A great deal has happened in this recent Parliamentary recess and events of significance have occurred in both the Australian and the international field.

In Australia we have seen the results of one of the most crippling strikes in Australia's history. What many people regard as the greatest copper mine in the world was brought to a complete standstill, not by the concerted action of any Union or group of Unions, but by the concerted action of a breakaway group from the A.W.U.

The shut down at Mt. Isa has come at a most unfortunate time. There is a world shortage of copper and the price of copper on the world market has risen tremendously. Instead of being able to supply our own requirements from Mt. Isa Australia has had to buy copper from overseas. This will, of course, adversely affect our overseas balances at a time when lower wool prices and heavy defence commitments are having their own effect on these balances. Work on some essential services, such as the Post Office, has been slowed down while supplies of cable and other essential materials have come from overseas.

I don't know the reasons or the causes for this particular strike. I cannot understand the motives of the men who have been leading the strike. Mr. Mackie was expelled from the Australian Workers' Union a considerable time ago and his Union has, I believe, behaved in a responsible and sensible manner over the whole affair, but despite the wish of the Australian Workers' Union to get this mine working again the Mackie group seem to have a large influence on a number of people in Mt. Isa. It is not as though the Industrial Courts and Arbitration procedures have not granted considerable increases to people working in Mt. Isa. A considerable advance has been made in this particular field and if these advances had been accepted there would have been no problems.

I understand it is the Australian Workers' Union's belief that the advance made in pay and conditions of service were worth while and reasonable, but the Mackie group remained on strike.

The Mt. Isa mines provide prosperity for this particular town. Without the mine there would be no town, there is no other reason to have a town of this size in this part of Queensland. The cessation and reduction of work in the mine has brought immense hardship to many people. Because of the strike, without a doubt, many of the Mt. Isa workers will have left the town to find jobs which are readily available in other centres. This is relatively easy for a single man, but the married man who may own his own home and has his roots in Mt. Isa would find it more difficult to leave. Under the conditions that prevailed his own house would have been unsaleable and if he wished to go and find work in another area he would probably have no alternative but to leave his family in Mt. Isa.

The financial loss to the workers in Mt. Isa will take many years to recover - if it can ever be recovered, and what is this for? If it were to get better conditions or substantial increases these have been granted. It seems now that they will still strike to support Mr. Mackie, a man who was expelled from his own Union. I cannot believe that the Australian Workers' Union would do this without just cause. It has always been one of the most reasonable and stable Unions in Australia.
There is some suggestion that Mr. Clyde Cameron, member for Hindmarsh from South Australia, has had something to do with what has happened in Mt. Isa. It has been well known that Mr. Cameron has had a fight with the Australian Workers' Union for many years. Looking from outside it would appear that the cause of this fight with the Union is over the question of control of the Union. The Union has, quite rightly, wanted to maintain control of its own affairs. It is suggested there are grounds for thinking that Mr. Cameron has wanted to get control of this Union for purely political as opposed to Union purposes. It would be reasonable for any Union to reject this.

The present position at Mt. Isa is this. Several days ago the Mine opened its doors and said they would remain open for anyone who wanted to go to work, even although it was completely uneconomic for a mine that should be working several thousands to operate for just a few hundred. However, in all about 1,500 people have been working in the last few days despite the fact that the Mackie group have heavily picketed the mine to try and prevent people attending. A day or two ago the Queensland Government put through special legislation to prevent the picketing in this instance. I understand the reason for this was the fact that there have been reports of violence between picketers and those wishing to work.

In all this dispute the Australian Workers' Union has played a reasonable part. For some time it has been doing what it can to get the mine working again. The rebel strike is a blot on Australia's industrial history which should be a lesson and a warning. The manner in which a small group can disrupt a great industry without Union support, without official Australian Workers' Union support and cause great hardship not only to the people involved but also to the whole nation should give us all cause for deep concern.
There is one other matter that I wish to mention briefly. There have been many people waiting for a considerable time to hear what the Government has done in regard to the proposals concerning the marketing of the Australian wool clip that were submitted by the Australian Wool Industry Conference.

On the first day of the Parliament I asked the Minister for Primary Industry whether the Government had yet considered the proposals and whether or not the Cabinet had come to any decision on the matter. I asked the Minister when he would be able to tell the House and the Industry what the position is. The Minister replied very briefly that he hoped he would be able to make a statement in the very near future.

As I understand the matter the Government has come to its decision but it is waiting to discuss this officially with the Australian Wool Industry Conference before any public announcements are made. I think this is the proper course to take since it was the Executive of the Conference that first put this matter to the Government.
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