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CANBERRA, MONDAY, 19TH MAY.

[1930.

Commonwealth of Australia.

GEORGE V., by the Grace of God of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas King,
Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India :

To Our Trusty and Well-beloved

GEORGE JAMES DETHRIDGE, ESQUIRE, Chief Judge of our Commonwealth Court of Conciliation
and Arbitration :

GREETING :

KNOW YE that We do by these our Letters Patent, issued in Our name by Our Governor-General of Our Commonwealth of Australia, acting with the advice of Our Federal Executive Council, and in pursuance of the Constitution of Our said Commonwealth, the *Royal Commissions Act* 1902-1912, and all other powers him thereunto enabling, appoint you to be a Commissioner to inquire into and report in relation to the following matters :—

- (1) The matters referred to in a letter, a copy of which is attached hereto, dated the eighth day of May, One thousand nine hundred and thirty, from the Chairman of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts to the Prime Minister and in the enclosures annexed thereto ; and
- (2) Whether any bribe, valuable consideration, advantage, recompense, reward or benefit was accepted by, or offered or suggested to, any member of the said Committee in connexion with the inquiry into a claim by certain Broadcasting Companies in Australia for £64,261 10s. 7d. stated to be in respect of actual expenditure made and incurred and incidental thereto in connexion with the amalgamation and co-ordination of the said Companies in pursuance of a demand alleged to have been made upon the said Companies by the Commonwealth Government :

AND WE REQUIRE YOU, with as little delay as possible, to report to Our Governor-General of Our said Commonwealth the result of your inquiries into the matters entrusted to you by these Our Letters Patent.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF WE have caused these Our Letters to be made Patent, and the Seal of Our said Commonwealth to be thereunto affixed.

(L.S.) Witness Our Right Trusty and Well-beloved ARTHUR HERBERT TENNYSON, BARON SOMERS, Lieutenant-Colonel in the Reserve of Officers of our Army, Knight-Commander of Our Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Companion of our Distinguished Service Order, Deputy of Our Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in and over Our Commonwealth of Australia, this fifteenth day of May, in the year of Our Lord One thousand nine hundred and thirty, and in the twenty-first year of Our Reign.

SOMERS,
Deputy of the Governor-General.

By His Excellency's Command,

J. H. SCULLIN,
Prime Minister.

Entered on Record by me, in REGISTER OF PATENTS, No. 56, Page 352, this sixteenth day of May, One thousand nine hundred and thirty.

J. G. McLAREN.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Parliamentary Joint Committee of Public Accounts,
Canberra, 8th May, 1930.

My dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee of Public Accounts I am forwarding herewith copy of an official report of portion of the proceedings of the Committee at Temple Court, Melbourne, on the 29th April, 1930. You will observe from the statements made therein that the honour of every Member of the Committee is impugned. The Committee took such a serious view of the matter that it unanimously decided to immediately suspend the inquiry and to convene a full meeting of the Committee at the earliest possible date. Arrangements were accordingly made to meet at Parliament House, Canberra, on the 7th May, 1930, when careful consideration was given to the course of action the Committee should take.

As the Broadcasting inquiry was instituted as the result of a direct reference from yourself as head of the Government the Committee decided that the proper course to pursue was to place the facts before you with a request that appropriate action be taken by you as the recognized head of Parliament.

For the time being the inquiry of the Committee will be suspended.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) M. R. O'HALLORAN,
Chairman.

The Right Honorable J. H. Scullin, P.C., M.P.,
Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia,
Canberra.

PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

MEETING AT TEMPLE COURT, MELBOURNE, 29TH APRIL, 1930.

Official Notes of Discussion.

MR. COLEMAN (Chairman).—Mr. Green has taken exception to the report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the Committee had decided to award £26,000 compensation to the Broadcasting Companies. His objection was based on the fact that there was obviously a leakage. Every member of the Committee disclaims responsibility for the report in the press. When the Committee took evidence from Mr. Aikins the Committee decided to exclude the press, but allowed counsel and representatives of the Companies and the Commonwealth Government to be present. No one took exception to the presence of the persons named. Copies of Mr. Aikins' statement were distributed amongst those present. The proceedings went on and afterwards Mr. Aikins was examined on his statement by Counsel. Counsel then said a few words and retired. The Committee then sat *in camera* and discussed with Mr. Aikins the details of his report. Senator Hayes and others propounded various methods under which damages could be assessed. The Committee was by no means unanimous as to whether any award was to be made, and it was recognized that no decision could be reached until there was a full meeting of the Committee. Obviously the suggestion that any member of the Committee would be a party to the disclosures in the press was a source of embarrassment to everybody. No decision had been arrived at when the announcement appeared in the press. However, every member of the Committee including myself absolutely denies that he was a party to a discussion with any member of the press or any one else.

The second point raised by Mr. Green was that I had discussed the position in Canberra. I admitted that I had referred to the inquiry when speaking with Mr. Percy Deane. Mr. Deane indicated to me that he had knowledge of the conversations which took place between the former Prime Minister (Mr. Bruce) and Mr. Tait. I told Mr. Deane that as far as I was concerned the evidence was closed, and that if he had any evidence he would have to submit it in the ordinary official way.

Mr. Green alleges that he met somebody at Parliament House, Canberra, who said:—

“I hear you are the only one on the Committee standing out against the Companies' claim. Coleman has earned his £500 at all events.”

Mr. Green also avers that he was personally approached by Major Conder and offered £200 to purchase dresses for his wife.

After these statements I denied absolutely that I had been approached by any one and I think the Committee accepted the denial. There the matter stands. The Committee immediately broke up to consider the matter. Senator O'Halloran and I considered the position and decided that it was better to have a further discussion this morning and decide what attitude the Committee desired to adopt. The only other point I wish to make is this:—These statements, which impugn my personal integrity, have come as a great shock to me and naturally I feel my position very keenly. Mr. Green will indicate whether I have correctly stated the position as he represented it to the Committee yesterday.

MR. GREEN.—The Chairman has set out the position correctly. I have been trying to think who this individual was and who it was introduced me to him. He is an insurance man from Melbourne. I have not the slightest idea what his name is. The conversation took place on the verandah by the bar on the day I left Canberra for Sydney.

MR. FRANCIS.—What day was that?

MR. GREEN.—I think it was the Friday before the House adjourned. I was not present the last week in Canberra. This man was to leave the same night for Melbourne. He was in the House and I am not positive now whether I was introduced to him or whether he saw me in King's Hall. He is a senior man in one of the insurance companies here. I have a kind of idea I was introduced to him. Later on, when we were having a spot together, we were discussing the tariff and the prohibition business. He then said—“I am rather interested in this Broadcasting inquiry you are on. I hear the Committee is going to come to a verdict in favour of the Companies. You are, I believe, the only one standing out”. I said—“Oh, where did you get that information from?” He said—“That information came from the Chairman”. I said—“That seems very funny.” He said—“Why the hell are you standing out. Anyway, Coleman earned his £500”.

MR. CHAIRMAN.—What followed then ?

MR. GREEN.—I was astounded. I tried to draw him on as to what proof he had about your obtaining £500. He said—"He received it alright. I know that. Why be a damned fool? Why stand in your own light." The conversation then ended rather abruptly. Every member of the Committee can draw his own inferences from that. The next statement I want to make is this, and I am prepared to give sworn evidence before the Committee as to the statement I have made. I was talking one day to Major Conder. I think it was the day we left for Tasmania. The conversation took place in the lounge in the Alexander. My wife was talking to the girl near the booking office. I have an idea it was the night before we left for Tasmania. Conder and I were standing up. He said to me—"A couple of hundred pounds would go very well. You could buy some dresses for your wife." I just looked at him and said no more. Nothing more was said.

MR. CHAIRMAN.—Did you know Conder ?

MR. GREEN.—Oh yes ; we all did.

MR. CHAIRMAN.—You did not know him more than we did ?

MR. GREEN.—I did not really know him. I had met him. I just looked at the man. He saw a man near the telephone and he walked away to see this man.

The man I saw at Canberra was a middle-aged man. He is connected with an insurance company in Victoria.

MR. CHAIRMAN.—He did not indicate his association in any way ?

MR. GREEN.—He did not say. He said "I am rather interested in the Broadcasting inquiry." My impression is that he came specially to see me. He started off his conversation by talking about the effect of the tariff. I have been trying to think whether I was introduced to him or not, or whether I met him casually. We went and had a drink together. He said—"You are the only one standing out. Why stand in your own light?" He told me he was associated with an insurance company. He arrived from Melbourne that morning and went back that night. I should know the man if I saw him again. He was a man about 5 ft. 9 in., reasonably well built, a slightish but good build, a prosperous-looking gentleman ; his hair was slightly grey ; I understand he is a very senior man in some insurance company in Melbourne. I told my wife about the Alexander incident at the time. I told her just afterwards.

MR. CHAIRMAN.—I propose to leave the chair. I do not know whether it is necessary for me to ask whether any individual members have been approached.

Messrs. O'Halloran, Francis, Gardner, Guy, Hoare and Yates intimated that they had not been approached in any way.

MR. CHAIRMAN.—In asking Senator O'Halloran to take the chair, I can only repeat my unqualified denial that I have been approached or received any monetary or other consideration in relation to this or any other inquiry with which I have been associated. The allegations convey very unfortunate implications and place me in a very difficult position seeing that I am going away.

MR. GREEN.—Personally, I believe you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.—It is unfortunate that this should happen when I am departing. I cannot postpone my departure at this stage. I think I have been scrupulously fair during the conduct of this inquiry. I will not, of course, be a party to any further consideration of the matter. My departure involves my immediate retirement from any further deliberations. No final decisions have been arrived at. For the purpose of expediting finality so far as the inquiry was concerned the Committee did tentatively agree that there was a claim. That decision was made without prejudice and with the object of going into the bona fides of the damages sought by the Companies. It did not commit the Committee in any way. The Committee will no doubt in due course decide what action is to be taken. I do not know that I need add more than to say that I think the Committee should go exhaustively into this matter. The honour of every member has been impugned. If any suggestion of malpractice were to hang over this Committee, the Committee would not be justified in pursuing any further inquiry until the matter was sifted to the bottom. I feel that the Committee should resign rather than have a thing like this hanging over everybody's head. What is going to happen ? I shall certainly have to leave instructions to protect my interests in the event of any public inquiry. The suggestion made is a cruel one. It is all the more cruel and malicious since no decision has been arrived at. I have not attempted to influence any one of you. When your tentative vote was given at Canberra on the question of the claim the last man who spoke was myself. Every one gave his opinion before I did. I merely concurred in the decision of the majority. There I leave the matter, gentlemen, inspired by the feeling of your unanimous belief and confidence in me. If that were not present I should immediately cancel my arrangements and remain here.

SENATOR O'HALLORAN.—I accept your denial without any qualification whatever. I have no doubt whatever as to your veracity. I realize the importance of the issue that has been raised by Mr. Green this morning. The matter is one which must be carefully discussed before a full Committee.

MR. FRANCIS.—The allegations are so serious that I suggest that the Committee should not proceed one step further until the whole matter is fully discussed at a full meeting of the Committee.

Mr Francis then moved a motion, seconded by Mr. Gardner, that the inquiry should not be proceeded with until the whole matter was fully discussed by a full meeting of the Committee.

MR. GREEN.—What is the desire of the Committee ? I am prepared to be sworn by the Committee and to repeat the statements I have made to-day.

SENATOR O'HALLORAN.—We must have a full meeting before any further discussion can proceed in connexion with this inquiry.

MR. COLEMAN.—My duty is not only to protect my honor but to act in conjunction with the Committee. I do not want to do anything to embarrass the Committee. If it is your wish that I leave the matter in your hands I shall do so. The allegations affect every member of the Committee.

SENATOR O'HALLORAN.—I think the Chairman should leave the matter with the Committee feeling that it will take all steps necessary to protect his honor during his absence.

The Commission on the Administration of the Government of the District of Columbia, established by Public Law 47-1, has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th day of this month, in which you expressed your interest in the work of the Commission and your desire to be kept advised of its progress.

The Commission is currently engaged in a study of the various agencies of the District Government, with a view to determining the most efficient and economical method of their organization and administration. This study is being conducted in accordance with the terms of the enabling legislation, and it is expected that a report will be submitted to the Congress in the near future.

In the meantime, the Commission is continuing its work on a number of specific issues, including the reorganization of the Police Department, the consolidation of the various departments, and the improvement of the methods of selecting and promoting the personnel of the District Government. It is hoped that these efforts will result in a more efficient and economical administration of the District of Columbia.

Very truly yours,
 Chairman

The Commission is also interested in the views of the public on the various issues being studied. It is therefore pleased to announce that it has established a public hearing program, by which interested parties may appear before the Commission and express their views on the various issues. The Commission is particularly interested in the views of the citizens of the District of Columbia, and it is therefore pleased to announce that it has established a public hearing program, by which interested parties may appear before the Commission and express their views on the various issues.

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