PRESS STATEMENT:

MALCOLM FRASER:

November 20th, 1963

ROYAL COMMISSION SUGGESTION BY MR. CALWELL INTO TFX BOMBER RIDICULOUS

Malcolm Fraser said at Glenthompson -

Mr. Calwell's statement that he would establish a Royal Commission to examine the purchase of the American TFX bomber was completely ridiculous and Mr. Calwell himself must know it.

The TFX bomber was purchased as a result of an R.A.A.F. Evaluation Team which was sent abroad during the winter. The Prime Minister had announced this last May.

The Evaluation Team examined several aeroplanes. The French Mirage 4 - which is made by the same people who made the Mirage Fighter - the American Phantom and the American Vigilante, the British TSR 2 in addition to the American TFX. Providing delivery dates were reasonable it seemed a test between the British TSR 2 and the American TFX, the other three machines were a generation younger and did not have many of the advantages that these two were supposed to have.

For some time it was felt there would be advantages with the British machine because of delivery dates, but then it was learned that the R.A.F. was only going to produce 30 TSR 2 and the Americans 1,000 TFX. This clearly meant that the Americans would be able to tool up to mass produce the TFX, while the British machine would have to be hand-made to the last detail. This is why the delivery dates for the two machines is now almost the same. It is also why the cost of the American TFX would be less than the cost of the British machine.

There are many other advantages in buying the TFX. For our purpose it is plainly the best machine. We know that it will have a superior speed and range and will carry a better bomb load than the TSR 2. It will also have better electronic equipment for avoiding enemy radar and will be better fitted for reconnaissance. It will be able to take off from a shorter runway than the British machine. It is, in short, ideal for Australian requirements.

In addition, the Americans are bound to be having some of these machines operating in the Pacific at some time. In any case, they will have large stores and spare parts on which the Australian Government will be able to draw if necessary. The thirty R.A.F. machines would not be operating in south-east Asia and the spare part position would obviously be much more difficult, meaning that Australia would have to build much larger stocks of spares for herself.

All these facts are known so what Mr. Calwell can have in mind in calling for a Royal Commission is impossible to imagine.

There is one other point that is worth mentioning. The independent British Journal - The Economist - said recently that it should cause no surprise that the Australian Government should purchase the American machine as opposed to the British because the British machine was not in fact a replacement for the Canberra machine that we were wanting to replace. The Economist recognised that Australia in Australia's interests had made the right decision.