By Malcolm Fraser, Member for Wannon and
Minister for Education and Science.

Minerals boom Transforms N. & N.W.

The vast sweep of Australia's North and North-West is being
transformed by spectacular projects which will boost Australia's export
income by hundreds of millions of dollars in the next few years.

Development stemming from the minerals boom was viewed recently
by the Prime Minister Mr. Gorton and the Minister for National Development,
Mr. Fairbairn and party.

The route of their itinerary took in more than one-third of the
main high-grade bauxite deposits in the world and mountains of iron ore
with reserves totalling more than 15,000 million tons.

In that big sweep of country new mining towns are springing up,
ports are being gouged out and giant freight trains thunder over semi-desert.
The tour covered iron ore projects on which interests are spending
or committed to investing more than $600 million.

Australia's export earnings -- about 70 per cent of which still
come from sales of rural products -- will rise sharply as a result of these
new projects.

Earnings from mineral exports, now about $485 million, are estimated
to climb to around the $1,000 million mark by the early 1970's.

At Gladstone the party inspected the new modern wharf facilities
handling bauxite, coal, pyrites, grain and alumina exports.

Here the $115 million alumina plant, producing alumina from Weipa
bauxite, had brought new life to the town.

The visitors inspected the big coal deposits in the Central
Queensland region, which provide export income through sales to Japanese steel
mills.

At Mt. Isa, Mr. Gorton and party saw the results of a $130 million
expansion program boosting ore-treatment capacity to 16,000 tons a day.

They inspected the exciting development of the rich bauxite field
at Weipa where reserves are estimated to be at least 2000 million tons.

Here there is a port where none existed just a few years ago. A
township has sprung up. The company plans to lift production of bauxite to
more than 4.2 million tons in 1969, about half of which will be treated in
Australian plants.

Across the Gulf of Carpentaria the party visited Groote Eylandt,
site of Australia's largest known deposits of manganese ore.
At Gove the Prime Minister saw the big bauxite-alumina project operated by Nabalco -- jointly owned by a consortium of Australian companies and a large European aluminium producer.

The party flew on to Port Hedland, which opened the way for visits to the great iron-ore projects.

The two main ore bodies of Goldsworthy Mining Pty. Ltd. contain between 40 and 50 million tons of direct-shipping ore. The company has big ore contracts with Japan, valued at more than $258 million.

South of Port Hedland Mt. Newman Mining Ltd. has a major ore body with reported inferred reserves of more than 1000 million tons of high-grade ore -- which makes it one of the largest single deposits of this ore in the world.

The company's agreement with the W.A. Government proposes the minimum expenditure of $156 million, firstly for export of ore, then upgrading of ore before export, and finally for steel-making.

The company has a 265 mile rail line under construction and trains of up to 135 freight cars, carrying 12,000 tons of ore loaded in less than an hour, will use it.

Mr. Gorton and party visited Mr. Tom Price, Hamersley Iron Pty. Ltd's. 'mountain of iron ore' containing an estimated 500 million tons of high-grade ore.

The ore is carried over a new rail link to Dampier, the shipment port which will provide access for carriers up to 100,000 tons taking the ore to Japan.

South of Kalgoorlie, the party inspected Kambalda, site of new nickel ore and sulphide discoveries.

Western Mining Corporation has signed an agreement with the W.A. Government to erect a nickel refinery at Kwinana, scheduled to begin production in 1970.