

From the Press Office

SUMMARY OF ABC'S NEWSVOICE

The row continued today over the Federal Government's plans to amend the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. The Prime Minister and the Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr. Street, made it clear today that the Government and not members of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission would control legislation relating to industrial disputes. Both Mr. Fraser and Mr. Street came under strong Opposition attack in Parliament this afternoon over the proposed amendments, now awaiting debate in the Senate.

Report

Statements this afternoon by both the Prime Minister and Mr. Street were perhaps the strongest yet in the growing controversy over the Conciliation and Arbitration Act amendments. There now appears no question whatsoever that the Government has not intention of withdrawing or watering down the legislation. In reply to one question Mr. Fraser said it was the Government's right to determine legislation in the industrial relations area and that was a policy the Government would pursue. The amendments now before Parliament would strengthen the powers of the Conciliation and Arbitration President in a way the Government believed was constructive. Launching a public importance debate on the need for the Government to re-consider its industrial relations policy on the basis of concern by 25 members of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, the Opposition Leader, Mr. Hayden, accused the Government of putting a noose on the impartiality of justice and it was not over-stating it, he said, to say the issue had now moved to crisis proportions. The Conciliation and Arbitration amendments, said Mr. Hayden, were not only unconstitutional, but would be inflammatory and create all sorts of problems for the Commission's handling of industrial disputes, in addition to which Parliament itself had been deceived. In his reply, Mr. Street said he had received advice from the Attorney-General which reaffirmed earlier advice that objections raised by a Deputy President of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, Mr. Justice Staples, did not show the amendments were in any way unconstitutional. He also denied the legislation would create problems for the Commission. Rather they would enhance the integrity of future awards. Outside the House, Mr. Hayden maintained however, that the Government had set out on a deliberate course to force the amendments through Parliament at the same time undermining the credibility of Mr. Justice Staples.

Hayden

There is a long record of Judges of various courts in Australia speaking publicly on matters of concern including criticism of aspects of rules they have to administer. What the Government sought to do, however, was to try to intimidate Justice Staples, to quell any criticism coming from the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, and set about in a most unwholesome way to try to reduce the man's professional standing and to intimidate him by suggesting there would be inquiry at the Attorney-General's

Hayden (continued)

level; leaked stories about perhaps being called by both Houses of Parliament to show cause why he should remain a Judge, when in fact they already have a communication from 25 - all 25 - of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commissioners expressing their total dissatisfaction and objection to this legislation. The whole thing is a contrivance to mislead the Parliament and to try to duress Justice Staples into silence. At the same time they have tried to panic measure the legislation through the Parliament. Now, it is quite undesirable. What this legislation will do will be to destroy the credibility of the Conciliation and Arbitration system in this country before disputants who appear before it. It is unconstitutional anyway. What the Government should do is withdraw the legislation, revise its position after consultation with all of the likely parties to these sorts of processes.

Kampuchea: thousands of refugees are still streaming across the border into Thailand. Many of them are sick and starving. Border fighting is intensifying.

A strong earthquake, followed by a series of aftershocks, has rocked Southern California and Northern Mexico. One person reported killed and more than 40 injured. There has been considerable damage to many small towns and communities.

N.S.W. has a new Police Commissioner. He is Mr. Jim Lees, who has been Acting Commissioner since the resignation of Mr. Merv Wood in June.

A sit-in by 31 workers at the Union Carbide Plant in Melbourne has ended after 51 days. It is thought to be the longest occupation of a workplace by employees in Australia. The workers locked themselves in the plant after Union Carbide threatened to use staff labour to perform overtime work, which has been banned in support of a 35-hour week campaign. Interview with Mr. Neville Hill of the Victorian Metalworkers Union.

A New Zealand marine scientist has come up with a new treatment for certain forms of arthritis. Mr. John Croft interviewed.

The power authority in Tasmania, the Hydro-Electric Commission, wants the State's next major power development scheme to be based on the integrated development involving the Gordon, Franklin, and King Rivers. Report was tabled in State Parliament a short while ago.

Trade: Australian manufacturers want to set up a customs union with New Zealand. The New Zealanders are apparently not keen on the idea. The Australian businessmen are reported to be pushing the idea at the Annual Meeting of the New Zealand Australia Free Trade Agreement held this year in New Zealand.