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Reference: Economic, social and political conditions in East Timor

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SENATE
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES COMMITTEE
Monday, 20 September 1999

Members: Senator Hogg (*Chair*), Senators Bourne, Brownhill, Lightfoot, Quirke and West

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Bolkus, Boswell, Brown, Calvert, Chapman, Cook, Coonan, Crane, Eggleston, Faulkner, Ferguson, Ferris, Forshaw, Gibbs, Gibson, Harradine, Knowles, Mason, McGauran, Parer, Payne, Tchen, Tierney and Watson

Senators in attendance: Senators Brownhill, Hogg, Payne, Quirke and West

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

- (a) economic, social and political conditions in East Timor including respect for human rights in the territory;
- (b) Indonesia's military presence in East Timor and reports of ongoing conflict in the territory;
- (c) the prospects for a just and lasting settlement of the East Timor conflict;
- (d) Australia's humanitarian and development assistance in East Timor;
- (e) the Timor Gap (Zone of Cooperation Treaty); and
- (f) past and present Australian Government policy toward East Timor including the issue of East Timorese self-determination.

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Committee met at 9.36 a.m.

LOWRY, Mr Robert Wayne (Private capacity)

CHAIR—I declare open this public meeting of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee. The committee is inquiring into East Timor in accordance with terms of reference given by the Senate. I welcome Mr Bob Lowry.

The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. For the purpose of obtaining an accurate record, would you remain behind at the end of the proceedings so that the Hansard officer can check spelling and sources of information provided this morning. I invite you to make an opening statement and then we will proceed to questions.

Mr Lowry—As you are aware, I was invited to appear before the committee so I have not prepared a submission. I would just like to say three brief things before we start, if that is okay. The first one is that, no matter what I might say hereafter, we must remember that the responsibility for what has happened in East Timor rests on the shoulders of the Indonesian army. The second thing I would like to say is that the government must be congratulated on the way it has marshalled the support for the UN force since the disaster that happened as a consequence of the ballot on 30 August and the aftermath. However, the fact that this level of violence did occur is a reflection of the failure of our government and our bureaucracy to properly read the situation and take appropriate policy measures to ensure—or try their utmost to ensure—that this did not happen in the first place.

It reflects a failure of political leadership and a failure of the bureaucracy to translate what I think was reasonably accurate intelligence into appropriate policy and then to have that policy implemented effectively. I must say that I have no access to intelligence records or to government policy discussions. What I am saying is my analysis is based on the public record only.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. Whilst you might not have had access to intelligence or government in terms of their policy making, what leads you to the assessment that they have not taken the best advantage of the intelligence that has been available?

Mr Lowry—One might argue whether a United Nations force should have been put in place in East Timor before 30 August or at some other time. But, accepting the fact that the government and the United Nations decided that it was not a feasible option to put a United Nations force in there, then it was the responsibility of those who oversee these things to look at the responsibilities undertaken by the Indonesian government in absolute detail and assess what the obstacles might have been for the Indonesian government.

It was quite clear from the start that, although President Habibie and the Indonesian government had committed themselves to the process—and I do not think there was any real equivocation about that—it was very obvious right from day one that the Indonesian military had not so committed itself. The intelligence that we have seen leaked to the press and the reports we have seen in the paper give us no doubt that that was the case.

That being so, then some analysis of who the decision makers were in the military and how they might be influenced to take some ownership of this process should have been looked at as a way of making sure that their policies as displayed in those weeks leading up to the Dili and Liquica massacres were not carried forward to the election process. Some sense of real security would have been provided to the ballot process and the aftermath.

It is very difficult to turn an army around once it is set on a course. It is not so much a matter of just giving orders. The people have to be socialised at the bottom to make sure that they understand exactly what it is, in what direction the military wants to go, why that is so and convince them that it is in their interests to do so.

CHAIR—How far back do you think that it would have been reasonable to make the assessment that, unless there was a proactive intervention to stop what ultimately did occur, that it would have in fact happened? Is this the sort of thing that is easy to judge in hindsight, or should we have said back in March or April that really we need to be taking steps now to ensure that the bloodbath does not occur?

Mr Lowry—The key point in time of course was the aftermath of the Dili and Liquica massacres in April when the Prime Minister went to Bali. It was quite obvious at that point that the Indonesian military was not on side. The trip of the Prime Minister to Bali was an appropriate response, but it seems to me that the ball was dropped thereafter. This high level of political leadership was not carried through. Again, I must be tentative about that, because we do not know what happens behind the scenes. But certainly in a public sense, we did not have any sense that the Prime Minister was leading the process. It seemed to be left to the foreign ministry, basically.

CHAIR—In the public sense—and I understand that is all you are able to speak from—do you see it as being the fault of government, the policies of government or more so of the bureaucracy who are advising government from the public perspective?

Mr Lowry—I think it was a failure of political leadership, but I also think it was a failure of bureaucratic leadership. My feeling is that the junior levels in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade understood the intelligence and understood what appropriate policies may be. I have a feeling that the middle and senior level leadership of DFAT were still locked in a mind-set of the past where the primary thing from their perspective was to ensure that there was a democratic transition in Indonesia. East Timor was a secondary consideration and they were not prepared to take the measures that were necessary to make sure that the process went smoothly.

CHAIR—We had a submission last week from a Mr Mark Plunkett. In that submission he was not very flattering of the bureaucracy. In his submission to us he said:

The extraordinary events of the last 10 days in East Timor and history requires that the Senate committee or some other credible, competent and independent entity inquire into and report on Australian public sector failings and shortcomings.

He went on to say:

A full scale Fitzgerald style inquiry into these government agencies is warranted to determine the extent of institutional corruption.

At the same hearing he was accompanied by General Sanderson who did not necessarily concur with the statements that Mr Plunkett had made, so I make that clear to you. Nonetheless, the statements that Mr Plunkett made to us were quite strong indeed in his criticism of the handling of events by the bureaucracy and called for a full-scale Fitzgerald inquiry. Those of us from Queensland know the extent of what a full-scale Fitzgerald inquiry means. Do you think that it is something that is necessary as an adjunct or extension of this inquiry that we look fully into the role and the part that was played by DFAT in these matters?

Mr Lowry—Yes. First of all, obviously political responsibility is the thing that is sorted out in the parliamentary process. But beyond that I do think that there is a necessity for a review of the policy making process within government, and that of course affects not only DFAT but the broader departmental structure as well.

I am not convinced, for example, that there was sufficient or effective coordination between the prime ministries involved in the process. It seems to me that there should have been some mechanism whereby the input from these various departments went to some sort of committee process or other mechanism which was directly led by the Prime Minister. I think this matter was far too important to be left primarily to the carriage of the foreign ministry.

CHAIR—Senator Quirke has just a quick question following on.

Senator QUIRKE—I suppose it has been bipartisan policy in this country for about 40 years that eventually East Timor would be incorporated within a broader Indonesia. It would go the way of all the Dutch colonies in South-East Asia and that in fact until really about two weeks ago that was still the geopolitical stance of the senior bureaucrats within DFAT. That is where they thought it should ultimately end up and that is where it should stay.

Mr Lowry—And many of them still think that way. But the fact that they have buried their heads in the sand for the last 20-odd years will not change the fact that it was always going to be a problem for Indonesia, right from day one. There is no need to drag up the history here, but departmental advice from Defence—for example, from Bill Pritchett back in 1975—already pointed to the problem that there had been established a sense of East Timorese identity which was going to be very difficult for the Indonesian army to overcome.

Then, of course, right from day one the brutality of the Indonesian invasion ensured that that was just reinforced and there was going to be a continual problem. There was never any indication in all of that time that this problem would be overcome. They developed a sort of Baltic mentality right from day one, basically, and that was never able to be swept away in any sense.

CHAIR—Could I just raise the issue of engagement of the Indonesian forces in the process that was going to take place. Correct me if I am wrong, but I think you said that they were not part of the process, they were going down their own path.

Mr Lowry—Yes.

CHAIR—It seemed to me from what I have heard in this inquiry so far that there is another factor in this, and that is the involvement of the United States. Whilst not trying to cover for our own Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and our own defence liaisons with Indonesia, it seems that the US should have played a more significant role in what has happened than they have.

Mr Lowry—Yes.

CHAIR—Is that a fair assessment and, if so, where does the responsibility lie for getting the US involved? It seemed to me that, at the end of the day, the Indonesian army—even once they had gone down the bloody path that they had gone down—was not going to respond to us whom they may well have viewed as a minor player in international political affairs, but would respond to the United States?

Mr Lowry—Yes. I think that one of the great failures on Australia's part was not to mobilise support from the United States at that earlier period back in April or May. As I said before, what was needed was recognition of the fact that Australia has fairly limited resources in terms of being able to persuade the Indonesian military to get back on track. We are the immediate neighbours of East Timor, and of Indonesia, and it should have been up to us to mobilise all the global resources that were available on a graduated basis to convince the Indonesian military that it was in their interests to change their policy, get on board and have some ownership of this process. I do not believe that we recognised the need to take it seriously or took it seriously once we did.

I know the foreign minister has said we have made thousands of representations, et cetera, to Indonesia and to whomever else. But there was a failure to recognise the scale of the problem and to mobilise the international resources that could have been mobilised. We have only got to look at what has been done since the disaster of 30 August to realise what resources are out there and what could have been mobilised. If a quarter of that had been mobilised back in April or May—although nobody can be definite about this—the likelihood is that we would not be facing what we are facing now.

Senator PAYNE—With respect, it is not actually the disaster of 30 August, I would suggest, because the ballot in and of itself was conducted in a fashion which I think the UNAMET were comfortable with. I think the disaster is post 30 August.

Mr Lowry—I have no quibble with that. The Indonesian army always made it clear that it would secure the ballot day, but that they could not be expected to be neutral before that. Again, that was something that was public knowledge in Jakarta and should have been heeded.

CHAIR—You speak of the Indonesian army as a united force, yet we have had evidence before this committee of the internal struggles within the Indonesian army for supremacy, and also the difficult position that the Indonesian army is going through as part of the democratisation process that is taking place within Indonesia itself. What would be your comments there?

Mr Lowry—There is a lot of talk about factionalisation within the military, but it is not factionalisation as we know it in a political sense with different ideological streams or whatever. What we have are competing centres of powers, and they were used by President Suharto to balance the power of the military against themselves and, of course, the military against other forces outside the military. When Suharto fell in May last year, there were only two centres of power; one around Prabowo and the other one around Wiranto. Of course, as we know, Prabowo was dealt with, and that left only one centre of power. President Habibie, of course, has not had the power or authority to set up another competing centre of power within the military. He has not got the ability to hire and fire.

In addition to that, in January this year, Wiranto was able to have a major rotation of senior commanders. He has been able to put his team in place with little interference from Habibie. So, although it is quite true to say that there may well be people within the military who do not agree with Wiranto, there is nobody there who represents another centre of power in any meaningful sense.

CHAIR—What of Australia's ongoing relations with Indonesia? It seems as if they are strained, if not in a state of collapse at this current stage. What does Australia need to do to mend those relations?

Mr Lowry—I do not think we should rush into this. We should let things pass for a little while and make sure that, as far as we can, our own media does not get carried away with what is happening in East Timor. We should make sure that the focus is on the Indonesian army and not the Indonesian people, and await the election of a new government in Indonesia. Hopefully, it will be a government which has not had to rely on the votes of the Indonesian army or the Indonesian military to elect the president and vice-presidential team and, therefore, they will have a free hand to act to carry out the necessary reforms that are necessary to make this transition to a more democratic state. Thereafter, there is plenty of scope for Australia to take measures to improve the relationship, even with the military.

Senator PAYNE—Mr Lowry, in a number of your statements you talked about the process of mobilising international resources. Can you give the committee your view of the current mobilisation for INTERFET? Do you think it is going down the right road?

Mr Lowry—There seems to be broad based support. The form of that support is not yet clear in terms of the contributions that have been made by all of the countries and how long that will be sustained. But whether the force will succeed, of course, depends very much on the attitude taken by Indonesia and the pressure that is kept on it to control its side of the border. That will be the critical thing.

They will be able to secure the centre and the eastern part of East Timor fairly quickly. The question is how quickly they will be able to get a grip of the western sector. As long as the border is controlled on Indonesia's side and as long as there are no third parties who are allowed to supply money and equipment and training to the militia, then I think that will be resolved within several months. If that does not happen, then, of course, it could drag on for quite a while.

Senator PAYNE—Senator Hogg has referred to evidence that we received from General Sanderson and from Mark Plunkett from Paxiquest last week, and one of the points which particularly Mr Plunkett emphasised was the importance of the engagement of the East Timorese themselves in this process for it to be a successful one. So, rather than an imposition, if you like, from on high, the East Timorese should be engaged and involved as far as is possible given the circumstances in its implementation. Do you have a view about that?

Mr Lowry—I think there are two aspects of this. The first one is the UN force that has been put in there at the moment is a sort of interim force to re-establish security on the ground. When we get down to state building and reconstruction and development, then obviously that is a problem that must involve the East Timorese. They are central to it. They are the subjects of it, not the objects of it. They must decide the issues about what sort of constitution, what type of law they will have, what sort of development they will have, how they will build their police force and public services, et cetera. I would see the role of the current UN force as being primarily to establish security so that those processes can begin. We must remember, of course, that Indonesia holds sovereignty until its parliament ratifies the ballot results, which we hope will be in October-November some time, before that can really get under way.

Senator PAYNE—So you think that in the establishment of the security process it is difficult for the East Timorese themselves to be involved in the circumstances?

Mr Lowry—I think they will be central to the whole thing because, as we all know, nearly 80 per cent of them voted for independence. So they will be sympathetic to the UN force. They are unlikely to host militia activities or other insurgent activities. They can provide an enormous amount of intelligence and, of course, they hopefully will be the recipients of humanitarian assistance in terms of accommodation, feeding, water and so on.

Whilst I said before that the real reconstruction of the state really will not occur until Indonesia formally releases it, a lot of initial work can be done to bring the populations back from West Timor, from wherever else in East Timor they have been displaced to, and to get basic services re-established. That of course will require a lot of local labour and a lot of local input as well.

Senator PAYNE—I think you said in your earlier evidence that in relation to the Indonesian army and the time frame in which work needed to be done to prevent some of the problems, that it is difficult to turn an army around once it is set on a course. One observation I would make is that, from the civic perspective, the evidence which we saw in East Timor recently was that there was a level of involvement of local officials, not just uniformed army personnel, in supporting the militias, including reports from a group of American nuns in one particular province of a local bupati paying the bill for 100 automatic weapons to be delivered into the province on the Friday before the Monday poll. It becomes an extremely complex issue of dealing not just with the uniformed identifiable military—and, for that matter, the identifiable militia to the degree that is possible—but also local officials in that context. Is that something of which you are aware, and on which you would make a comment?

Mr Lowry—Yes. It has been quite obvious right from the start that the current governor strongly supported autonomy within Indonesia. Several of the spokesmen for the militia and the pro-autonomy group came from within the government. But it is also clear that these people could not have taken such militant action, as you have described before, without the consent of the Indonesian military. There are very strict rules and laws relating to the control of firearms in Indonesia. This man was obviously breaking those laws and he was doing it at least with the tacit approval of the authorities.

Senator PAYNE—My final question, which may be outside your purview but I would be interested in your view, is that obviously in recent weeks the Catholic Church and its various levels of administration, be they civil administration or nuns and priests, have been a significant target of the military and have suffered extraordinarily in that process. How important do you think the Catholic Church is in working with the security process and then the re-establishment process to ensure its success?

Mr Lowry—Obviously, they are what the Indonesians often refer to as informal leaders in the community and they will be vital in assisting the population to overcome the trauma. They also provide assistance in terms of organisational leadership because they have a regional network set up so that there will be quite a significant social role. How that feeds into the organisation on the ground and the contribution being made by all the various non-government organisations, et cetera, I am not really sure. That is something that obviously will involve discussions between whoever is set up there to represent the East Timorese community. I am not sure whether Xanana Gusmao is going back to form some sort of temporary committee or what is happening there, but obviously that is an important aspect of it.

Senator WEST—With the East Timorese that are currently displaced in West Timor, it appears from reports that there are militias mingling in the camps or in fact guarding the camps. How much of a risk do you think the East Timorese there are at from the militias and from the activities of the militias that have crossed the border or who may have been residents of West Timor but crossed into the east for a bit of a skirmish? Are they at a major risk? What is your assessment there?

Mr Lowry—I think it is already fairly clear from the news reports that we have seen that they are at risk and the militia are hindering the entry of humanitarian relief there. One of the things that you often find with these sorts of organisations and people is that they start to feed on their own and that then forces the local authorities to act against them. What I mean by that, of course, is that they will not just restrict themselves to the refugees but they will start to commit crimes against the local residents. That will force the authorities to take action against them in the longer term, but we may still be faced with a rump which is supported by dissident elements of the Indonesian military or, as I said before, third parties who are seeking revenge.

Senator WEST—How easy is it going to be for those who are in West Timor to get back to East Timor? Is it going to be possible for them to up sticks and walk through in the night or are they going to have to actually be physically transported?

Mr Lowry—From the point of view of being allowed to go, the Indonesian minister for transmigration has said publicly that those people who do not want to go back will be transmigrated to other areas in eastern Indonesia and those people who want to go home will be allowed to. It will be an enormous logistics undertaking. Some of them will obviously, regardless of who says what, pack up their bongos and go home by their own means. Others will require extensive transport to get from there back to their point of origin. Then, once they get there of course, they will need extensive support for probably a year or so because of the fact that nothing has been planted and we have got the wet season coming on very soon, as you know. There probably will not be any food crops for about a year. The key to this is the final withdrawal of the Indonesian army which the news reports say will be in four or five days time. That will allow the UN force to secure the road between Dili and the border. That will hopefully open up the possibility of getting people back along that road fairly quickly.

CHAIR—Could I just interrupt there? How will the people who are currently refugees in the west know of the safety and security in East Timor given that many of them will have fled in fear? They will have apprehension about going back under any circumstance. How are they to be convinced of the safety that hopefully will be re-established there?

Mr Lowry—To some degree this relies on the United Nations. We know that Mrs Ogata has been visiting the camps in terms of trying to get in humanitarian relief. I would assume that they will also take the role of convincing people that it is now safe for them to go back to their point of origin and that this will all be coordinated with whatever transport is provided by the authorities in East Timor.

Senator WEST—If the Indonesian army goes in the next few days, what is the impact of that likely to be on the behaviour of the militias? Are they likely to become more lawless?

Mr Lowry—More lawless is an interesting question—if they can be any more lawless than what they have already been.

Senator WEST—I suppose it is degrees. Is there going to be anybody there that can actually control them or have their leaders also taken off when we saw a lot of people leaving? Did the leaders of some of those militias actually go as well, leaving these groups very undisciplined and with no leaders? There was no-one there to be able to exert moral authority or any other sort of authority.

Mr Lowry—I think you will find that once the Indonesian military and police are not in East Timor to protect these people—because you have got to realise that the only reason the militias were so effective, even though they only had in many cases knives and axes, is because there was a barrier between them and the 80 per cent who would have dealt with them otherwise—once this barrier is removed, I think you will find that a lot of the people who were coerced into being part of the militia, or joined it because there was a day's pay when there was nothing else available, will melt back into society or they will be in fear of their lives and they will flee to West Timor. So you will be left with a rump of the more ideologically committed, of maybe 15 or 20 per cent of the people. They are the ones that we have really got to worry about in terms of what they do, where they go, what support is

forthcoming, as I said before, from dissident elements of the Indonesian military or third parties who have money and vengeance to seek.

Senator WEST—You talk about the third parties. Can you identify any third parties, or do you want to identify any third parties on the public record?

Mr Lowry—There have been rumours, for example, that General Prabowo has been seen back in Kupang. If that is true, one would have to ask why and what he is doing there. There may also be other retired members of the army who still have an ideological commitment, or even ordinary citizens or people from the civil administration who want to seek vengeance for what has happened.

Senator WEST—What is General Wiranto's attitude and the attitude of the military likely to be if Prabowo or other former senior military people are going around doing a bit of festering?

Mr Lowry—If he is there, and people have just said this, he would not have got back in there and he certainly would not have got to Kupang without the Indonesian military knowing. Their attitude to him and what he might be doing is fairly obvious from that. We would just hope that our fears do not come to fruition in that regard. That is why it is important that we maintain international interest in this thing, and international pressure, to make sure that the Indonesian army does play its role in controlling that border and that the refugees do not become hostage to this process as well.

Senator WEST—Yes. What are the chances, do you think, of the 80 per cent wanting to actually seek some retribution upon who they perceive are the alleged perpetrators?

Mr Lowry—I think it will be fairly strong on the part of many people. That is where, hopefully, the leadership of people like Xanana Gusmao will come into play. It would be too much to expect after what has happened that certain people would be welcome to stay in East Timor, but I think what they have got to do—and only the East Timorese can do this—is to reconcile those people that were forced into the militias because, as I said before, they were intimidated themselves or they had less worthy motives and it was only a day's pay, et cetera. These sorts of people will have to be accommodated back into society. It is always easier said than done, of course, because in a community where you have very limited resources and government and foreign aid are the major sources of economic reward, then obviously there are a lot of people who feel that they have more superior revolutionary entitlements than those people who they fought against. It is all right to do it in a rhetorical sense, but it is very difficult to do in a practical sense.

Senator PAYNE—In terms of what Senator West termed a possibility for retribution, the Falintil who have been in cantonments and so on have really, it would seem, exercised a great deal of restraint, notwithstanding what they would have faced had they come out of the cantonments anyway. Is what you were saying, Mr Lowry, that you think that that restraint will give way to a sort of natural retribution?

Mr Lowry—I think that would be a natural reaction after all they have been through, to seek some redress, especially from the leaders of the militia—people like Guterres, Tavares and so on.

Senator PAYNE—Guterres was accompanying Mrs Ogata on her tour of the camps in Kupang, I observed, or I gather from yesterday's media. What do you make of that?

Mr Lowry—It is a little bit worrying. One has to ask what else he was doing there, who he is making connections with, what plans he was making, what his future intentions are. The fact that he is seen to be a leader in these camps would make one hope that he has not got plans to keep these people hostage on that side of the border for any period of time.

Senator PAYNE—It seems a strange thing for the United Nations to have done.

Mr Lowry—Of course it is in the interests of the Indonesian army to keep portraying this as a civil war. In that regard, it is in their interest to make sure that these people are still seen to have some sort of organisational base that is to be independent from the army and therefore to have some control over these camps and refugees.

Senator PAYNE—Thank you.

Senator QUIRKE—There has been a degree of wishful thinking, hasn't there, Mr Lowry? We have had officials here and governments of both persuasions wishing that the problem would go away and everyone would be very happy in what they seem to have viewed with rose-tinted glasses in Indonesia over the last 30 years. In fact, what you commented on earlier I think probably is really true of the Prime Minister and the foreign minister and the bureaucrats, the whole lot—that they just wished this problem would go away.

Mr Lowry—All of the bureaucrats, all of the politicians of the last 25 years, exactly.

Senator QUIRKE—In fact I think it goes back to the Menzies era.

Mr Lowry—Of course, before the invasion actually occurred it seemed quite a logical thing, and it could probably have been done if it had been engineered properly from the start. Of course, history did not transpire that way. It happened as a result of the collapse of the Portuguese empire rather than some organised—

Senator QUIRKE—Do you think the Indonesian forces would have been any less brutal if they had gone in there 10 years later than what proved to be over the last 24 years?

Mr Lowry—If there had been a decolonisation process prior to the collapse of the Portuguese empire and the people had actually chosen to be part of Indonesia, then there would not have been any need for the military operations that transpired. There would have just been a small garrison force put in there, as there is in the rest of Indonesia. That is assuming, of course, that the people had actually chosen to be incorporated within Indonesia. So it may well have done under those circumstances, but the way it transpired meant that it could never succeed.

Senator QUIRKE—Let us have a look at the broader Indonesian civil society. We are constantly under the impression, I think, made by government in this country that it is on the road to democracy, that it is a transition state. I have not seen a lot of evidence of that. I have seen a fair bit of evidence of elections and this, that and the other, but when it really comes down to it the only agency that seems to unite Indonesia and keep it together is a very aggressive and very vicious military regime. I have seen no evidence—none at all—to suggest that Indonesia is even remotely moving down the democratic path. It may well be that the new government there will have some powers, but at this stage it would appear that Habibie and his friends are right out in the cold and that the military run that place the way they always have.

Mr Lowry—Fortunately Indonesia is a lot bigger than the Indonesian military, and there is a sense of being Indonesia amongst the broad range of the population. I agree with your sentiment that at the moment the military does seem to still be very important. But of course we must recall that they were persuaded by a very weak president, as a result of the support he received from the international community and the disgust of his own society of the way the military acted in East Timor, to allow a UN force in there and to push the UN process along. So that does show that there are limits in what—

Senator QUIRKE—Do you mean the recent decision in the last week or two?

Mr Lowry—That is right, and that does show that there are limits to how far the Indonesian military can go. There is no way they could mount a coup at the moment, or it is very unlikely that they could mount a coup, because they do not have the internal cohesion to carry everybody with them and that would result in civil war, something which they are always trying to avoid. Secondly, they always like to have a veneer of constitutionality, and it would be very hard to engineer that in this process. Thirdly, there are a lot of people in Indonesia who are supporting the democratisation process, as we saw in May last year and in the months after that leading up to the last MPR session.

We would hope that once the new government is elected, it will have a lot more legitimacy than the current government has and it will have the authority to hire and fire the senior military commanders. But that is yet to be proven. There is a growing recognition that the problems that Indonesia faces cannot be resolved by military force alone. We have seen in Aceh recently, for example, a meeting of all the religious teachers and scholars come out in support of a referendum. Those people represent basically, in a social sense, the whole population of Aceh, and there is no way that the military can go in there and stamp on the heads of all of the Acehnese. There has to be a political solution to this. I am reasonably confident that the new government will be able to get on top of this, but we must not expect Indonesia to become a democracy like Australia overnight. It is going to be a fairly messy and tumultuous process that will take a little time and a little angst.

Senator QUIRKE—My experience with the Indonesian military is that once you have graduated to the senior officer corps, the next stage is to be put in charge of some business or other in one of the outlying provinces and you can make a lot of money out of it. That is how quite a large number of millionaires are made in Indonesia—it is a bit different than owning a McDonald's in Australia—and one of the things that the military is particularly

narked about in East Timor is that these business opportunities look like they are evaporating. Would you like to comment on that?

Mr Lowry—I think the economic issues in East Timor have been overblown a little bit. The major products of East Timor are coffee, marble and sandalwood. They are the basic commodities, and all of those together were not worth all that much. I cannot put a figure on it, but they were not worth a lot.

Senator QUIRKE—But it would be fair to say that the military graduate into business across the whole of Indonesia, that in fact it is seen as part of the career path?

Mr Lowry—That is right. When they have been in the military, they have had access to power and therefore assistance from various people who need protection, et cetera, for a family business or whatever. When they leave the military, the pension is very small and therefore they need some other source of income. Either they get seconded to a government department or they team up with a business arrangement somewhere.

But in going back to East Timor, as I said before, the profits from business there were fairly small pickings and would not have filtered to a broad range of the military. The money was made in government contracts that were let for public works—road building, bridge building, building schools, et cetera—and that is where a lot of money was raked off. But the economic incentive itself was a small part of the reason why the military resisted the UN process and what happened thereafter.

Senator QUIRKE—Finally, I spent a lot of time in Indonesia 22 years ago, and there seems to be a surprise in the Australian media and in the Australian community about Indonesian attitudes towards Australia. In fact, it may have changed and maybe I had something to do with it when I was there, but I can tell you that the average Indonesian had an attitude across the islands to Australia that was less than flattering. I was there after the initial invasion of East Timor by the Indonesian forces, and they had no doubt what they thought of Australians, in particular what they thought of what I think they saw as colonial hangovers in their end of the world that unfortunately would not go away.

Mr Lowry—There was a lot of angst caused by Konfrontasi, and then there was the invasion of East Timor and the Australian reaction against that. Many of them saw Australia's reaction as a betrayal of the understandings they thought they had had with the Australian government. So those reactions are understandable.

There is also a feeling that they are the superpower in South-East Asia and that they needed to put us in our place. For example, when I went to the Indonesian Army Command Staff College in 1983 the first essay I was asked to write was about why Indonesia was more important to Australia than the other way around. So this is something that—

Senator QUIRKE—You are confirming what I was saying. Thank you.

CHAIR—Just following on from that line of questioning of Senator Quirke, what is the current perception of Australia at various levels within the Indonesian society? Is it as unflattering as one could expect or is there a healthy regard for us?

Mr Lowry—It would be presumptuous of me to be able to really say that I know what the feelings are in all those levels, but I do not get that feeling at all in my own contacts. Sure, some people will berate you about various issues, but at the same time they are prepared to sit down and have a civilised conversation with you. I think that is quite normal.

CHAIR—Do we have a skewed view of our own importance in the region, in the way in which Indonesia would view our importance? That gets back to the question that Senator Quirke raised. Do they see us as a minor player?

Mr Lowry—They do; they see us as a bit player. After all, Australia has a population of only 18 or 19 million and most of the country is desert, barren land. It is down there in the middle as a breakwater between the Indian and Pacific oceans and is of no relevance to anybody. They control the straits between the Indian and Pacific oceans, all the oil for Japan and Eastern Asia flows through their archipelago, they have a population of 200-plus million and they see themselves as having enormous potential resources and so on. They have, as Michael Leifer has said quite appropriately, a frustrated sense of regional entitlement. They feel that, because of their potential, they should be given more honour and respect than they now receive.

CHAIR—What forums should we be seeking to play a role in as a means of influencing the outcomes in Indonesia? If we cannot do it of our own right, if we are seen as being a bit player, where does the power lie? Or is it a matter of knocking on the door of the United States in times of trouble, whether they be now or in the future, and saying, ‘Hey, intervene here and help us out?’

Mr Lowry—Like all of these things, the way to build relationships is to build them on a one-by-one basis. The same applies with countries: you build the bilateral relationships first and then, if it is possible to build broader multilateral relationships, you build those. But we have to be careful about those. For example, we have had ASEAN for a vast number of years, but in practical terms it has been more froth and bubble than substance. The ASEAN countries are realising that now and, hopefully, are addressing that particular issue.

We do not need to feel isolated in the region. I think we should feel confident and respect the mores, the language and the culture of these countries, but we do not need to apologise for ourselves. We do not need to be more Indonesian than the Indonesians. We should engage them in terms of mutual respect and take it on that basis rather than trying to push ourselves on the region.

CHAIR—You referred in your evidence before us to Aceh. It has been put to this committee that what we saw eventually happen with the military in East Timor and the militias was the Indonesian way of saying to those outlying areas where there is unrest in Indonesia, ‘If you go down the same path as East Timor has gone down, this will be our response to you,’ that really it is a very blunt message that they were handing out. Is this a fair interpretation?

Mr Lowry—It might have been part of the answer. If that is what it was designed to do, then it did not have much effect in Aceh, because, as we saw a couple of days ago, a meeting of religious teachers and scholars said they want a referendum. So, basically, they

were saying, 'If this is the way you are going to treat people, then we do not want any part of it.'

CHAIR—The view that was expressed to us as well was that senior military and even people in the senior political ranks do not want to see the disintegration of the archipelago. If the East Timorese are successful—and they now have their independence and are down that path—then this will act as the catalyst for the other regions to rebel and thereby splinter and fragment the power that has been centralised in the Javanese over a long period of time.

Mr Lowry—I have never accepted that argument. The problems in Aceh and Irian Jaya were always there, regardless of whether East Timor had been part of Indonesia or not, and they would have always had to be addressed. Hopefully, the decentralisation measures that the Indonesian government has set in train will help build the economies in these outer regions, which will hopefully get the economy going quicker than it might otherwise recover from the Asian crisis, and also settle down some of the political dissent and resistance to Jakarta that there is in the regions. As I said before, there is still a very strong sense of being Indonesian, way beyond what the military can impose by force. In fact, the application of force can have the reverse effect if it is not handled properly. I think the Indonesian military needs to review its policy, its strategy, its doctrine and its training very quickly if it is not going to promote the disintegration of Indonesia rather than defend it.

CHAIR—Just on the issue of the Indonesian military, what should our relationship with the Indonesian military be at this stage? Should it be in suspension and, if so, for how long? What should we be doing to ensure that not only do we re-establish political relationships but also military relationships, and that they are in a positive sense rather than acting in a negative sense?

Mr Lowry—I think we have to be very careful at the moment. Obviously there are areas of quite close cooperation between the UN command in Dili and the Indonesian military commanders on the ground, and that will probably be a useful thing in terms of building confidence, assuming that there has been a genuine change of heart in Jakarta.

There are enormous amounts of expertise that we can make available to the Indonesian military if they do decide that it is in their interest to become an effective apparatus of a democratic state. As I said before, they do need to reform the armed forces from the very top to the very bottom. To do that, they will need a lot of assistance, not only in terms of finance, which basically has to come from the Indonesian government, but in terms of the technology and the know-how to frame the policies that are needed and to help with the training, the implementation of the legal reforms and so on.

CHAIR—You referred earlier to the role of the Indonesian armed forces on the western side of the border. What will be the role of the peacekeeping force on the eastern side of the border, given, as I understand it, and I have not been to East Timor, that the border is not a clearly defined border as such and given, as I understand it also, that it is a fairly rugged border as well? Will it be sufficient for the Indonesians to secure their side of the border? What role will the peacekeepers need to play in controlling the eastern side of the border?

Mr Lowry—They will need to play a fairly intensive role, for the first few months anyway, because, even with the best intent, the Indonesian military cannot necessarily control all cross-border movement, as you said before. I would imagine the peacekeeping force would secure the inhabited areas, the villages, but also conduct extensive patrolling and ambushing along that border to make sure that people do not pass back and forth in an unauthorised way.

CHAIR—One thing that I have raised in this inquiry—and colleagues have as well—is the role that Radio Australia plays, or did play. Do you have a view on that? It has a weak signal into that area and into Indonesia at this stage.

Mr Lowry—When we talk about Radio Australia, I presume we are talking about international media, because I do not know whether radio is necessarily effective. It could have played an important part, I think, if earlier in the year we said, ‘Okay, the Indonesian military hierarchy needs to be targeted and provided with the information and opinions which hopefully might contribute to them changing their mind.’ If that was the case, then perhaps there is a way of identifying what sort of media they actually take notice of, listen to or watch, and producing programs which could have contributed towards that change of attitude. As it was, of course, we had nothing in that regard.

CHAIR—But Radio Australia was never viewed as an arm of government, as the political voice of government. It was always viewed, and still is, as being a fairly strident and independent organisation putting out fairly independent views through its broadcasting network. Given that that was the role and is the role of Radio Australia, what sort of function could the re-establishment of Radio Australia as a broadcaster into the Indonesian archipelago play in the fostering of better relations between Indonesia and Australia?

Mr Lowry—That is a good question, especially in view of that fact that the media in Indonesia generally is becoming more free and more open and more objective. The question is, do you need a national broadcaster to put national perspectives into your neighbouring countries over and above what their own media provide? I do not feel competent to answer that, but I think there probably is a role, because basically Indonesia has lost 30 or 40 years of history which they themselves recognise needs to be recouped. But that will take a long time to do, and perhaps there is a role for Radio Australia in helping with that process.

Senator WEST—I am thinking about the infrastructure needs of East Timor, both before and after ratification, hopefully, by the government. Does the UN force that is now going in have sufficient resources to be able to actually set up some of those structures for a police force, some sort of judicial court and prison type system? How big an issue is that, in your eyes?

Mr Lowry—It is a problem because if, for example, the United Nations force arrests somebody, what do they do with him? Obviously they can take him into custody, but what do they do with him thereafter? If he is kept there too long without being processed, there will start to be complaints about that sort of thing. I do not think that is really a problem that belongs to the international force. Some other mechanism has got to be set up outside that under the UNAMET arrangements to deal with that.

Senator WEST—Can you see, from what we are seeing and hearing on the public record, any signs that this is actually taking place, or does this seem to have been lost in the rush to get a military force in?

Mr Lowry—I certainly have not seen any signs of it, but that does not mean to say it has not happened.

Senator WEST—We are relying on what is on the public record, so it is a trice hard. I will leave it at that.

Senator PAYNE—On that point, the plan post a successful popular consultation and a better period of transition than we have experienced was for programs called UNAMET II and UNAMET III, which were reasonably well planned. Certainly there were Australian UNAMET workers intending to stay in East Timor as civil affairs officers and political affairs officers who would be involved in that process. Are you familiar with UNAMET II and UNAMET III plans?

Mr Lowry—Yes, but quite obviously they have been put into abeyance until now.

Senator PAYNE—Indeed.

Mr Lowry—Hopefully, as you say, they will go back in once the UN forces have actually restored security and recommence that process.

Senator PAYNE—As I understand it, people who had previously indicated an interest in participating in UNAMET II and UNAMET III have been able to either re-record their interest or at least provide an indication that they wish to participate in that process. Certainly the International Commission of Jurists is at great pains to pursue those questions.

Senator WEST—They are going to need to be implemented fairly speedily, though, aren't they?

Mr Lowry—Yes, but the immediate thing is obviously to restore security and get the basic necessities—shelter, food, water and sanitation—to those people. Those other things can then follow on that.

Senator WEST—What sort of time frame do you think there needs to be set for the UNAMET II, UNAMET III type of thing?

Mr Lowry—Those sorts of functions are fairly critical. Once you have addressed the basic needs then you need to get those other functions in as soon as possible. They were provided for according to the program and should get in fairly quickly. Some of it, of course, will depend on logistics. The priority will go immediately to the UN force getting itself on the ground and getting itself set up and getting the basic necessities in for the people who have been displaced. Then the next priority will obviously be to restoring those programs.

CHAIR—There being no further questions, Mr Lowry, thank you very much for your evidence this morning.

Proceedings suspended from 10.38 a.m. to 10.47 a.m.

[10.47 a.m.]

CROUCH, Dr Harold Arthur (Private capacity)

CHAIR—I now welcome Dr Harold Crouch. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request.

I now invite you to make an opening statement and then we will proceed to questions. I do realise that you are appearing here again this week not before a committee but at a forum on this issue.

Dr Crouch—I will make my statement short then. As an introduction, let me make three broad points. The first one is to emphasise, as others have emphasised, the continuing importance of Indonesia not just for Australia but also for East Timor. You sometimes hear the view expressed that 200 million Indonesians are far more important than 800,000 East Timorese. I do not subscribe to that view but at the same time Indonesia clearly is extremely important not just for Australia but also for East Timor's future. In the last few years, in fact, the East Timorese leaders have been stressing that and saying how important it is that an independent East Timor would have good relations with Indonesia. We are not telling them anything to say that. That is probably the first point that I want to make. If Indonesia eventually adopts a positive attitude towards East Timor, then it will be a lot easier for East Timor. If Indonesia's attitude is negative, it is going to be very difficult for East Timor. It also has great implications for the Australian role and the UN role in East Timor.

Secondly, I would like to just make a few brief comments on the Indonesian reaction to what has happened in East Timor. I have not been to Indonesia, naturally, since the crisis broke, but I have looked particularly at the Indonesian press. Firstly, I think we have to distinguish between the Indonesian military and Indonesian society in general. It seems to me the Indonesian military have been extremely humiliated, not just in the last few weeks but since the fall of Suharto. They have been forced on to the back foot. What has happened in East Timor, I think, has also been an enormous humiliation for them.

They have been telling Indonesians for 20-odd years that there is just a small group of malcontents in East Timor who have been opposed to integration. To a certain extent, they have been believed, I think, by many Indonesians. When something like this happens, where 80 per cent of the people who vote contradict that completely, I think it has been a very humiliating thing for them. On top of that, they were committed under the 5 May agreement to maintaining security in East Timor and they have blatantly failed to achieve that goal. The rest of the world knows that; all of Indonesia also knows that and I think, again, they have experienced quite a lot of humiliation and resentment. I think it is in that context that they are looking around for scapegoats—Habibie, Australia, United Nations, America or whoever.

I could elaborate on the society's reaction later but I want to make a few points especially in connection with attitudes to Australia, as this was raised a little while ago also. The immediate Indonesian reaction is partly a result of things like interference with Garuda passengers, interference with transport in and out of the Indonesian Embassy and all that sort of thing. Some quite exaggerated stories are going around in Indonesia.

In fact, I was called by a Jakarta radio station last week to be interviewed on the whole East Timor issue and interviewed by three journalists from respected newspapers. The first question was, 'What is the situation like in Canberra?' I said, 'What exactly do you mean?' They said, 'Is it calm in Canberra?' I assured them it was completely calm in Canberra. That that sort of question should be the No. 1 question surely shows that the Indonesian newspaper readers and radio and television viewers have got a somewhat exaggerated picture of what is happening to Indonesians in Australia.

But there is another aspect also, I think, to the Indonesian reaction, which you find not only among the nationalists but also even among people who would accept East Timor should be independent—the democrats if you like. You can see it in editorials and in statements by prominent people. Australia is seen as overenthusiastic in reacting to the East Timor issue and what happened in East Timor. Some of these people are anti-Australian full stop and anti-Western but some of them are by no means ultranationalist on the East Timor issue.

They describe Australia as arrogant, particularly because of Australia's concern to lead the military forces in East Timor. They are saying, 'Why should Australia be leading it? There are plenty of other countries in the region which could not only supply troops but also lead, but Australia seem to be demanding that they lead the force in East Timor.' The question is asked, 'Are there some hidden motives that Australia has in this?' As you get further way from people that are actually concerned with policy, you get people raising, 'Is Australia really using East Timor as a stepping stone to Irian Jaya?' and that sort of thing. There is this sense that Australia is playing some sort of colonial type of role. I am not necessarily sympathising with that, but I think that is a very common reaction in Indonesia.

On one side, there certainly is this rise of nationalist feeling in Indonesia in reaction to what has happened. I would also stress the other side and that is the rise of very strong antimilitary sentiment, which is coming out all the time in the press. You must remember that the press in Indonesia is very free at present. I would say, looking at the television news on the government TV station—the news that is actually shown on SBS here—that you could get the impression that there was a civil war in East Timor, refugees were running away from the civil war and the military was trying to stop the civil war. But, if you read the press, you just could not get that impression. The stories are there all the time about how it is the militia that is causing the trouble, causing the destruction, and about how the police and the military are standing by watching it. The sort of thing that we read in our press is also in the Indonesian press.

This has to be seen in the context of the antimilitary sentiments in the year and a half since the fall of Suharto. For many people, what the military is doing in East Timor just confirms the feelings they have against the military anyway. The events of the last two weeks happened to coincide with a debate in parliament on a new emergency and martial law bill. So already in Indonesia there were demonstrations and a lot of adverse comment in the press about this emergency and martial law bill on the grounds that it seemed to be allowing the possibility of the military coming back to power and that sort of thing.

We are seeing in our press a lot about the anti-Australian and anti-Western reaction, but equally strong is this antimilitary reaction in Indonesia. The other thing is we tend to see

those two sentiments as mutually exclusive, yet it is often the case that people who are going with the anti-Australian criticism are also very strongly critical of the military. There was an article reprinted in the *Australian* a couple of days ago from the *Jakarta Post* where one Indonesian woman was saying, 'I feel ashamed to be an Indonesian,' and that sort of thing. She said, 'Our army, which we initially saw as saviours and now see as a scourge.' That sort of language is appearing in the Indonesian press. Even Ambassador Wiryono over the weekend was reported expressing his sense of shame as an Indonesian about what has happened in East Timor. That sort of thing is commonly found in the Indonesian press.

At the moment, it seems to be very common for Australians to be saying that our relations with Indonesia have fallen to rock bottom and people expect it will be decades or generations before they can be restored. I emphasise that Indonesia is really still in an extraordinary transition. It is most unpredictable what might happen. A lot is going to depend on the presidential election, the new government and the role of the military in the new government. So I do not think we have grounds to be totally pessimistic for the future.

The final point I would like to make at this point relates to self-critical comments on Australia, not just so much on the East Timor issue but in general. I find—and the chairman raised this point a few moments ago—Australian political leaders and the press have an extremely Australia-centric perception of South-East Asia and Asia in general and grossly exaggerate our power and our influence. You find that in the rhetoric about leadership, which is so common in Australia—'Australia must give leadership,' 'Here is an opportunity for Australia to show its leadership,' and so on. A few years ago, this was common too. To imagine Mahathir, Suharto, Lee Kuan Yew and people like that turning to Australia for leadership is just bizarre. And it is still the case. South-East Asians resent that sort of language. I say we should tone down this leadership stuff.

On the East Timor issue itself, you see a lot of criticism of Australian policy as if Australia is the determining factor in East Timor. John Howard's letter to Habibie last December is seen as the turning point—but, no, the changes were already taking place in Indonesia. Maybe it did have the effect of pushing Habibie along to show the letter to his colleagues as a way of getting the conversation started, but the changes towards the new policy on East Timor began long before that. And in any case, what Howard proposed in that letter is not what happened. Australia did not propose a referendum for August 1999. It was really supporting the position of the Timorese resistance which was thinking in terms of autonomy followed, in 10 years time or whenever, by a referendum.

I was reading the newspaper this morning about whether Australia should have accepted the 5 May agreement which gave authority over internal security in East Timor to the Indonesian army. My reaction to that is: Australia was not a party to that agreement. It was an agreement between Portugal and Indonesia under the auspices of the UN. It was not our business to accept that or not. We could be critical or not. You get the feeling that Australia somehow accepted this fatally flawed agreement. We could not have stopped it.

You also get the same thing now that people are saying Australia should have insisted on sending international troops in about July or August when the militia intimidation was rising. But there was no possibility. Australia had no capacity to insist on that. If Indonesia said no, the whole process of the referendum would have been endangered. Most importantly, what

would have been the reaction of people like Xanana Gusmao and Jose Ramos Horta if Australia had said, 'Let's cancel the referendum because of the intimidation backed by the Indonesian military'? It is this sort of feeling that Australia could change everything.

I think this all comes back to the Indonesian reaction at present—that Australia is too big for its boots, that Australia is arrogant and trying to play the role of a great power when it is not. That, to me, is bizarre. To many South-East Asians, it is offensive actually.

Senator BROWNHILL—So 78 per cent of the people voted in East Timor for independence and approximately 73 per cent of the people in Indonesia voted against the present government—or they got 27 per cent of the vote or something like that?

Dr Crouch—Yes, but the whole system of government is a bit different in Indonesia. It is a presidential system.

Senator BROWNHILL—This is a very simplistic question, and it has been put to me by numerous people and I have put it to other people in this inquiry. Basically, what is the popular support apropos your remarks about the Indonesian people? Nobody has a bitch with the Indonesian people, and in your article here there are some basic points about Indonesia itself not having any sort of great animosity with Australia, and I think you have said that in your submission and you have just been talking about it. So what is the popular support in Indonesia for the present government?

Dr Crouch—On the point of animosity to Australia, I think there is considerable animosity but it is against, as I say, the arrogance and so on. Support for the Indonesian government is extremely difficult to assess. The system is not a parliamentary system, so the fact that Golkar only got 20-odd per cent of the votes does not mean that a Golkar-headed government would be unpopular because it depends really on the coalition that Golkar forms.

There was the general election last June, but the election of the president is by the 700 members of the People's Consultative Assembly in October or November. It would not be impossible for Habibie to somehow pull together a coalition of support. Whether that would be seen as a good decision or not, I do not know. It is quite possible that, if Habibie became president again, it would be met with demonstrations and so on. That is possible. It is a difficult question to answer.

Senator BROWNHILL—Yes, I thought it was.

Dr Crouch—The whole system is different.

Senator BROWNHILL—What about the generals then? Is there any possibility that the generals could come back, have a coup and be the next government of Indonesia?

Dr Crouch—Again, it is so fluid in Indonesia right now. Habibie has been, to my mind, fatally wounded; not so much by East Timor, but by a big banking scandal. The popular belief is that a lot of pressure was put on the bank to extract money from it and that money could well be used to buy votes in the People's Consultative Assembly session in November for Habibie. This has led to a very strong reaction, to the point where a lot of the Golkar

people are now wanting to drop Habibie as the candidate. I would think it quite likely that he will be dropped as the candidate on the grounds that, after this banking scandal, he cannot win, and on top of that there is the East Timor question.

One possibility is that the anti-Habibie people from Golkar will decide to form a coalition with Megawati Sukarnoputri of the Democratic Party, and then they will try and build up other parties to get the majority. The other speculation going on is that they might in fact turn to General Wiranto as their candidate. When you get that sort of range of possibilities, prediction is very different. My expectation though is that, if Wiranto did get up—and you would have to assume money would be used in the election—there would be a very strong reaction in Jakarta particularly, because Jakarta, firstly, has a very strong PDI base—which is Megawati's base—but also Muslim students and secular students would all demonstrate, and it would become very difficult.

On the question of a coup, it would be even more difficult. I do not think the Indonesian military at this moment is capable of carrying out a coup, because, again, they would just expect massive opposition in every city in Indonesia. If they are to restore their influence, it would have to be through the electoral process, through Wiranto getting elected, although I think that would be very difficult also. It is complicated.

Senator PAYNE—If there is any possibility of General Wiranto carrying that off, that would be a much preferable option to a coup, anyhow.

Dr Crouch—Yes. I have said myself in the past that, if a retired general gets elected through constitutional processes, then we accept it. Take the case of Ramos in the Philippines; because of the particular system in the Philippines, Ramos won 23 per cent in the presidential election. He then became the president and was a successful president. If people want to elect a general, no problem. In the case of Wiranto, given what has happened in East Timor lately, it is much more questionable. The reaction could well be very negative in some parts of Indonesian society. It certainly would be internationally, I think.

Senator PAYNE—When I said 'more preferable', I meant more preferable from Wiranto's perspective as to how he might achieve power, rather than a coup.

Dr Crouch—It would have been preferable from any perspective if he is elected.

Senator PAYNE—Certainly. I was not indicating my preference either way, though. If, as you have postulated, it is possible that Golkar may drop Habibie as their candidate, do you see that having any effect on the legitimacy of the current security arrangements for East Timor, which he has essentially fathered from the Indonesian side?

Dr Crouch—It is going to depend a lot on who is the nominee and who actually wins, and that is why it is so uncertain. It seems to me almost certain that the MPR, the People's Consultative Assembly, will endorse the decision made by the people of East Timor.

Senator PAYNE—Why do you say that?

Dr Crouch—Just judging from the statements made by various leaders, even the military itself. Even Wiranto himself said after the referendum that the referendum was conducted reasonably well, although there were some who claimed there were violations of one sort or another, but because it was 78 to 21, or whatever, he accepted it. The fact that they have permitted international forces to come in and they do seem to be preparing to leave East Timor, I cannot see them reversing that now.

Senator PAYNE—In the reporting and the discussion of the issue in Australia, do you think there is a risk of us losing sight of the contribution that the complexity of the Indonesian political scene is making to this whole process?

Dr Crouch—Yes. That is always the case, I think. Even for specialists in Indonesia it is sometimes bewilderingly complex. I sometimes think to try and make comments on what is happening in Indonesian politics from Canberra is very difficult. Then when I talk to friends in Jakarta, they find it just as difficult. So it is extremely complex.

At least during the Suharto period we had the contours of the system clear. It is a new system now. You have an electoral system with all sorts of inconsistencies and so on. It is only a couple of days ago that they finally worked out who were going to be the members of the new parliament. They worked out the distribution between parties, but it took 97 days to get the individuals named, and that was only a few days ago. So it is extremely complex. They are really trying to work out the new rules of the system as they go along.

Senator PAYNE—And the new road map of where things lie and who is where has not been drawn up yet.

Dr Crouch—Yes, exactly. They are making the rules up as they go along.

Senator PAYNE—Dr Crouch, you spoke at some length about animosity towards Australia and Australians as it manifests in Indonesia at the moment. Is it your view that that is amongst the elites of the Indonesian community, or is it spread much more broadly?

Dr Crouch—It is very hard to tell what a peasant in Sulawesi thinks about Australia. Who knows? We also tend to think that we are terribly important to all these people. I would say that the typical Indonesian attitude is one of total indifference. But among people who read newspapers and watch television news broadcasts and that sort of thing, yes, you can see a tone in the press, particularly in commentary that is uncomfortable with Australians, although not necessarily totally anti-Australian. I do not think they are going to attack Australians in the street or anything like that. But there is a certain resentment about perhaps our style in some respects.

Senator PAYNE—When you were speaking about what we could actually do or not do in the process leading up to the popular consultation, the effect that the Prime Minister's letter had or did not have, and so on, I assume that post the popular consultation with the difficulties and tragedy that has occurred since then, you are not suggesting that Australia was overplaying its hand in terms of pushing for an international force to re-establish some peace?

Dr Crouch—Post the referendum?

Senator PAYNE—Yes.

Dr Crouch—Yes, that is a different matter. But before the referendum, I think it would have been extremely difficult to get an international force in. Indonesians do have a sense of national pride. The military would feel ashamed to admit—and it still feels ashamed—and it would have felt extremely ashamed to admit at that stage that it could not maintain order. But there is another reason why the military would not agree to it and that is the obvious one, that the military was indeed backing the militia. So they would not have permitted an international force to come in at that point.

Senator PAYNE—Would you then comment on Australia's role in that international regard post the popular consultation?

Dr Crouch—In which regard?

Senator PAYNE—On its role in terms of our efforts to ensure a strong international presence post the consultations.

Dr Crouch—Yes. The Indonesians are also resentful about that. I am not necessarily saying that I am resentful, but Indonesians are on the grounds of, who is Australia to tell us about who should be in the force and all that sort of thing? As they say themselves, they would prefer more Asian faces. The obvious answer to that is that the Asian faces were not presenting themselves to join the force, so Australia in a way had to play a leading role. In terms of relations with Indonesia, it would have been a good move to simply nominate a Malaysian or Thai to be the commander of this force, even though Australia provided the bulk of the forces. I think that would have been quite a good move. As it is we have a Thai as a deputy.

I suppose from an Indonesian perspective it was almost as if we have been waiting. Some Indonesians see it as Australians perhaps deep down having had that resentment against Indonesia, and here is a chance to show that we know what is best. We can do it and Indonesia cannot do it. There is that sort of feeling in Indonesia. You do not find it expressed in any many words in the press, but it is implied in much of the comment in Indonesia, including from people who are quite prepared to let East Timor go.

Senator PAYNE—Is there a real awareness in Indonesia of what has happened to the people of East Timor and to East Timor itself—a real awareness?

Dr Crouch—I would say generally, no. Firstly, when Indonesia went in it was because the Communists were taking over in East Timor. Then the argument was, from the Indonesian point of view, it was to stop a civil war. The argument that is used over and over is, 'We built so many kilometres of road. We built so many schools, so many hospitals and all that.' There is a feeling that the Timorese are not grateful for all these things. There is a blind sort of attitude in Indonesians. It is probably changing now, but for a long time that was a very common attitude.

I remember talking to a professor of political science in the University of Indonesia on Acehese only probably a year ago and he was saying, 'Why isn't the West protesting about what is happening in Aceh?' I said, 'Aceh is serious, but in terms of sheer numbers, the numbers in East Timor were so much greater.' He said, 'No. There are many more killed in Aceh.' He is a professor of political science who studied abroad and has access to international media, yet he was quite convinced that really the Timorese had far less to complain about than his people in Aceh.

It is quite remarkable. Again, with many Indonesians, you also have to think that the sorts of changes taking place in Indonesia itself in the last two years have absolutely preoccupied people. If you went to Indonesia now, you would find the presidential election was still uppermost in their minds, rather than East Timor. They, of course, cannot see why Australia is so concerned about East Timor when there is this big presidential election going on in Jakarta.

Senator PAYNE—To extrapolate that then, what is the level of awareness amongst Indonesians who are forming these views about how Australia is behaving of what has actually happened in East Timor since 31 August this year?

Dr Crouch—People who read newspapers surely will know, because there are plenty of reports. One of the turning points was when one of the leading newspaper's journalists was shot by one of the militia in Dili and, of course, that was reported widely. But now you are getting lots of comments from reform minded political leaders. For example, one of the arguments against this new emergency law bill is, 'You cannot trust the military. Look what they are doing in East Timor supporting the militia, the destruction and so on. We cannot trust these people to have extra authority if there is an emergency.' That sort of thing is very common now. People who are reading newspapers could hardly not be aware of what has been happening.

Senator PAYNE—You may not be able to give an indication, but what proportion of the population are you talking about in that context?

Dr Crouch—Tiny, of course. In Indonesia's urban population, the big centres, probably only 10 or 15 per cent or something like that. But it is not everyone in these urban centres who read. How many people read the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Australian* and the *Age* in Australia?

Senator PAYNE—Very popular newspapers.

Dr Crouch—In Indonesia, even more so.

Senator PAYNE—Mr Chairman, you probably have some questions.

CHAIR—Then I will come back to you.

Senator PAYNE—Thank you.

CHAIR—I just want to look at the role of the United States in all of this and our role with the United States. It has been put to me that we were less than active in pushing the plight of East Timor, pre the ballot and even post the ballot, with the United States. Really the only credible intervener with the apparatchik within the Indonesian military, and also with the Indonesian government, was ever going to be the United States. What is your view on that?

Dr Crouch—Yes. I can only say what I have read in the newspaper. I do not have any special knowledge of that. I can only guess. I have read reports that—and I cannot even say that they are necessarily true—one of the senior American military officers rang Wiranto several times and allegedly, according to the report, he did say, ‘We’re suspending all military links with Indonesia,’ but that amounted to a fairly small sum of money.

CHAIR—Which is minute, really?

Dr Crouch—Yes, minute. He also allegedly conveyed the message that the American government was not pushing the World Bank or the IMF to go ahead with loans to Indonesia. I suspect that would have been a very important pressure on Wiranto, who must have then discussed it with his cabinet colleagues.

CHAIR—Really what you are saying is that our stance in trying to play a leading role in the region was never going to be a success by itself?

Dr Crouch—Yes.

CHAIR—It always had to be with the clout that America—as a dominant force in world politics and world military—was going to have.

Dr Crouch—Yes. Militarily, clearly we could not have gone in unilaterally with 2,000 or 3,000 troops. That would have been suicide, I would say. Economically, our aid is pretty tiny. I have forgotten what the figure is, two or three per cent or something of the total aid. The other country that could have economic clout, of course, is Japan. But Japan has never shown any sign of using its aid for that sort of purpose. I think you are probably banging your head against a brick wall if you tried to get the Japanese to cut aid on an issue like East Timor. So that leaves the Americans, basically.

CHAIR—So really at the heart of this was our ability and our capacity to give good intelligence to the United States, to give good advice to the United States and to be on their doorstep, pushing them to become involved. It seems to me that we have not done that to our best capacity.

Dr Crouch—I am not sure about that. Again, I can only read in the newspaper, but I did have a conversation with an American diplomatic person who says some of the newspaper reporting on that is all wrong. I can only convey that to you. I do not know whether he is telling the full truth, or whether he knows fully the total background about it. There were some reports that we were supposed to have not told the Americans that the military was backing the militia. Everyone knew that. The Americans have military attaches also in Jakarta; they would surely know that.

CHAIR—Let me say that at one stage earlier this year I was involved in questioning various people from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I think that people were of the belief and the view that the military were clearly involved with the militia. I do not think that there was the direct link that has subsequently proven to be there. In this inquiry, we have taken evidence from experts who have said that it was calculated—this is the involvement in East Timor—it was planned, it was very well thought out and so on. That seems to have been more a judgment by some people after the fact, rather than before the fact. Is that fair?

Dr Crouch—Habibie made his announcement at the end of January. I was actually in Indonesia in February and a good bit of March and I was talking to people, both military and people who are close to the military. The general impression I got at that time was that the military was more or less accepting the policy decision to have a referendum. At the same time, everyone knows there are the links between the military and the militia because many of the personnel of the militia are involved in these civilian military organisations that are common in Indonesia. In areas where they conduct operations—and this is for the last 20 years—they recruit what they call the wanra units, which is people's resistance or something. They are units which are armed, they are under military control and go into operations, and they certainly were doing that in East Timor.

When Habibie said he would have a referendum, the so-called militia suddenly emerged. Yet many of these militia people were actually also members of the wanra. So you sometimes had Wiranto saying, 'We don't give any arms to the militia,' but they did give arms to the wanra, and they might be wanra in the morning and militia in the afternoon. I think it was pretty widely known that the militia had these close connections with the armed forces. It was some time after February—maybe it was around April or May—that people became fully aware just how the militia were being used to intimidate and to try and affect the result of the election.

In retrospect, I think that what actually happened is that, from day one, Wiranto accepted the holding of the referendum and decided the military was going to make sure that Indonesia won. The debate then became a question of: is it rogue elements on the ground in East Timor or is it the military as an institution? I think it became increasingly obvious that it must have been the military as an institution. Part of the evidence for that is the sort of people that Wiranto was appointing in command positions in East Timor, and particularly the former intelligence chief, Major General Zacky Anwar Makarim, who was appointed as liaison officer to the UNAMET. From his public statements, he was clearly committed to keeping East Timor for Indonesia, and it is not possible that he was appointed without Wiranto's approval. He was a person who also had links with the disgraced General Prabowo. Then later, at the time of the referendum, General Sjafrie Sjamsuddin, another of Prabowo's guys and who was the commander in Jakarta in May last year, was also sent to East Timor. These people could not have just gone there without Wiranto's approval. So it was clear that it was not just rogue elements in the military but that Wiranto was giving his approval, as part of policy, to make sure that Indonesia won the referendum.

At some point their intelligence people must have got the message that they were not going to win. But I doubt that they thought they were going to lose so badly. After the referendum, the questions became: was this completely planned or did it run out of control

and, if it ran out of control, did it run out of control from day one or was it that the military leadership in Jakarta said, 'Let's have a bit of destruction just to teach them a lesson' and maybe after a few days it really ran completely out of control?

Whether they really intended to destroy Dili in the way that it was destroyed I do not know. But the evidence about the planning is the way in which refugees have been trucked out and forced out of East Timor. They had announced earlier that they expected 200,000 refugees. Then in the referendum only 90,000 people voted to stay with Indonesia. Of course, the number of refugees includes families, not just individual voters, but it looked like they might have some difficulty getting the 200,000 that they had prepared for. In that context, it looked like they started forcing people out to show that there really were 200,000, or whatever number, refugees who really wanted to stay with Indonesia. But, again, the only question in my mind is: at what point did they lose control, if indeed they did lose control?

CHAIR—Have our intelligence sources underestimated what has been happening in East Timor?

Dr Crouch—I do not have access to the intelligence.

CHAIR—Just from an outsider's viewpoint, have we underestimated or have we misread the signs that were there?

Dr Crouch—I think there was always concern about violence. It was obvious that violence was taking place before the election. We were probably seeing it in terms of intimidation of voters. I do not think I have met anyone in the Australian Embassy or anywhere else who was not aware of that sort of intimidation and that the military was behind it. The problem is more to explain what happened after the referendum. Was there a failure of intelligence there? Again, where do you get that sort of intelligence? The Indonesian military does not announce that they are going to destroy Dili or something like that. And the time that that intelligence had to be gathered was very brief. I think you are expecting too much of the intelligence services if you think they can predict the extent of that sort of destruction. That there were going to be problems I think everyone knew.

CHAIR—Could I take you to an article of yours in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 14 September. I was interested in a paragraph in that and I would like an expansion on your comment there. You say:

One of the successes of Australian foreign policy for several decades has been the virtual elimination of the Indonesian "threat". That Australia has been able to get away with such a low level of defence preparedness is one indication of this. One consequence, of course, is our inability to intervene militarily in East Timor, but I do not recall present critics demanding the trebling or quadrupling of defence spending to give us such a capability.

It seems as if you are clearly targeting our military capacity to intervene in East Timor.

Dr Crouch—Not really.

CHAIR—Do you believe that we have the ongoing capability and capacity? It seems you are saying there that those who are critical of our defence spending in the past are now

finding the product of that being that we are not militarily capable of intervening as a major force in East Timor.

Dr Crouch—Writing a newspaper article you adopt a kind of combative style to start with. I think the purpose of that defence agreement with Indonesia was basically a symbolic thing to say, ‘We are not organising our armed forces to have a war with Indonesia and Indonesia is not organising theirs in such a way as to have a war with Australia.’ In that context, we could feel fairly secure on our northern frontier. Indeed, I think that is still the case. The Indonesian intervention in East Timor, if you are thinking purely in terms of threat to Australian security, is not a threat, any more than Indonesia’s occupation during the last 20-odd years has been a threat.

One of the things about Indonesia’s military structure and ours is that in a strange way they are complementary, in a beneficial sort of way actually. I am no great military expert but, broadly, Australia has a very powerful Air Force and a very powerful Navy and our Army is small. To meet an Indonesian invasion threat, the Navy and the Air Force, from my understanding, are quite capable of stopping that. Indonesia could not easily mount an invasion of Australia because they simply do not have the naval and air strength to do it. On the other hand, if Australia wanted to intervene in Indonesian affairs militarily, our Navy and our Air Force are not all that helpful; we need to put men on the ground, and that is what we do not have a real capacity to do alone. So there is a kind of complementarity there that actually has a very beneficial result, that neither side really can do a great deal against the other.

What I feel at present, in relation to all the calls for rethinking our defence strategy and expenditure and so on, is that in terms of defence against Indonesia it seems we are okay—I cannot see the problem; it is only if we are thinking in terms of dealing with contingencies like East Timor, and especially of dealing in a unilateral sort of way. If we react to what has happened in the last few weeks by building up that sort of capacity, I would predict our problems with Indonesia are going to continue for a very long time, because the way they will see that is: what is the purpose of a big army in Australia? If it gives us the capacity, for example, to intervene in East Timor, they will think, ‘What about next time—in Irian Jaya or in Aceh or anywhere?’ To my mind, if we are to continue to have a reasonably comfortable relationship in the long run with Indonesia, it is best not to have a military capacity to intervene in territories that they consider theirs.

CHAIR—Yes, but we are confronted with the situation this time where our military forces are part of a United Nations force intervening in East Timor. I read your article as putting forward the view that we may not have the capacity to intervene militarily even as part of a United Nations force.

Dr Crouch—No—

CHAIR—I am just wanting to flesh this out because it seems to me that if other hot spots do arise in the foreseeable future—and who would ever know what they might be—there is the issue and the question as to whether or not we have a large enough standing military force to be able to intervene in these hot spots as they occur.

Dr Crouch—Yes, but does Australia's Defence Force aim to be a sort of policeman of the region? I think the answer is no.

CHAIR—All right. That is a good point.

Dr Crouch—All that we can do, and the proper thing for us to do, is to have troops available for peacekeeping operations under the UN—it must be with other people. We should not be thinking in terms of having a capacity that would enable us to intervene, particularly in Indonesia.

CHAIR—There are two types of forces—and this is one point that was made to us by witnesses the other day: there are peacekeeping forces and peacemaking forces. What we have seen at this stage is more a peacemaking force than a peacekeeping force. A peacemaking force can take on a quite different nature, a different structure, to a peacekeeping force. Probably one of the confusing things in the debate that is currently taking place is this very telling difference between peacemaking and peacekeeping. I would agree with you in terms of peacekeeping. But it seems to me that we are involved primarily at this stage in a peacemaking force, and one does not know the length or the nature of the engagement that will take place in East Timor. The issue that raises, issue, without being viewed in an aggressive mode, is: do you see that we have a greater need for a focus on a larger standing force for either peacemaking or peacekeeping? While not trying to be the policemen of the region, but given the volatility that exists throughout the world and our capacity to participate as a good international citizen, should we be increasing our defence spending?

Dr Crouch—I think it depends on what sorts of problems you are thinking of intervening in. If you are thinking in terms of intervening in something on the other side of the world as part of a UN force that is very good. But I can also see the danger of having what would be seen by the Indonesians, given their sensitivities, as a force that could intervene in Indonesia itself. Our participation in international forces should not be of a sort that would require a huge increase in the number of soldiers we have on the ground, basically. That is the problem.

I do not see it necessary for the defence of Australia. It is a double-edged sword. If you have a large peace enforcing force, that will be seen very negatively by Indonesia. It could be a self-fulfilling prophecy that you have increased suspicions on both sides and we start building up again.

CHAIR—So what sort of importance do you place on the military cooperation between ourselves and Indonesia? This has been a significant thing in recent times between the two countries. What is the ongoing importance?

Dr Crouch—My view all along has been that I think you have to break down defence cooperation into exactly what it is. I am not for or against defence cooperation; it depends on what in particular. I had no objection to Australia having defence relations with Indonesia that were directed towards defence. That in practice meant naval exercises, Air Force exercises and that sort of thing. I have all along felt that we should not have been training foot soldiers on the ground. If we take, say, army personnel to our staff colleges to study

strategy and whatnot, I do not see that as a big problem. But, given that the Indonesian armed forces are primarily an internal security force and that the primary internal security force—up until recently at least—has been the army, then any soldiers who come to Australia to train are, whatever people say, not being trained to defend Indonesia, they are being trained for internal security, in effect.

When things settle down between Australia and Indonesia again, if we wish to restore military relations, I would focus very much on making sure it is real defence, it is not contributing to internal security. A force like Kopassus is clearly an internal security force. We had no business to be training them. That has backfired now, as we see.

Senator PAYNE—You were talking about the degree of evidence of the planning of the work of the militias with the military. Do you view the fact that, until the tragic death last week of a German priest, they had avoided the killing of any Westerners present in East Timor as an indication of that planning?

Dr Crouch—This is also evidence of some sort of control, in my view. You had how many hundreds of Western journalists in East Timor for how long? For several months. As far as I can recall, there was an American policeman who got shot in the stomach, but he was in a car which was sprayed with bullets. It was not that they went up to him and actually shot him. You had that British journalist who was beaten on the ground. They could have killed him quite easily if they had wanted to. It seems remarkable that there were no deaths among numerous foreigners in Timor for quite a long time. That would strongly suggest to me that in the activities of the militia part of the goal was to get rid of the foreigners, to get the witnesses out of the way.

Senator PAYNE—Similarly, how do you interpret the extraordinary level of violence against the Catholic Church?

Dr Crouch—It is absolutely extraordinary. If you look at the history of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, the Catholic Church was not a major target in any way. In fact, some of the generals who were behind the original invasion were Catholics. I do not have any explanation, but one possibility that crosses my mind is that some of the so-called militias are not actually East Timorese Catholics but could be people from elsewhere who do not have the same sort of respect for the church. There is no evidence of that, but it crosses my mind that that could be the case. Definitely there is a change in the pattern of violence with regard to priests, nuns and so on.

Senator PAYNE—In evidence before you appeared this morning, Bob Lowry reported that there are reports of Prabowo being around Kupang again. I have also heard media reports that Major General Zacky Anwar Makarib is also perhaps back on the scene. What do you make of those?

Dr Crouch—I was here when Bob Lowry mentioned that, and he only mentioned it as a rumour. I would be surprised if Wiranto had permitted Prabowo to come back, partly because Prabowo could turn out to be some sort of threat to Wiranto in the long run if he were rehabilitated politically. When Wiranto appointed Zacky Anwar Makarim as the liaison officer in about June or so in East Timor, I was also surprised, I must admit, because I

would have thought that Wiranto was on the other side to Zacky Anwar Makarim. However, Wiranto is a bit like Suharto, who is a master of keeping a balance and playing off factions. It seems to me that his use of Sjafrie Sjamsuddin, Makarim, the Bali commander, Damiri, who are all people who were more or less on Prabowo's side before, is the Suharto game of keeping a kind of balance. In that context, you think that maybe Prabowo could be brought in with some sort of understanding with Wiranto. I still find that hard to believe, but lots of things that I have found hard to believe turn out to actually take place. You have to keep an open mind in Indonesia.

Senator PAYNE—Finally, you have referred to the number of refugees in West Timor, whether they are there voluntarily or otherwise. What view do you see the Indonesians taking about how to deal with those people? Do you think that they will allow the UNHCR to do what they believe they need to do? You may have been here when I asked this question of Mr Lowry. The fact that when Mrs Ogata visited yesterday she was accompanied by Eurico Guterres seems to me to be a very strange arrangement. I wonder what your interpretation of that is.

Dr Crouch—The first big worry I would have about the forced exit of refugees to West Timor and the militias following and the militias' apparent dominance of these camps is that I suspect what they are doing is trying to identify people who had some sort of leadership position in the resistance. I know there were two very prominent people who were caught in Kupang and have disappeared. Mahudu, who replaced Xanana, and another one—these are nom de guerre sort of names—were actually caught. I think they are probably going through those camps and trying to identify people who have some potential for being leaders in an independent East Timor and could well have eliminated them, in fact. I think that is a very worrying thing.

You are talking about transmigration of Timorese to all these other parts of Indonesia and not letting them go back to East Timor; it is not as if Indonesia has got all these unlimited funds to establish transmigration centres. I would expect that they will eventually go back to East Timor, but without their leaders, would be my guess.

On your point about Guterres going along with the UN lady, the fact is that all the militia people are being permitted into West Timor with no attempt to disarm them. Just a week or so ago, Guterres and Tavares both had a meeting with Adam Damiri, the Bali commander. Here are the people who virtually boast of killing people and have a completely amicable meeting with the Bali commander. It seems to me there is still an enormous problem in West Timor.

Senator PAYNE—The other part of my question concerned whether you thought the Indonesians would allow UNHCR to do their job. I am wondering whether that is caught up in the perception that the international community is arrogant in wanting to impose itself on Indonesia and if they might be precluded from doing that.

Dr Crouch—On the other hand, they have, after all, let in the peacekeeping force. I can only guess on that. I guess their main goal would be to weed out all the people who are considered anti-Indonesian and, having done that, then they possibly will let the UNHCR come in. I suspect the main goal is to deal with the people they think are anti-Indonesian.

CHAIR—Just a couple of final questions from me. You have mentioned the martial law bill on a few occasions. Can you give us any detail of what is actually in that bill?

Dr Crouch—There is a martial law act from 1959, which is the one under which martial law was declared in East Timor, which has various levels of emergency—civil emergency, military emergency and state of war, if I am not mistaken, are the three. Actually the new one is slightly more liberal and has more restrictions on what—

CHAIR—So it is a replacement bill?

Dr Crouch—It is a replacement, but it still, from the point of view of many people, gives the military far too much power. There are a lot of people in Indonesia who would say that Indonesia needs some sort of emergency powers, especially with ethnic tensions, religious tensions and all the rest. So, looked at in the abstract, I think probably a lot of legal people would say it is okay to have such a law. It is in the present context where there is such suspicion and antagonism towards the military—I think that is the real reason for the extreme opposition right now. They feel that the military will use that just to declare an emergency and take over—not through a coup but just by using this law to take over. I think that is a major part of the concern about that bill.

CHAIR—And is the bill likely to be passed?

Dr Crouch—It has not yet. The trouble is that the old parliament is still sitting in its last days and quite a number of people have said that there are other bills that are being held over until the elected parliament takes office, yet the military seems to be pushing the present members of parliament to pass it. As of the end of last week it still had not been passed, and they have only got a couple of weeks to pass it. It is possible it will be passed, but I cannot be sure. I doubt that it could be passed in its present form by an elected parliament.

CHAIR—Thanks very much, Dr Crouch. We have appreciated the evidence that you have given to us today. We have been on broadcast this morning and we hope that you have whetted the appetite of those who will turn up to the seminar on Wednesday. So thank you very much.

Dr Crouch—Thank you.

Committee adjourned at 11.52 a.m.