PRESS STATEMENT:

MALCOLM FRASER:

March 1st, 1964

Last week the 25th Parliament assembled. It's quite a different Parliament from the old one. There are many new faces in the Parliament, including two young Liberals under thirty - Kevin Cairns, who moved the Address-in-Reply to the Governor-General's speech and Adrian Gibson from Tasmania, who won the by-election following the death of Athol Townley. For the first time in eight years I will not be the youngest Government supporter or the youngest member of the House - both these two men are about twenty-eight. This is a very good thing. As far as I am concerned, the more young people the better.

The first week of Parliament is full of pageantry to accord with our British traditions. The bells rang to summon the 25th Parliament early on Tuesday morning. Once members were seated the Clerk of the House read the Proclamation summoning Parliament.

A wigged and uniformed figure bearing the title Usher of the Black Rod entered the House of Representatives with a message from the Governor-General.

Members of the House of Representatives were then sworn in by his deputy.

The ceremony was made in some degree unusual by the absence of two members who are involved in a libel case with one of the Sydney newspapers. You may have read that an attempt was made to subpoena Mr. Calwell over the same case. Very sensibly the subpoena was not forced as Mr. Calwell clearly had parliamentary duties that required his presence in Canberra.

If the subpoena had been enforced Mr. Calwell might have had to absent himself from the A.L.P. Caucus meeting on Monday. This was the first meeting of the A.L.P. parliamentary party since the election during which Mr. Calwell was re-elected leader of the A.L.P. and Gough Whitlam deputy leader.

In the afternoon of the first day members of the House of Representatives were again summoned by the Usher of the Black Rod to the Senate Chamber. Viscount de L'Isle read on behalf of the Queen the speech giving, in parliamentary terms, his "causes for summoning parliament".

This is, in fact, the speech that sets out the Government's administrative and legislative program. The speech opened with an important reference to Australia's defence and to our position in South-East Asia. He expressed and reflected the concern that every Australian feels about the unfortunate and possibly disastrous arguments that are occurring between Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Governor-General's speech went on to outline many other items of Government intention, particularly those concerning implementation of the election program. I will deal with these fully in later articles, but the Parliament will shortly introduce legislation to make possible higher child endowment payments for the third and subsequent children, endowment of 15/- a week for all full-time students between the ages of 16 and 21, in addition to legislation to give effect to the Government's housing proposals. The Minister for Housing, Leslie Bury, has recently issued a statement concerning the details of these proposals, and if anyone is interested I hope they will contact me.
This applies in particular to the proposal to subsidise the savings of young married people, one of whom is under 36, and who wish to build or purchase a home. The definition of the savings that will qualify for the scheme has not yet been finally decided, but it will, I hope, be as broad as administrative problems will allow.

After the address by the Governor-General the members of the House of Representatives returned to their own Chamber. There, the Prime Minister formally told the House of the Ministerial arrangements that had been made.

Before any other business was conducted the House passed messages of sympathy concerning three men who had died since the Parliament last met.

The first concerned John Kennedy, assassinated President of the United States. I have already said what I felt about this foul act, and I am glad indeed that the Australian Parliament saw fit to send messages of sympathy to his family and country as a first item of business. He was a great leader who inspired faith and gave hope to the free world. It was appropriate that the Parliament mourn him. The other two people concerned were Athol Townley and Josiah Francis, both former Ministers of the Crown. Josiah Francis left Parliament before I entered public life, but I was honoured to serve with Athol Townley. Australia lost a great politician and a good servant, his family a proud Father.