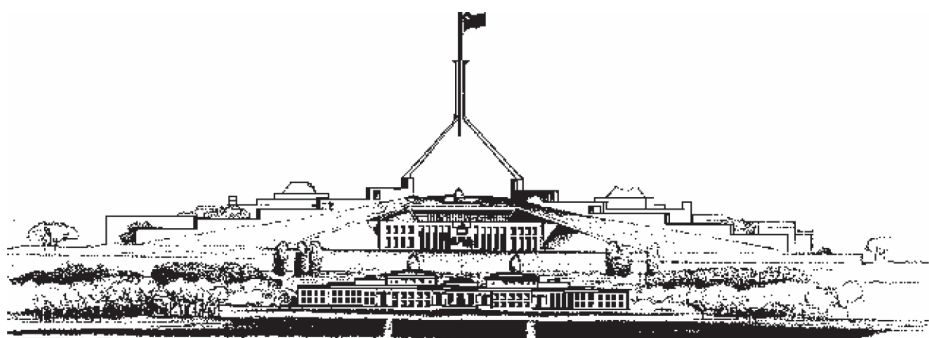




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

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TWENTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The extra money to go to New South Wales in this financial year, 1973-74, is \$52m, which is made up of \$4m extra for pre-schools, \$8m extra for technical education and \$40m extra for schools. This extra money does not take into account teachers colleges, universities, colleges of advanced education or whatever extra is required for pre-school teachers colleges.

NATIONAL PIPELINE AUTHORITY ACT: VALIDITY

Mr GRAHAM—Is the Minister for Minerals and Energy prepared to table the legal opinions about the validity of the National Pipeline Authority Act, as he has already made reference to these opinions in the House during his recent precise and comprehensive statement?

Mr CONNOR—Yes, I will be very happy to table the opinions as received.

ABORIGINES: SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Mr BENNETT—Has the Minister for Social Security noted in the Press recently reports that Aborigines in Western Australia were alleged to be spending their money on taxis, liquor and in other ways rather than on family welfare? If the Minister has had an opportunity to investigate these reports will he advise of the steps he has taken and the steps he proposes to take in relation to this matter?

Mr HAYDEN—I have seen these reports in the newspapers from Western Australia. Very clearly problems will arise if we try to interfere and direct that Aborigines shall not spend their social security benefits in the same way as other people. Having said that, however, one must also say for the record that problems are developing, especially in the more remote areas of Western Australia. I am sure that that is not the only part of Australia in which Aborigines are living under similar conditions. Tribal groups have suffered a rather severe cultural jolt as a result of the introduction of payments to them of social security benefits. The point has been reached where I feel great concern about this matter.

At this stage I ought to concede that when the honourable member for Mackellar raised this matter earlier in the year I expressed some scepticism of his reports about the effects of the payments of these benefits to Aborigines. This problem

is worrying many people, including anthropologists, sociologists and people generally who are concerned about the welfare of Aborigines in remote areas. A complete dislocation to the family and tribal tie-ups is occurring in some areas because of this money being made available. The tendency of the people receiving it is to move away from the area, for a number of reasons. I do not want to enumerate the reasons or the symptoms of what happens because there is a tendency for these to be exaggerated and dramatised for public effect. I merely say that there is clear evidence that because of the cultural difficulties of the recipients of these benefits in handling this money a serious cultural problem arises which is creating, it seems, a fair bit of human suffering. I will have to consider this matter more closely with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. If it is at all possible I intend to go to the north west of Western Australia and to other parts of that State well before the end of the year to view at first hand some of the worrying reports I have received from the Department about these effects.

INFLATION

Mr SNEDDEN—My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. With inflation at such a high rate that it is doing serious social and economic harm to the community, will the Prime Minister make a statement to the House setting out the corrective measures the Government proposes in order to combat this insidious evil? Does the Government intend to concentrate its efforts on monetary policy?

Mr WHITLAM—The Government has not concentrated and does not intend to concentrate its efforts in combating inflation purely on monetary policy. The Government has twice revalued the currency. On another occasion it stood firm when the United States of America devalued its currency. We had an inquiry into steel prices at the beginning of the year. We cut tariffs by 25 per cent. Pursuant to the mandate we sought from the people last year, we have introduced in the Senate trade practices and consumer protection legislation. We have established, pursuant to our mandate, a Joint Parliamentary Committee on Prices which is in the process of examining the prices of imports, building materials and other matters. The Prices Justification Tribunal has been established. Later, at the end of question time, I will be tabling the notification by the first companies