

PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA -  
2 JULY 1974

Ladies and gentlemen, first I can inform you of some appointments. The Government has decided to appoint Mr Philip Evatt, B.Sc., Q.C., as a Judge of the Australian Industrial Court; Mr Justice Starke of the Victorian Supreme Court and Mr John Dixon of Melbourne to the Board of Trustees of the Australian War Memorial; and Brigadier A.B. Stretton as Director-General of the Natural Disasters Organisation. The brigadier will be promoted to major-general. Cabinet has also approved the re-appointment of Mr J.L. Burke, barrister, and Mr M. Dempsey, accountant, as members of the Taxation Board of Review. Mr Walsh can give you biographies of the gentlemen concerned.

Mr Walsh will also give you press statements concerning appointments to the Industries Assistance Commission. I'll just briefly mention the persons involved. Mr Peter Westerway is to be a commissioner and, after the act has been amended to permit the ceiling on the number of appointments to be raised from the present nine to eleven full-time commissioners, Mr Frank Pascoe will be appointed as the tenth commissioner. He was recently appointed as associate commissioner for the inquiry into the clothing industry and, as you know, he is the president of the South Australian Chamber of Manufactures and now the first president of the amalgamated Chamber of Manufactures and Chamber of Commerce of South Australia, and he is deputy president of the Associated Chambers of Manufactures of Australia. There are some other associate commissioners who have been appointed. Dr Melville for the inquiry into the financing of rural research; Mr Fisk for the inquiry into the dairy industry and rural reconstruction; Mr J. Poulton for the inquiry into paints, varnish and lacquers; Mr Kevin Brown for the inquiry into electrical machinery and equipment. Mr Colin Grace, whose present term as an associate commissioner expires on the 16th of this month, has been re-appointed on a temporary basis in order to finalise a number of inquiries on which he has been engaged, and the acting Premier of New South Wales has agreed to make the services of Dr Dunn of the New South Wales Department of Agriculture available for the inquiry into the financing of rural research, subject to certain administrative arrangements being satisfactorily concluded. Here again, if you want the biography of the appointees, Mr Walsh can give them to you.

Cabinet yesterday received the Cochran Committee report on labour market training. We are getting it printed as soon as possible and expect to be able to table it next week. Similarly, we are trying to get copies printed as soon as possible of the report by Mr Justice Woodhouse of the New Zealand Court of Appeal and Mr Justice Meares of the New South Wales Supreme Court into the national compensation and rehabilitation scheme. You'll remember that was appointed at the beginning of last year and last March its charter was extended to cover compensation and rehabilitation for sickness in general, not merely for people injured on the roads or in factories or in the home. That also we hope to be able to table and thus publish next week.

Are there any questions you would like to ask me?

QUESTION: We received a cable from Cairo which says in part:

"The Palestine Liberation Organisation welcomes the decision" - welcomes, Sir, is the word - "of the Australian Government to allow it to open an information centre in Sydney." I ask, has the Government in fact granted such permission and have you any comment to make on the whole question?

PRIME MINISTER: The Government has received no approach on this matter at all. It knows nothing other than it has read in the newspapers on it.

QUESTION: Does your silence on the attack by Senator Brown on Mr Marshall Green indicate, as has been suggested, your tacit approval of what he said?

PRIME MINISTER: I think you're putting such an allegation to me so directly and promptly so that I can refute it. I wasn't proposing to dignify or magnify Senator Brown's attack. It is a miserable - in fact a cowardly thing - to attack an ambassador. An ambassador cannot reply. If Senator Brown has any information which would indicate that Ambassador Green has not conducted himself with propriety in his present post it is his duty to give it to the Foreign Minister or to the Prime Minister. He has given no such information. I don't believe there is any such information. I read in the papers that he is keeping it for some rally to mark the Fourth of July. If there's any information it shouldn't be kept for an occasion like that - it should have been promptly put at the disposal of the responsible minister. From what I know of Mr Green - and I've known him for ten years in Washington, in Jakarta and in Canberra - he is, as you all know, a singularly alert, active, articulate man. I don't believe that any member of the U.S. Congress would have any justification to criticise an Australian ambassador who had said or done in the United States what Mr Green has done in Australia. Mr Green is one of the most experienced of America's diplomats. He has had experience for over 30 years in the western Pacific. And not only did the Government approve his appointment - that's obvious, of course, from the fact that he became ambassador here - but it welcomed his appointment. Mr Green is a man whose experience and qualifications would have entitled him to the embassy in Tokyo or the liaison office in Peking. I believe it is a singular indication of the importance that America attaches to her relations with Australia that Mr Green was appointed to Canberra.

QUESTION: Have you contacted Mr Green or caused a message to be sent to him dissociating yourself and the Government from the senator's attack?

PRIME MINISTER: I've seen Mr Green since, as you would have expected. I've been in Canberra some days since this. Mr Green doesn't need to be reassured of my attitude to him or his country.

QUESTION: Indications are that unemployment may worsen during the last half of this year - that the economic situation may worsen during the last half of this year. Do you have any information supporting or refuting these indications and what are your views and your information on the economic situation?

PRIME MINISTER: You mention there are "indications". Now specify them. I know of two events which are said to be indications. One is that Leyland have put off 1,000 people; but the motor car industry is producing as many vehicles as ever. It's not the Government's fault if Leyland finds it more difficult to sell its products than other companies find it to sell theirs. The other field is in the textile industry. People who lose their jobs in the textile industries in the State capitals are, we believe, able to find other employment which they like just as well. In regional areas there can be a difficulty there, but the cure for that is not to ban the imports of textiles or to put a prohibited tariff on them. There's no need to burden the Australian consumer because of some regional difficulty. What we are doing - and there has been a committee of our ministers considering it, and there is a conference pending between my ministers and State ministers on the decentralisation or regional aspects of this question - for something needs to be done to improve regional developments in many areas. I notice that the Victorian Government and the Victorian Minister for Decentralisation have been singularly vocal in these matters, not least, of course, during the recent election campaign. Their arguments would have carried very much more weight if they had stuck to the facts. If State ministers were to specify areas of regional development they would find that the Australian Government is very happy to collaborate with them. The Australian Government is very happy to collaborate with them. The Australian Government has taken the initiative in the biggest regional development project, Albury-Wodonga. We are very happy to collaborate with other States which have designated such areas. Our attitude to Bathurst and Orange, which New South Wales has designated, evidences that; and there have been for the last dozen years, I suppose, four other areas apart from Wodonga which Victoria has designated - Ballarat, Bendigo, the area of Warrnambool, Portland and Hamilton, and the Latrobe Valley. You might remember there was a debate on the Latrobe Valley in the House of Representatives a few months ago on this very point. We are very happy to collaborate with State Governments in regional development but, as in all these things, one needs to plan properly and co-operatively. We've shown that we are anxious to do this.

QUESTION: I was speaking specifically of the Associated Chamber of Manufactures/National Bank survey which indicated that something like 73% of businesses or companies surveyed were extremely pessimistic.

PRIME MINISTER: Well those are expressions of opinion. Give me some facts. I've quoted the two that I am aware of.

QUESTION: Ever since your address on Saturday night to the Industrial Relations Society, when you said that we couldn't go on with wage increases at 20% a year, there's further evidence that wage-price pressures are increasing. Is there anything that you can say now that you couldn't say then about the Government's strategy in face of this, and in particular is there anything you can say about how quickly the Government is going to take action with so many wage negotiations currently overhanging the economy?

PRIME MINISTER: No, I've got nothing to add to the prepared remarks which I made on Saturday night.

QUESTION: Would you consider following or giving a lead to the lead put up by four of your backbenchers in Victoria yesterday that pay rises for M.P.s should be postponed for some time in the fight against inflation?

PRIME MINISTER: You will remember that the Act on this subject, the Remuneration Tribunal Act, provides that the tribunal can make recommendations concerning judges' salaries and ministers' salaries and can make determinations concerning members' salaries, ministers' allowances and the salaries of first division members of the public service... Now I'll read what the Act says on this very aspect: "If either House of the Parliament within fifteen sitting days of that House, after a copy of the determination has been laid before that House, passes a resolution disapproving of the determination, then (a) if the determination has not come into operation..." - I interpose there to say that the Tribunal can fix a date for determination. Well, if the determination does not come into operation - "or (b) if the determination has come into operation, the determination shall not have any force or effect in respect of a period on or after the day on which the resolution was passed." So it's open to the Parliament, either House, to disapprove of a determination.

QUESTION: If I asked for your personal opinion, would you consider following or leading ...

PRIME MINISTER: I don't choose to express my personal opinion. I'm the man in the Parliament who has the highest salary. It would be very easy for me to get kudos by expressing a view. I prefer to consider this in a collective way.

QUESTION: You said that Senator Brown's comments were cowardly and miserable. Do you intend to tell him so face to face?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't propose to magnify this issue. I suppose I'll speak to him. I'm not going to call him in. I don't propose to answer any further questions on this matter.

QUESTION: Sir, do you disagree with Clyde Cameron's forecast yesterday that unemployment will increase?

PRIME MINISTER: I was speaking to Clyde Cameron quite a lot yesterday. I didn't hear him make that forecast. I appreciate that it's necessary to ask, Do I approve of what some particular critic or reporter or colleague has said? I wish you chaps would take responsibility for the unpleasant things which you want me to answer.

QUESTION: Mr Cameron said yesterday, "I've felt for a long time that unemployment will rise."

PRIME MINISTER: I didn't know he had.

QUESTION: He also says, "We are in fact taking steps which are based upon the possibility that this will happen." What steps will those be?

PRIME MINISTER: I believe you've already been given a statement. I think you were given a statement last night concerning the Structural Adjustment Board, for which legislation was approved yesterday, and I think you were also given information concerning the action we're going to take on the Cochrane Report which I've already mentioned to you - the one about retraining.

QUESTION: The question of wage indexation awaits Mr Justice Moore's conference.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes.

QUESTION: Then are there any moves which will speed up the holding of the conference, which I think would take place about September?

PRIME MINISTER: The holding of the conference is an initiative by Mr Justice Moore, the president of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. Clearly, therefore, it should be left to him. We said that we were happy to support that initiative. I think we've shown that, including on Saturday at the Industrial Relations Society Seminar at Surfers Paradise, where both Mr Cameron and I supported the idea.

Perhaps I should have mentioned another thing about Senator Brown. I'm sorry that his statement of the declaration of the Senate poll in Victoria, of all places, took out of the papers - I think, relegated to the third page of the Melbourne Sun, which is a pretty comprehensive medium - the comments made on the same occasion, of all places by Mr McManus. I notice, not for the first time, that he said he had been offered the post of Ambassador to the Vatican. He was never offered the post of Ambassador to the Vatican. At the time that Australia established diplomatic relations with the Vatican - at the time that Australia appointed an ambassador to the Vatican - I was the Foreign Minister, and Senator McManus was never approached nor, if it's not too harsh for me to say, was he ever considered.

QUESTION: While we're talking about senators, does the Government intend to provide Senator Steele Hall with any increased facilities or staff? If so, why?

PRIME MINISTER: Senator Steele Hall hasn't written to me or spoken to me about the matter.

QUESTION: I understand there was a meeting of ministers and Treasury officials at the Lodge last night. Was the tenor of that meeting optimistic that the Government would be able to both contain or reduce inflation and maintain employment and that it would be able to do both together?

PRIME MINISTER: It was a private meeting both before, during, and after dinner. So don't expect me to state or to repeat the views which the wide number of men there expressed. The object of it was for me to have the benefit of an exchange of views with and between the Government's senior economic advisers. And I do this not infrequently. Not as often as I'd like to, but...

QUESTION: Do you consider immigration more important as an instrument of foreign policy rather than one of domestic, social and economic policy?

PRIME MINISTER: Immigration, as far as the present Australian Government is concerned, involves people who were born overseas and who have migrated to Australia; our prime objective is to make them happy in this country, and to see that they get as good opportunity, individually and as families, as it is possible for the country to provide as their new home. I notice that you still get some references to a mass immigration program. The Government has no mass immigration program at all. Its efforts are directed to making migrants feel at home in Australia.

QUESTION: How can you emphasise family reunion and yet give the Immigration Department to Mr Clyde Cameron, the Labour Minister, where the obvious orientation is going to be towards manpower needs, considering that family reunion has the least requirements for manpower policies and national need?

PRIME MINISTER: Mr Cameron, as Minister for Labour and Immigration, naturally has the prime responsibility for determining what the opportunities are for permanent migration to Australia - that is, for people coming here who want to live here permanently and obviously, therefore, want to maintain themselves when they come here. It's quite an unreasonable and cruel thing to permit, still more to encourage, people to come to Australia as permanent residents if there aren't jobs available for them. I notice there's a great deal of speculation in the newspapers on this subject arising from fomentation by members of the old Department of Immigration when it was an individual department. It's true that that department fell down very badly in respect of Australia's urban affairs and foreign affairs, but it has got many skills which are appropriate to be retained and which will be retained in the augmented Department of Labour and Immigration. Nevertheless, there are some aspects which were left to that department and which obviously would be better handled by other departments. For instance, it has already been decided that the administration of the Immigration Guardianship of Children Act should be transferred to the Minister for Social Security; and that the administration of the Immigration Education of Children Act be transferred to the Minister for Education; and that the policy and issue of passports for Australian citizens should become the responsibility of the Foreign Minister. And other matters are being considered with the general object in mind of assuring efficiency of administration and humanity of administration.

QUESTION: Have you or Mr Daly been able to reach any agreement with the Opposition parties or their leaders on the procedures to be adopted for the proposed joint sitting of Parliament this month?

PRIME MINISTER: Mr Daly at this moment is studying the Canadian federal elections, where it is expected that a result will be achieved rather more efficiently and promptly than was the case in the Australian federal election. I haven't spoken to him about this for a couple of weeks, I think.

QUESTION: Has the rise in the price of phosphatic rock, combined with the fall in the price of meat, given you any reason to reconsider the decision to abolish the superphosphate bounty at the end of this year?

PRIME MINISTER: I can only repeat that if any industry or region believes it is disadvantaged by the increase in the cost of superphosphate then it can make an application to the Department of Agriculture to see if there's a prima facie case for a reference by me to the Industries Assistance Commission. There has already been one successful proposition of that nature put to me by the department and one unsuccessful one. The cost of superphosphate as a fertiliser in Australia is lower than in pretty well any other country in the world. At last Australia might find it profitable, therefore, to develop her own very considerable resources of phosphate, those near Mt Isa, in the hands of Australia's greatest and most prosperous company.

QUESTION: When do you propose to announce the appointment of the inquiry into security services?

PRIME MINISTER: I'd say in a couple of weeks.

QUESTION: Do you intend to make public the findings of the inquiry - some of the hearings of that inquiry?

PRIME MINISTER: Terms of reference, yes. Findings, almost certainly, in respect to procedures to review decisions which are thought to have affected public servants or immigrants. Hearings, that will be up to the judges.

QUESTION: If the Palestine Liberation Organisation approached the Government, does that....

PRIME MINISTER: Do not speculate. Wait until the matter happens. Wait until there is such a proposition.

QUESTION: The metal trades unions have said they will press ahead with new wage claims despite your call for restraint last Saturday. Do you feel that this is a legitimate stand for the unions to take at the moment and do you agree with your Labour Minister, Mr Cameron, who said yesterday the metal trades....

PRIME MINISTER: Here it comes again! Do I agree with one of my colleagues? Yes, go on.

QUESTION: ....do you agree with Mr Cameron who said yesterday the metal trades workers were only trying to keep pace with the public service?

PRIME MINISTER: Where did he say all these things? I spent most of yesterday morning, afternoon and night with him and he didn't say any of these things to me! There's only one person I listen to on Macquarie and he sounds more funereal than Mr Cameron. Mr Jack Devereux was at Surfers on Saturday night talking with me. He had my oration. He didn't express the view

to me that you attribute to the union of which he is head. I notice that an assistant secretary was reported a day later as commenting that he was not there and hadn't, at that time, received his copy of the oration.

QUESTION: This week we're getting the third instalment of the long-running Bulletin serial on ASIO. Are you concerned that these documents have leaked out? Do you think they've damaged the security service or the Government? Have you asked for an inquiry on how they've leaked out and have you any results from the inquiry? And will this be one of the things being looked at by the Royal Commission?

PRIME MINISTER: Any of you who wants the full text of the ASIO document entitled "Croatian Nationalist Movements and Activities in Australia" can get a copy of it from Mr Walsh immediately after this gathering disperses. Anybody who wants to know the titles and the dates of the other documents in this category which were prepared by ASIO can similarly get that list from Mr Walsh as soon as this gathering disperses.

QUESTION: Senator Greenwood said these documents were unclassified.?

PRIME MINISTER: I wouldn't be releasing this document if I were not satisfied that it was completely genuine! But even so I wouldn't be releasing it but for the fact that the Director-General of ASIO has assured me that there is no confidential material in it whatever. All the material in these articles could have been got from any bookstore, and the dates, the facts, the quotations were available in newspapers and magazines which were freely available in Australia. There is nothing in these documents which ASIO has sought or received in the course of its statutory duties. In releasing this document I am assured by the Director-General that the security of the country is not in any way jeopardised. There is no confidential information in these documents at all. Security is not involved and therefore I am making it available to you through Mr Walsh if you're interested in it. Perhaps I could refresh your memory about this in general by quoting an answer which the Attorney-General provided for our colleague, Dr Klugman. You'll see it in House of Representatives Hansard of 13 December last. Dr Klugman's question was: "Has the Attorney-General's attention been drawn to the statement by Mr Robert Mayne, Assistant Editor of the Sun-Herald, (a) that he was approached by Mr Peter Coleman, M.L.A., and a senior officer of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation to work for a magazine called Analysis and (b) that the organisation would supply material to discredit members of the Australian Labor Party." To that the Attorney-General provided the answer "Yes". Dr Klugman also asked: "If so, (a) who was this senior officer of the organisation and (b) is he still in the employment of the organisation?" To that the Attorney-General answered: "The officer concerned is still in the employ of the organisation. The supply of material about individual citizens to be used in the media of which this case was an example was wholly unwarranted and outside the functions of ASIO. The Director-General of Security has informed me that some time after he assumed office he discontinued the practice of giving background briefs to journalists." The documents to which you refer were among some scores of document



prepared from 1962 onwards. The preparation of these documents was discontinued by the present Director-General of Security before the present Government was elected. The material was given to a selected number of journalists.

QUESTION: Well we know the author of these documents?

PRIME MINISTER: No. I should say the employee of ASIO who was referred to in the Attorney-General's reply to Dr Klugman is the author of all these documents. He's still in the organisation. He is there, I am sure, doing work which does relate to the organisation. I therefore don't believe that I should mention his name.

QUESTION: Do you welcome the election of Mr Percy Tucker as Leader of the Opposition in Queensland, and are you happy with the way it comes out?

PRIME MINISTER: It's not up to me to express a view on a matter such as that. Whom any Parliamentary Labor Party chooses to hold office in it is entirely a matter for that party. I've known Mr Tucker, of course, for very many years. He is a family friend of mine as well as a personal friend. I'm sure I can work very effectively with him. I congratulate him.

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