to enter immediately into a formal agreement with the architects for the new building. It is intended that the contract will be let and construction begun as soon as funds have been approved. The estimated cost will be \$9 million.

Cabinet also approved a site at Barton for a new building for the Attorney-General's Department. The estimated cost of the building is \$5 million. However, there will be no expenditure in fact this year.

Mr Jones, the Minister for Transport, I believe made a press statement yesterday on Cabinet's decision concerning the report of the House of Representatives Committee on Road Safety. Cabinet also split up among various Ministers responsibility for following-up the recommendations in the Report of the Senate Committee on Mentally and Physically Handicapped Persons which was tabled in May 1971. Nothing was done about it in the last Parliament but Ministers are reviewing all the recommendations in that Senate Report.

There are two pieces of legislation to be drafted. The legislation is being drafted but it doesn't say that every feature which we have asked to be drafted will be confirmed when the legislation appears in draft form. One of the features flows from the statement in the policy speech concerning a Law Enforcement Agency. You will remember that I said that the Commonwealth Police Force will be upgraded with better training, pay and conditions to meet the growing threat of political terrorism and organised crime.

Its facilities will be expanded and its role extended to that of the American FBI. The Commonwealth Police Force will become the key link between Australian Law Enforcement Agencies and Interpol to fight against international crime and the drug traffic must be primarily a national part. And there were some further details in the policy speech on that. Now flowing from that commitment, Cabinet yesterday considered proposals put forward by Senator Murphy, Attorney-General and Minister for Customs and Excise. Cabinet asked the Attorney-General to prepare for further consideration, draft legislation for the creation of a Law Enforcement Authority bringing together under one organisation the work of law enforcement currently performed by the Commonwealth Police, the A.C.T. Police, the Northern Territory Police and the law enforcement units within the Department of Customs and Excise. The legislation is to be drawn with provision for an independent tribunal to investigate complaints against police and on a basis that would provide for divisions within the authority appropriate to the A.C.T. and the Northern Territory. The Cabinet had in mind that when the legislation is passed, the Department of Customs and Excise will be abolished with part of its functions being transferred to the new authority and half being included in a Bureau of Customs. Additionally, Cabinet decided that arrangements should be put in hand now for the functions of the Department of Customs and Excise in the registration of British ships and in indigenous oil policy to be transferred to the Department of Transport and the Department of Minerals and Energy respectively.

Mr Daly, the Minister for Services and Property, was authorised to prepare legislation to ensure disclosure of donations from now on to political parties.

Are there any questions?

QUESTION: Did Senator Murphy yesterday ask that ASIO be included in the group of forces to be brought under the control of one organisation. If so, and that was not done by the Cabinet, can you tell us why?

PRIME MINISTER: Senator Murphy made no such proposal; ASIO is not a law enforcement agency.

QUESTION: Do you have any specific knowledge of donations by multi-national companies to Opposition parties and further are you sure that multi-national companies haven't made donations to the Labor Party?

PRIME MINISTER: I have no knowledge of specific companies which have made donations to the Liberal Party. I have no doubt that such donations figure very greatly in the donations that the Liberal Party has received in recent months. I don't recall donations of this character - this is from overseas companies - to the Labor Party.

QUESTION: Prime Minister, as a matter of clarification, in your policy speech you said "rates of taxation need not be increased at any level to implement a Labor Government's program". Subsequently, in relation to this year's Budget, you interpreted that as an undertaking not to increase taxes in this year's Budget just past. Is that generally an undertaking that during your term of office you will not increase taxation?

PRIME MINISTER: I have got nothing to add to that and I am not going to promote speculation on this issue.

QUESTION: Sir, don't you think that you have in fact created speculation by the doubt you cast on it?

PRIME MINISTER: No I haven't. If you ask questions and I answer questions on this it will create speculation. I recommend Kenneth Davidson's article today.

QUESTION: Mr Daly's legislation. Will provision be made for an Appropriation for party funds to fight election campaigns.

PRIME MINISTER: That's not proposed in this legislation.

QUESTION: Do you propose to introduce that legislation.

PRIME MINISTER: There is no proposal.

QUESTION: What is the attitude of your Government to efforts by Rhodesia to recruit migrants from Australia, and what would be the position of Australian passport holders who accepted an offer of assisted passage to Rhodesia?

PRIME MINISTER: We are obliged under United Nations Security Resolutions to do nothing to support that regime or to facilitate movements into or out of Rhodesia. As you know, any Australian citizen who is promoting the policies of the Rhodesian regime would have his passport recalled. I don't say that there are not persons in Rhodesia in possession of Australian passports who are not performing functions which have no relation to the policies of the regime but if a person with an Australian passport were promoting the policies of the regime that is an abuse of the passport and it would be recalled.

QUESTION: How?

PRIME MINISTER: There have been passports recalled before as you know.

QUESTION: How would you do it if they were living in Rhodesia?

PRIME MINISTER: If they didn't obey, you couldn't go and get it.

QUESTION: Would you cancel it?

PRIME MINISTER: It would be cancelled at the first place where it was presented outside Rhodesia. I suppose there isn't much you can do about people who stay in Rhodesia but a passport is supposed to facilitate movement and any attempt to use it for that purpose would result in its cancellation.

QUESTION: Senator Georges has inferred quite strongly that Dr Coombs had something to do with the removal of Mr Bryant from Aboriginal Affairs. Would you care to comment on that?

PRIME MINISTER: There is no foundation for that allegation whatsoever. Needless to say, I don't discuss with Dr Coombs or with anybody other than my immediate ministerial colleagues any changes in the ministry.

QUESTION: Senator Georges also suggested that Aboriginal Affairs had been become a disaster area littered with failures and excess expenditure. Do you think that a wider range of inquiry is needed?

PRIME MINISTER: No. present inquiries should be adequate.

QUESTION: Do you anticipate any controversy over Mr Heffernan's appointment to the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission?

PRIME MINISTER: I wouldn't expect so. It would be generally acknowledged that Mr Heffernan's qualifications are very appropriate. He is a very well qualified person in the industrial field. I believe he will be able to help in the work of the Arbitration Commission very greatly.

QUESTION: Last week some 57 members of your Labor Caucus sent out a petition calling on the Government not to recognise Chile until Caucus had discussed it. Will you go ahead in recognising Chile before Caucus has discussed the issue, and what's the position now?

PRIME MINISTER: We have taken the steps to recognise the Government that is there. That was done last Thursday. I think I told you a week ago that that is what would happen. There does seem to be some misapprehension about this. Therefore it might be useful if I were to point out to you that, of the countries which have had diplomatic relations with Chile - not just recognition - but those that have had diplomats accredited to Chile, in our region China, Indonesia and Japan have done what we have done; in the Commonwealth, Britain, Canada and New Zealand have done what we have done; countries which have fraternal governments which have done the same as we have are all the Scandanavian countries and West Germany. You probably know already that every Latin American country has done so except Cuba and every Western European country except Italy. New Zealand and Australia were the last of all the countries that I have mentioned to take the step of acknowledging the letter which the new regime had delivered to the foreign missions in Santiago. You know that we have expressed our disapproval of the method by which the regime usurped power by withdrawing our ambassador.

QUESTION: Will he return, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Not for the time being.

QUESTION: The A.L.P. Platform lays down that the Federal Parliament should be clothed with supreme powers. Are you asking A.L.P.'s supporters within the trade union movement to join with you in supporting the incomes referendum rather than accepting the viewpoint of the trade union movement as announced by Mr Hawke?

PRIME MINISTER: The Party's attitude was determined and published on Saturday week after the meeting of the Federal Executive in Adelaide. I would hope that most members of the party and supporters of the party would heed the party's wishes in this regard.

QUESTION: Do you have sympathy for Bob Hawke's stand in opposing the referendum or whether you....

PRIME MINISTER: Not much.

QUESTION: Or would you go to the other extreme and believe that he has actually been disloyal or breaking the rules of the party?

PRIME MINISTER: No, of course I don't. He is entitled to come to his conclusion and to get support for it if he can. I think it's wrong but he would accept the same right on my party to come to a conclusion and seek support for it.

QUESTION: Can you say what topics you hope to discuss with Chinese leaders during your forthcoming visit to Peking?

PRIME MINISTER: I haven't got any specific list but as you can well believe, there are a great number of political and economic and cultural matters which we would like to discuss with them and which we anticipated they would like to discuss with us. There is no agenda at this stage.

QUESTION: Will you protest against their nuclear tests, Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, of course. I did when we were there together last time. I was the first Australian to do so, and I have been followed by Dr Cairns who has done so as a Minister.

QUESTION: When the High Court handed down its majority decision on the Rhodesian Centre, you did suggest that you would ask the Postmaster-General to amend the Postal Act. Have there been any developments on that?

PRIME MINISTER: There has been no submission on this since I said that. I think we will be doing so but there has not been a submission yet because, as you will appreciate, there is a very great deal of legislation which we have been considering. It looks as if we will be introducing and I hope passing almost 200 Bills this year, which is easily the largest number and I would think incomparably the most substantial body of legislation that the Australian Parliament has ever considered. There are some pieces of legislation which you will appreciate have to be done quite quickly. There are quite a number which will have to be through before the 1st of December when Papua New Guinea becomes self-governing. There are also quite a number of pieces which we would like to have on the Statute book in time for the 25th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December. There are also a very great number of pieces which for various financial or tariff or administrative reasons have to be through before the end of December.

QUESTION: Could I ask you some questions on the progress of the Appropriation Bill through the Senate?

PRIME MINISTER: You can ask me one. You have the same right as anyone else.

QUESTION: Could you give us an idea when you expect that to proceed to a vote in the Senate?

PRIME MINISTER: Do you mind if I consider that question?

COMMENT: Right.

QUESTION: The second question is, what is your general attitude. Do you think the Senate is entitled to refuse Appropriation or Supply?

PRIME MINISTER: No, of course its not. It would be quite unprecedented.

QUESTION: And thirdly, Mr Anthony suggested that you couldn't use the Election Bill to go to the Governor-General to ask for a double dissolution. He said it is not something you can put on the shelf and keep there for a double dissolution. Mr Snedden has said that he doesn't know whether the causes for a double dissolution have evaporated or not. What is your opinion on this constitutional situation?

PRIME MINISTER: Mr Anthony, not for the first time, is wrong; Mr Snedden, not for the first time, can't make up his mind. The position is quite clear that the conditions for a double dissolution are available for me to make a submission to the Government-General whenever I wish.

QUESTION: I was wondering whether you could elaborate on the Bureau of Customs. Will it be attached to this new Law Enforcement Agency....

PRIME MINISTER: I don't think so.

QUESTION: And what about its functions?

PRIME MINISTER: It will be primarily a revenue body in the same way as the Commissioners of Taxation are.

QUESTION: What about by-laws?

PRIME MINISTER: The legislation is being drafted and I think it is enough for me to leave it at that. We are committed to establish a Law Enforcement Agency as we undertook in the policy speech. We are committed, when that legislation is enacted, to abolish the Department of Customs and Excise as at present constituted.

QUESTION: Would you have been better able to attack inflation if you hadn't given an election promise not to raise personal taxes?

PRIME MINISTER: I think the same answer as I have already given to the "Age" still applies.
