

From the Press Office

SUMMARY OF ABC'S "P.M."

A special conference has been called by Mr. Justice Staples in the Arbitration court in Melbourne tomorrow to try and sort out the Telecom dispute. The Australian Telecommunications Employees Union has lodged a claim for a 20 percent across the board payrise for its members employed by Telecom. To support the claim the union has imposed a series of work bans which are already seriously affecting telephone and telex services out of Sydney. The problems are likely to shift to other States in the next few days. Interview with General Manager of Industrial Relations for Telecom and General Secretary of ATEA, Mr. Mansfield.

It was reported today that Mr. Fraser has moved to end a seismic survey which was being carried out by an American company along the Great Barrier Reef. The survey had been approved by both the Federal and Queensland Governments. Reported from Brisbane that Mr. Fraser's intervention was unnecessary.

Report from Brisbane: Last week's story on "PM" obviously caused the Prime Minister some embarrassment because it was on June 4 that he had announced that "there should be no further exploration for petroleum in the Great Barrier Reef region". On Thursday, two days after we reported on the survey work, Mr. Fraser wrote to his Minister for National Development, Mr. McLeay and drew his attention to the statement of June 4. He pointed out, in the letter that the seismic surveys were contrary to the spirit of the Government's policy. The letter asked Mr. McLeay to ensure that no survey work take place in the Barrier Reef region. Last night, Mr. Fraser's office let it be known that the letter had been sent. The story was duly reported this morning with headlines such as "Fraser moves quickly over Reef petroleum exploration" in the Financial Review, and "PM stops Reef survey" in the Brisbane Courier-Mail. Mr. Fraser's decisive action, however, was just a little bit too late, as the Queensland Premier, Mr. Bjelke Petersen gleefully revealed after seeing Mr. Fraser's headlines. In fact, the survey was completed last week and the ship is already heading back for its own base in Perth. Mr. Bjelke Petersen said that he was at a loss to understand the reports of Mr. Fraser's putting an end to the work, and said he would bring the facts to Mr. Fraser's attention when he saw him in Canberra later this week at the Premier's Conference.

Mr. Bjelke Petersen: First of all, Canberra gave approval when this matter was raised by Mr. Camm, not through Cabinet but through himself and his Department. They gave an agreement, a green light to go ahead with it, and I have a letter to that effect. Of course, I don't know what prompted the Prime Minister to come in and say he would stop it because it has stopped. It's finished long ago. The ship's gone. Question: When did it stop?

Mr. Bjelke Petersen: I don't know. But the ship's gone long ago.

Question: Mr. Premier, what are they doing, what is the survey for?

Mr. Bjelke Petersen: Well, the survey is just by a large world organisation that does this sort of work in connection with shipping lanes, or fishing, or anything at all. But nobody can get a permit unless the Government, State and Commonwealth grant it, so that gets rid of the argument that it's going to be definitely used and oil drilling is going to start. That's not correct.

Question: These surveys aren't cheap though. Obviously they are going to charge a lot of money and they must be looking for money from mineral companies?

Mr. Bjelke Petersen: They might be. They can be looking for money from people who are interested in all these other areas and it gives Governments a very clear, or interesting picture of the seabed as such from a shipping lane point of view.

Question: What I am saying is, it wouldn't be economical just to do it for the shipping lanes would it?

Mr. Bjelke Petersen: No, well anyway they no doubt know their business and they are prepared to spend money to do these things and obviously that's their concern. I'm not interested in whether they make money out of it or not.

Question: Didn't you ask when you granted the permit?

Mr. Bjelke Petersen: I didn't grant the permit. The Commonwealth and the Mines Minister, the two Ministers were the ones that organised it and they both agreed.

Question: Don't they have to provide the information why they are doing the survey. When they ask ...

Mr. Bjelke Petersen: No, they don't have to provide the information at all. There is nothing to it.

Question: Do you know for a fact the survey hasn't been commissioned by oil companies?

Mr. Bjelke Petersen: It hasn't been commissioned by oil companies, no. I am not aware of that at all. I am sure that is not correct, because they haven't got a permit to - or they haven't got an authority to go in drilling there. The Government hasn't given them that authority.

Report Just a footnote to the story, I rang Geophysical Services International in Perth a short while ago. A spokesman confirmed that the survey was completed last week and the ship was on its way back to Perth.

The State Premiers are bracing themselves for some savage cuts in funding from the Commonwealth at the Premier's Conference which begins on Thursday. Economist Allan Woods of Syntec interviewed.

Federal Cabinet has meeting today to discuss, among other things, how Australia can conserve fuel. It is believed that one of the proposals is to reduce the speed limit to 90 kph across the country. Executive Director of Australian Institute of Petroleum says this would reduce the country's petrol consumption by from 10% to 15%: interviewed.

Troops of Zimbabwe Rhodesia have carried out a helicopter attack on an outer suburb of Zambian capital, Lusaka, where it is believed officials of the patriotic front, ZAPU, live. Lusaka is to be the venue for the forthcoming Commonwealth summit in August to be attended among others by Mr. Fraser and Mrs. Thatcher. Reuters AAP says the raid was carried out about an hour and a half ago.

The ALP called today for a national media policy to replace what it has described as the present piecemeal ad hoc developments by the Federal Government. Senator Susan Ryan said the ABC should be re-structured and measures taken in the commercial sector to stop ownership being concentrated in too few hands. Senator Ryan interviewed.

There has been an announcement from the finance company, Beneficial in response to the publicity about the company. The company delivered a letter to the Adelaide Stock Exchange. The Directors said they believed it was their responsibility to comment on the recent publicity concerning the possible effects on the company of the publicly known difficulties affecting ASL and the Bank of Adelaide Finance Corporation of Australia group. The Directors said the company continues to operate soundly, has available unused borrowing limits within its trustees and has substantial unused lines of credit. They said "in view of the unprecedented circumstances currently facing the finance industry, the Company's major shareholders have been involved in preparing a package of measures which will further strengthen the capital base and provide additional borrowing facilities in order to demonstrate publicly their on-going substantial support for the long-term success of the company".

Dr. Shelley Phillips has published a book, released today, entitled "Young Australians" based on a survey of 2000 children in Sydney between ages of 9 and 13: interviewed.