Last Thursday, Phillip Lynch, Minister for Labour and National Service outlined the Rural Reconstruction Employment Training Scheme. This scheme was to assist farmers who wished to pursue other employment. Many people must regret the necessity for this kind of arrangement. I personally regret the fact that all those who wish to pursue an occupation on the land are not able to do so. However, despite the assistance of Governments with subsidies and with rural reconstruction, we are in a position in which some people, by necessity, and others by choice have decided to move away from their farms. This training scheme is designed to assist them.

The opportunity to undertake full time or part time training in technical education or through direct training on the job will be provided. Farmers eligible for this Scheme are those without prospects of long term economic viability. The Scheme will assist a farmer or his family if they have been working on the farm. Farmers who have been refused debt reconstruction assistance under the rural reconstruction programme or under the marginal dairy farmers agreement would be eligible. Applicants would choose their own field of technical training. Full and part time courses will be available. Full time training would be available for twelve months or twenty four months on a part time basis. The costs of fees will be borne by Government. Trainees in full time approved courses will receive an allowance of a little over $46 per week. There is an allowance for books and equipment and any travelling expenses will be provided. There will be an extra payment of $10 per week for married trainees who may have to live away from home. If anyone is interested in this scheme, if they write to me I will see that an application form and a copy of the Minister's speech is made available. Alternatively, applications can be addressed to the Regional Director of the Department of Labour and National Service or they may be lodged with any District Employment Office. Again, I regret the need for this measure, but it is something which is necessary in the present circumstances.
Bushfire Studies

Forest fire problems in California are very similar to those in Australia. Forestry officials are to make a study tour of fire control operations in the United States. The tour will take place during the worst period of the Californian fire season. United States fire control methods, including the use of helicopters and other aircraft, will be examined. The Australians for their part will lecture in Australian practice.

Restrictive Trade Legislation

You will have seen recent reports of the High Court decision that has great implications for future legislation. While the High Court struck out provisions of present Commonwealth Restrictive Trade Legislation, the Court at the same time indicated that the Commonwealth has power to act in these areas provided the legislation is properly drawn. As a result the Commonwealth has decided to strengthen the Restrictive Trade Practices Act and is also examining the implications of the judgement in other areas to strengthen competitive influences in Australia. As a result of this High Court decision the Commonwealth will have a much more effective Restrictive Trade Practices Act than would otherwise have been possible.

Period of National Service Reduced by Six Months

Following the decision that the Australian troops would be withdrawn from Vietnam by Christmas, it was announced that the period for full time National Service would be reduced from two years to 18 months. The time on the reserve (which does not involve any training commitments but renders those involved liable for call-up in the event of a national emergency) will be extended from the present three years to 3½ years. The alternative of five years in the C.M.F. Forces remains.

Arrangements are now in hand for those who have already served 18 months or more to be discharged progressively over the next three to four months.
No doubt there will be a wide divergence of opinions expressed during the forthcoming debate on this subject. The vital point to keep in mind is the reason why we have National Service; that is to provide the Defence Forces which the Government considers necessary for the adequate defence of Australia.

This is an issue quite separate from the Vietnam war. National Service was introduced before we sent troops to Vietnam, and for the same reasons as it was introduced will be continued after our troops are withdrawn. It is a form of national insurance to give a measure of security to Australia.

It is most important to remember that National Service provides many more trained men than the 12,000 actually serving in the Army. There are in addition 20,000 fully trained ex-national Servicemen in the Reserve and a total of 51,000 men have been trained since the inception of the scheme in 1964. In addition there are 12,000 who have chosen to serve in the C.M.F.

Less than 1% have failed to report for National Service without reasonable cause and 3% have been granted total exemption as conscientious objectors. It is also worth remembering that 9% of National Servicemen are volunteers; they sought to be enlisted and were accepted.
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