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cc PC



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 May, 1984

Dear John,

Mr Hayden's Call on the Prime Minister

As agreed when we spoke on the telephone this morning, I enclose a fuller brief for the Prime Minister on the subject of UK nuclear tests in Australia.

This subject was discussed when Mr Luce saw Mr Hayden here this morning. I understand that Mr Hayden made two main points. First, he pressed for the release of all documentation on the subject. Mr Luce responded along the lines of the first of the points to make below. Second, Mr Hayden suggested that there should be a Commission of Enquiry and asked for our full cooperation. Mr Luce took note of this proposal.

Yours ever,
Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street


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UK NUCLEAR TESTS AT MARALINGA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

POINTS TO MAKE

1. There is no question of a cover up. We have nothing to hide. All relevant documentation has already been made or is in the process of being made available to the Australian authorities. We are co-operating fully with Senator Walsh, and his Department and have agreed with him to fight in the courts any claims for compensation. I do not see what further we can do.
2. There is no evidence available to the British Government of servicemen, aborigines or anyone else having been killed or injured as a result of the nuclear test programme in Australia. Indeed the Donovan Report concluded that there were "no grounds for concluding that Australian personnel who participated in the UK atomic test programmes in the 1950s and 1960s suffered significant adverse health effects".
3. There were no atomic tests in Australia after 1957 and no tests of a nuclear device either at Maralinga or anywhere else in Australia which have been kept secret.
4. Strict protective measures were in operation for all personnel involved in the tests and detailed records have been kept of the amount of radiation experienced by individuals.
5. To the best of the Government's knowledge and belief there are no buried dumps of radioactive material in Australia arising from the nuclear test programme other than those identified in the Pearce Report which Senator Walsh tabled in the Australian Parliament last week.
6. Cannot declassify all documents. Some documentation relating to weapons design must remain secret and under the NPT treaty is not available to Australia.



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CALL BY MR WILLIAM ("BILL") HAYDEN, AUSTRALIAN MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ON THE PRIME MINISTER, 14 MAY AT 4 PM

UK NUCLEAR TESTS IN AUSTRALIA

Extent of Public Interest

1. Public interest in the alleged harm done by radiation from the 1950s UK nuclear tests in Australia continues unabated both in this country and in Australia. Although there are many practical difficulties, the two Governments are co-operating very closely and HMG have pledged the Australians every assistance possible in providing information relevant to the five common law cases currently before the Australian courts.

Co-operation between UK and Australia

2. Minister ^(Geoffrey Pallin) ~~(DI)~~ was in Australia last October and had talks on the subject with Senator Walsh, the Minister for Resources and Energy, and at the same time a UK Mission to Australia (Mr D C Fakley, ACSA(N), Mr W N Saxby, SFS/AWRE and Mr J G Ward, T Sol's Department) was engaged in detailed and very useful discussions with Australian officials and lawyers.

3. As a response to these visits an official (Mr A A Garran) and a Consultant (Dr J L Symonds) from the Australian Department of Resources and Energy visited the UK in March/April to obtain evidence from UK documents and UK witnesses relevant to the cases currently before the courts. They started work on 12 March and their visit appears to have met with some success. Invaluable assistance to MOD has been provided by the official historians of the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA). Additionally, the MOD have agreed to the declassification and release of the Pearce Report AWRE 0-16/68 which describes the purpose and outcome of Operation Brumby, essentially a clean-up operation carried out to safety standards laid down by the Australian Government prior

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to handing back the Maralinga ranges to the Australians. The report also gives full details of the radioactive material buried at Maralinga. The MOD have also agreed to the release of the 1979 Agreement in which it was accepted that the British Government had no further responsibility to repatriate waste from Maralinga after the removal in 1978 of a small quantity of recoverable plutonium buried there. Both reports have now been tabled in the Australian Parliament.

Recent Allegations of Deliberate Exposure etc.

4. Public concern about the safety of the tests has flared up lately with Press allegations that British, Australian and New Zealander officers of the "Indoctrinee Force" were deliberately exposed to radiation in 1956 in order to see what effect this had on them. They have ^{been} further fuelled by the death bed allegations by a former RAF senior technician, that he found bodies of four aborigines in a bomb crater at Maralinga after tests there in May or June 1963. He further alleged that these tests were secret and that no information about them had been revealed.

5. The guinea pig claim is largely based on a misinterpretation of a 1953 UK document released to the Public Record Office under the 30-year rule and attempts to set the record straight (for example, by Minister(DP) during the Consolidated Fund Bill Debate on 12 March) have suffered a slight setback by remarks on 13 March attributed to Mr Scholes, the Australian Minister of Defence, which appear to corroborate the Press reports. However, detailed information, including that on the actual radiation exposures experienced by those in the Indoctrinee Force, has been traced in AWRE and, has enabled the allegations to be firmly refuted by the Department of Resources and Energy. The allegations about the aborigines' deaths and secret tests are also unfounded and MOD have provided Senator Walsh with documentation enabling him to refute the allegations in Parliament and to the Press.

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Epidermiological Surveys

6. Both countries have embarked on epidermiological surveys. The results of the Australian study, (The Donovan Report) carried out by the Australian Department of Health, were published in December last year and show no increased incidence of radiation associated diseases amongst Australian participants in the tests. The UK study, announced in October last year by Minister(DP), is being carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board. Results may be expected towards the end of 1985 or early in 1986.

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