

from the Press Office

Summary of "A.M."

Rumours are rife in London and Washington claiming that the Soviet leader is dead. There is no confirmation from Moscow that Mr Brezhnev is either ill or dead, although many diplomats believe he has been either very over-tired or that his chronic ill-health has suddenly worsened.

The Carter administration moved swiftly today following a Judge's ruling that would block the United States from ending the mutual defence treaty with Taiwan.

Report on the stories coming from Kampuchea of disease, malnutrition and the deaths occurring from them.

What has been seen as a desperate effort to fix the Victorian coalition rift occurred last night at the Lodge. State and Federal leaders of the Liberal and Country parties met last night to prevent further animosity developing between the two parties. Local branches of the Liberal Party in Gippsland are still determined to press ahead with their plans to run a candidate against Mr Peter Nixon. Interview with the Leader of the National Party in Victoria, Mr Ross Edwards, has suggested that yesterday's meeting has committed the Liberal Party leadership at least into attempting to restrain their branch members. Interview with Mr Ross Edwards who said the meeting yesterday was very successful and a good deal of progress was made.

There will be further discussion on Coalition unity when the Prime Minister and Federal Liberal Party officials gather with State Party leaders for their annual meeting. Of particular concern will be the separate Senate ticket issue in Victoria and also Queensland, where one celebrated nomination has come from the Premier's wife.

There has been a breakthrough at the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia peace talks. After a short meeting between Lord Carrington and the leaders of the Patriotic Front it was announced that all parties have now agreed to a draft constitution for the country.

South Africa is again stalling on the United Nations plan for a peaceful transfer to independence in Namibia. There is now great scepticism amongst the five Western nations supporting the scheme as to whether the South African government has any real interest in going ahead with it.

The Philippines defence minister has revealed for the first time the existence of a new rebel group led by several priests. The group is reported to be comprised mainly of Catholic laymen and sympathisers.

The Nobel Prize for Literature has been awarded to a Greek poet.

The Federal Government has been attacked once again over its amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, this time by one of its own members. Senator Missen has described the

changes as provocative and counter-productive. Interviewed:

"Because of the very great powers in the de-registration area obviously unions will be fearful of this, obviously they will resist it very strongly, and one might have more trouble than we would have without that part of the legislation".

Question: Do you think the Government has just simply over-reacted.

Senator Missen: I think so. I think that I would have liked to have seen more consultation about the legislation before hand, including the lawyer members of the Law and Government Committee who of course didn't see this before the Bill arrived in the Party, and who I think could have contributed to it.

Question: Why do you think the Government has overreacted?

Senator Missen: Well, I don't know why because I'm a backbencher and I am therefore not privy to the discussions that have gone on in cabinet. There is a serious situation in regard to strikes at the present time, and a lot of key areas where a lot of damage is done to the community. I think they feel something has got to be done about this, and there is a lot of pressure to do it, and I suppose that makes for urgent action.

Question: But in that context, and given your reservations, do you think the Government has been provocative?

Senator Missen: I think the result of the Bill is provocative and I think something about it the way in which the Bill has actually been handled. It has been fairly secret and not taken into consideration people - both the Commissioners and lawyers and so forth - who might have, I think, been able to help overcome some of the problems in the Bill,

Question: Why do you think there has been that element of secrecy about it?

Senator Missen: To stop an enormous campaign developing before the thing is even in the Parliament, and probably making it more difficult to discuss it in any impartial sort of way. That might be the reason.

Question: Even apart from your very strong views you decided not to cross the floor. Why is that?

Senator Missen: Well, I have not announced this to the Party. I made no intention known that I would, and I think I have pointed out the dubious constitutional position. It may be that the Bill will be read down by the High Court, and it won't be so objectionable, but I saw no reason myself to make some sort of grand gesture by what you call 'crossing the floor' - that would have had no affect on the Bill.

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A few weeks ago, the EEC's executive commission was the subject of a critical auditor's report over the amount of money its 13 members spent on expenses, air travel, drinks, flowers and so on, so the last thing the commission president, Roy Jenkins needed was the most recent scandal involving the Dutch commissioner whose peccadilloes led to the replacement of a \$10,000 plate glass in an exclusive hotel, broken by during a heated political debate.

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