

Medibank is not available in the A.C.T., or that the patient cannot have the doctor of his choice in the hospitals of the A.C.T., which of course is quite false. There is no financial disadvantage to either of them, if they want private hospital treatment, in having it in the A.C.T.

I suggest to patients in the A.C.T. that, if at any time a doctor says that there is no way that they can get free hospital treatment in the A.C.T. and then come back to him as private patients after hospital treatment, they should ask that doctor what his object is. Is he saying this for medical reasons and saying that it is in the medical interests of the patient that he is doing this, or is he saying it for a political reason? If there is a political reason he can only say: 'The political reason is to save you, my patient, the freedom of choice'. The patient then only has to say: 'I exercise my freedom of choice by choosing to be a hospital patient. I choose to be treated by doctors who co-operate with Medibank'. If the doctor objects to that, then he is not fair dinkum in his political objections.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Dr JENKINS (Scullin)—Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Mr SPEAKER—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Dr JENKINS—I do. The misrepresentation occurred in a paragraph written by Cassandra in the *Sunday Telegraph* of Sunday, 24 August. The main points are covered by the following quotation from that paragraph:

Hawke will stand for the blue-ribbon Melbourne industrial suburbs seat of Scullin held by old-time Victorian Labor stalwart—

I do not object to that description—

Dr Harry Jenkins. Dr Jenkins is reported to be in bad health and to have agreed to stand down.

Normally I would disregard such reports, but these reports are being persistently floated about myself and other Victorian members. The report from which I have quoted requires denial and causes concern in the Scullin electorate and in the Australian Labor Party itself. To answer the misrepresentation I point out that when nominations were called for ALP preselection for Scullin for the next election mine was the only nomination received. No requests were received from the local electorate organisation for preselection proceedings; so I am endorsed.

At no time has Bob Hawke, any Party official, or indeed any individual either in or out of the Labor Party, suggested that I should forgo the seat in favour of any other person. I have not

agreed to stand down. This must be made quite clear. On a previous occasion when this rumour circulated Bob Hawke took the trouble to contact me to assure me that he had had no discussions on this subject with any person.

Mention of bad health is made in the article. Many honourable members in this House have health problems. Here it would be a matter of definition whether there is misrepresentation. Industrially I would be classified as physically handicapped. I suffer a painful condition affecting the muscles which prevents me from walking long distances and causes difficulty in climbing stairs or carrying heavy objects. This has been so for some 4 years. I have not talked about it. Obviously with the honour which the House paid me last week my colleagues consider me capable of carrying out the arduous duties of a federal member of Parliament and are willing to entrust me with further duties. I hope this will give physically handicapped persons incentive to continue with their personal endeavours and cause employers to accept that being physically handicapped does not consign one to the scrap heap. Might I add that this building has no facilities whatever to assist physically handicapped persons.

Mr SPEAKER—It has no facilities, full stop.

PORTUGUESE TIMOR

Ministerial Statement

Mr WHITLAM (Werriwa—Prime Minister)—by leave—The Government welcomed the outcome of the talks last May and June in Dili and Macao between the Portuguese Government and the principal parties in Portuguese Timor. In our view, the program mapped out at Macao, providing for steady forward movement towards decolonisation and free elections for a constituent assembly, went a long way towards the objectives we support for the territory. It also follows, however, that the Government is most concerned by the present situation in Portuguese Timor. What began as a show of force by the UDT party on 10 August has deteriorated into virtual civil war with widespread loss of life. The UDT and the rival Fretilin party are struggling for power in Dili and in many parts of the interior. The Timorese police appear to have sided with UDT, while the much more numerous military is predominantly for Fretilin.

The polarisation between the 2 groups now seems to be complete. Both groups are armed with Portuguese weapons captured at the time of the initial UDT show of force or having been taken over to Fretilin or UDT with the defecting

troops and police. Apodeti, the party favouring integration with Indonesia, is not a major participant in the struggle, although there are some reports of attacks on its members.

As a result of the evacuation of most of the Portuguese administration and military, the Governor now remains in Dili with only a very small staff and with no chance of exerting control over more than a small section of Dili. The Governor thus retains no more than the formal trappings of office. The Portuguese authorities in a communication to the Secretary-General of the United Nations have acknowledged that it is impossible for them to control the situation.

Several days ago the Governor issued an appeal for international forces to be sent to Timor to control the situation and to bring an end to the bloodshed. The Portuguese Government has also issued appeals for international assistance, including suggestions that Indonesia and Australia might help, especially with the evacuation of Portuguese and foreign nationals from Timor. Australia has extended considerable support in various evacuation operations. We stand ready to take part in any humanitarian action that may be practicable.

We have been, however, and remain opposed to Australian military involvement. One of the first policy decisions of the Government, on assuming office in December 1972, was to determine that Australia would not intervene again in land wars in South East Asia. This applies as much to the civil war in Portuguese Timor as to the earlier civil war in Vietnam.

On political aspects of the situation, the Government has been in close touch with the other governments most concerned, namely, the Government of Portugal and the Government of Indonesia. The Australian Government, however, does not regard itself as a party principal in Portuguese Timor. We continue to hold that the future of the territory is a matter for resolution by Portugal and the Timorese people themselves with Indonesia also occupying an important place because of its predominant interest.

The Government recognises that there are some who believe that Australia should accept some political obligation in regard to Portuguese Timor, and even that Australia should step in and attempt to arbitrate between the competing political factions. The Government acknowledges that those who have put forward these views have been motivated by genuine feelings of concern for the welfare of the Timorese. But the Government does not itself think these views reflect the best approach for Australia. It believes

that acceptance of these views could lead to a situation where Australia was exercising a quasi-colonial role in Portuguese Timor, and might lead to the point where we were assuming some *de facto* responsibility for the territory.

But the Government does view with serious concern the recent turn of events in Portuguese Timor. The immediate need, of course, is to bring the fighting to an end. This is both a necessary pre-condition to any political settlement as well as an urgent need if the bloodshed is to stop and relief work is to begin. I take this opportunity to appeal on behalf of the Australian Government to all parties engaged in the fighting to lay down their arms and to end the bloodshed. I have said that it is not possible to carry forward relief or rehabilitation without restoration of order in the territory. The immediate responsibility for bringing an end to the fighting must continue to rest with Portugal. In the Government's view, Portugal cannot simply wash its hands of Portuguese Timor.

The present situation, of course, may have passed the point of no-return. In the absence of firm policies in Lisbon, defections of local officials and local military forces may now be complete. Nonetheless, the Government understands that Portugal is to make an attempt to retrieve some lost ground by sending a negotiating team with a view to persuading Fretilin and UDT to stop fighting and to agree to negotiate new arrangements among the Timorese parties for orderly decolonisation. The Portuguese Government, through Dr Santos, the former Minister for Interterritorial Co-ordination has approached the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The results of this approach are not yet clear. There have been suggestions that a good offices committee might be proposed to help mediate a settlement in Portuguese Timor. But none of this has gone very far and without some restoration of basic order in the territory it is not easy to see how a UN good offices committee, whose role would be essentially political in character, could function on the ground. The same consideration applies to various ideas for an international humanitarian relief effort.

I return, therefore, to the conclusion that the first priority is to put an end to the killing and fighting and to restore order. This objective requires the active intervention of Portugal itself. It is a responsibility that cannot be shrugged off on to others such as Australia. We have no national obligations or interest in getting reinvolved in colonial or post-colonial affairs in Portuguese Timor at the very time when Papua New Guinea's imminent independence is leading to

the ending of our colonial role there. We have no ethnic or cultural ties with the Timorese which would suggest a role for Australia in substitution for Portugal in Portuguese Timor.

The other interested country in all this is, of course, Indonesia, with which we have been in very close touch on developments in Portuguese Timor in recent days. Indonesia has shared the Australian concern about the evident drift in Portuguese policies and, like us, has urged on the Portuguese the need to reassert Portuguese control in Portuguese Timor. We, for our part, understand Indonesia's concern that the territory should not be allowed to become a source of instability on Indonesia's border. Portuguese Timor is in many ways part of the Indonesian world and its future is obviously a matter of great importance to Indonesia.

Indonesian policy is to respect the right of the people of Portuguese Timor to self-determination and Indonesian leaders have often denied that Indonesia has any territorial ambitions towards Portuguese Timor. Nevertheless, Indonesia's concern about the situation in the territory has now led her to offer, if Portugal so requests, to assist in restoring order there. President Suharto has made it clear that Indonesia would only wish to act at Portugal's bidding and that the objective would be the limited one of restoring conditions which would allow orderly self-determination to proceed. The Australian Government has frequently stated its concern that the people of the territory should be able to decide their own future.

Whatever external efforts might accomplish, the hostility and mistrust between Fretilin and UDT remain the main threat to future stability in the territory. This hostility and mistrust indeed form one of the most disappointing aspects of the situation in Portuguese Timor. The events of the last few weeks have dashed the hopes for Portuguese Timor which followed the change of government and Portuguese colonial policy in Lisbon. In a little over a year, the situation in Portuguese Timor has become a very dangerous one, mainly—it must be said—because of the shortsightedness of some of the territory's aspiring political leaders. It is a matter of record that none of the three major political groups in the territory has shown any genuine willingness to work with the others. Each demands that it alone be recognised as the sole legitimate nationalist group. None seems prepared to test its claims to lead the country through any conventional form of democratic process.

At the moment, it is not possible to predict how events will move or what constructive contribution Australia may be able to make. Our first task will be to be alert to opportunities for humanitarian assistance, but here there are real questions of practicability. We shall give what practical help we can to the Portuguese in their efforts to mediate and to bring an end to the fighting. I repeat my call to the parties for a cease-fire and the ending of the bloodshed. As events develop it may be necessary for me to keep the House further informed.

Motion (by Mr Daly) proposed:

That the House take note of the paper.

Debate (on motion by Mr Peacock) adjourned.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr DALY (Grayndler—Minister for Services and Property)—For the information of honourable members I present the annual report of the Australian Department of Social Security for the financial year ended 30 June 1975.

DARWIN CYCLONE TRACY RELIEF TRUST FUND

Dr PATTERSON (Dawson—Minister for Northern Australia)—For the information of honourable members I present the report on the Darwin Cyclone Tracy Relief Trust Fund for May 1975.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Mr BEAZLEY (Fremantle—Minister for Education)—Pursuant to section 33 (2) of the Australian National University Act 1946-1973 I present the report of the Council of the Australian National University for the calendar year 1974.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL PROJECTS

Mr UREN (Reid—Minister for Urban and Regional Development)—For the information of honourable members I present a report titled: 'Australian Government Assistance to Local Projects'.

HANDBOOK ON HEALTH MANPOWER

Dr EVERINGHAM (Capricornia—Minister for Health)—For the information of honourable members I present the first edition of a 'Handbook on Health Manpower' prepared by the Australian Department of Health.