

From the Press Office

SUMMARY OF ABC'S 7:45 am NEWS

Mr. Ian Sinclair has resigned as the Minister for Primary Industry, following a report tabled in the N.S.W. Parliament accusing him of forgery and manipulation in the finances of his family companies. Report from Duncan Fairweather: Mr. Sinclair was summoned to the Prime Minister's Office around midnight and, I am told, reluctantly agreed to resign. The downfall of its Deputy Leader has weakened the National Country Party's standing in the Coalition and Mr. Fraser is under pressure from his backbenchers to fill the vacancy in the Ministry with a Liberal member, not another Country Party man. The Minister for Transport, Mr. Nixon, is to take over the Primary Industry portfolio this morning, but it is expected the Minister for Health, Mr. Hunt, will get the job permanently.

ABC's Ron Sinclair report: the reasons for Mr. Sinclair's resignation were summed up in a six paragraph letter. Addressed "My Dear Prime Minister", it alleged that the blatant political character of the investigation and the appointment of a prominent Labor Party member as Special Investigator seriously called into question the validity and integrity of the Finnane Report. At 2:40 am, having issued his statement expressing regret over Mr. Sinclair's resignation, Mr. Fraser emerged from Parliament House: Prime Minister interviewed.

The Finnane Report containing the allegations against Mr. Sinclair was tabled in the N.S.W. Parliament yesterday by the Attorney-General, Mr. Walker. Last night, Mr. Walker said that in view of the allegations, he had asked Mr. Finnane to expedite a further report on recommendations for any prosecutions.

A plan to feed 200,000 people in Kampuchea was mapped out in a meeting in Bangkok yesterday of representatives of 15 countries and 8 international organisations. Thailand said afterwards the plan meant substantial supplies of food and medicines would soon move to its eastern border to help Kampuchean people who had congregated there. Meanwhile, Australia continues to play an active role at the United Nations in efforts to get food and medical supplies to Kampuchea. Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Peacock, discussed the Kampuchean relief operation in talks with China's Vice Foreign Minister.

Developing countries are to be given greater access to the Australian market, but tariffs on a range of British goods will go up. Some 500 British goods will no longer get special tariff preferences. But the Federal Government has given no details. The Minister for Special Trade Representations, Mr. Garland, said in Singapore the move was part of a package aimed at helping Asian countries compete more effectively in Australia.

Narcotics agencies in Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand have begun investigations into the source of heroin seized on a ship in Western Australia on Tuesday.

South Africa's Prime Minister has said he is prepared to consider changing the laws which ban marriage between people of different races. His statement came as a surprise. The laws concerned - the Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act - have been regarded as pillars of South Africa's apartheid policy.

Queensland's Premier, Mr. Bjelke Petersen, has again strongly criticised the Liberal Party and warned of a breakdown in the State Coalition. Speaking at a Bjelke Petersen Foundation dinner in Townsville last night, the Premier said Queensland would have much to lose if the Government fell into unstable hands or into the hands of those who sought to wreck the Coalition for their own political self-interest. The way things were heading, he said, the State could also soon be talking to another Labor Government in Canberra, which would be a legacy of the Liberal disruptions as much as anything else. The Premier said the National Party stood firmly behind the Coalition concept and found it difficult to understand why some people wanted to divide and destroy the Coalition.

After long and sometimes bitter debate, the American Congress has finally passed legislation implementing the controversial Panama Canal treaties.

The British MP, Mr. Enoch Powell, has criticised the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Coggan, for what he called his encouragement of the IRA. In a speech in his Northern Ireland constituency, Mr. Powell accused Dr. Coggan of being an accomplice to IRA terrorists.

The last correspondent in Iran for a major American newspaper has been thrown out of the country. Correspondent in Tehran for the Wall Street Journal is being expelled by the revolutionary government for what it calls unauthorised contacts.