Mr Jones to resign?

I want to talk about arbitrary and irresponsible Government. Last week I think I mentioned the fact that the Government's industrial relations policy had been torn up by Mr Jones.

There is another chapter in relation to that because there was an arbitrated decision which would have given a 17% increase to TAA pilots. It appeared that under pressure from Mr Hawke the Prime Minister has ordered that that be increased to about 24%, the same increase as was negotiated for the ANSETT pilots.

I understand Mr Hawke has suggested that the Minister for Transport, Mr Jones, ought to resign. There are good grounds for him resigning or being removed to a different port folio where he would be unlikely to aggravate industrial-relations' problems. However, I believe that it would be wrong for the Prime Minister to remove Mr Jones at the suggestion and direction of Mr Hawke, President of the A.C.T.U., because I do not believe that any Prime Minister should give in to directions from outside the Parliament.

There are a number of areas where Mr Hawke has told the Government what it must do and there are a number of occasions on which Mr Whitlam has reacted. It could almost be said Mr Hawke is de facto Prime Minister of Australia and that Mr Whitlam is captive of the President of the A.C.T.U. I do not believe that this is good for Australia.

This is one kind of pressure which leads to bad Government - pressure by an outside body on the elected Parliamentary representative of Australia.

Pressure on the Arbitration Commission

The Government itself has been guilty of putting pressure on an independent body - it has been putting a great deal of pressure on the Arbitration Commission. It did this on the Qantas pilots' case. There was a great deal of criticism as a result of an earlier determination concerning Air Hostesses and I have been advised that the Commissioner who normally looks after the Air Hostesses' award has been removed to another area and that has in fact been admitted by the Minister for Transport.

One of the valued things about the Arbitration Commission is its
independence. That needs protecting by the quality of people who are appointed to the Commission. In the past their terms of appointment have been until retirement and that is similar to judges. This gives the people concerned an independence to act as they believe right in accordance with the law. If pressure were put upon such people they could resist it, but now we have had an admission by the Minister for Transport that a certain Commissioner was removed, put into another job, and we have the announced policy of the Minister for Labour that the terms of Commissioners would be limited to a fixed period of 3 to 5 years.

Once you have a fixed period of this time for Commissioners of the Arbitration Commission and once you have that coupled with the kind of public pressure that is being put upon them by this Government, you would have a tame cat Commission that would be merely an administrative arm of Government designed to do what the Government itself wants. That would destroy the Commission and everything it has stood for since its establishment. It would be disastrous for industrial relations in Australia. It would be the direct consequence of the present Government's policies.

John Curtin House and the Commissioner of Taxation

There is a third example where pressure may have well have had some part to play in a decision that has been made. Whether it has or not I do not know and I would certainly not make charges of that kind but a question has been raised and the question needs resolution in the clearest possible terms.

I think many of us have heard that John Curtin House is going to be built in Canberra as the National headquarters of the Australian Labour Party. I believe that virtually every Australian citizen would believe that political headquarters ought to be paid for by the political party concerned or by its supporters. I know this happened with John McEwen House in Canberra but with the building of John Curtin House we are likely to have a different set of circumstances.

I have a photostat of a letter to a Mr T. Kavanagh who is Secretary of the John Curtin House Appeal. It is dated 28th October, 1974 and is signed by J.W. Curtin, First Assistant Commissioner of Taxation.

The third paragraph of the letter says that "large business organisations often make donations as a form of advertising and in this situation deductions would ordinarily be allowable in terms of Section 51. In view of the wide-spread publicity which it is proposed to give donors" (i.e. to the John Curtin House Appeal) "it is thought that tax payers carrying on business operations would have little difficulty in establishing that the gifts were made..."