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PRIME MINISTER

15 APRIL, 1979
PJT FINDING ON SHELL AUSTRALIA APPLICATION FOR PRICE INCREASES

I am concerned at the statement issued by Shell Australia to the effect that they are considering their position following the decision of the Prices Justification Tribunal to grant smaller price increases than had been sought by the company.

It is the public duty of companies to accept and abide by decisions of the Prices Justification Tribunal, which is the arbitral authority in these matters, even when companies privately disagree with its decisions.

The Prices Justification Tribunal's role in determining prices is comparable to that of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in relation to wages. Companies quite rightly condemn unions for their failure to abide by the Commission's decisions when they do not receive the wage increases they seek. Such condemnation sounds hollow when companies behave in a similar fashion in respect to Prices Justification Tribunal findings.

In this instance the Prices Justification Tribunal's inquiry had been thorough and wide-ranging. The Tribunal had reached its findings after carefully considering all the evidence submitted by Shell concerning its costs and profitability, and the submissions which the company made on the various issues raised at the inquiry. The Prices Justification Tribunal also considered evidence and submissions from other interested parties including State Governments, the oil industry, the transport industry, consumer groups, farmers and trade unions.

The Government's fight against inflation needs the support and co-operation of all sections of the community.

Accordingly, I expect Shell Australia and other oil companies to behave in a responsible fashion and to accept the decision of the Tribunal.

The Government frequently calls on unions to abide by the umpire's decision. This is an occasion when we call on a company to do just tha

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