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Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert
Menzies

It is true that I have been having some discussions over recent times with my colleague, Mr. McEwen, over electoral matters. But these have been essentially exploratory.

On redistribution, for example, we have both been trying to work out what the area of difference may be so that we may have some ideas to present to Cabinet, which will then decide the course to follow.

So far as individual electorates are concerned, all I need say is that in the Liberal Party and, I imagine, in the Country Party, a decision as to whether or not to contest a particular seat is a matter for the organisations and not for the Parliamentary leaders. Though it is true that over the years we have not infrequently proffered our opinions and our advice, the final decisions are not ours to make.

Of course we behave, as sensible men, in a composite government. At the next election we want an overall victory for the Government, which means the minimum of electoral friction between the parties. Sometimes three-cornered contests are useful; sometimes they are unavoidable. Sometimes they are damaging. Mr. McEwen and I, as usual, would like in the common cause, to confine the areas of conflict. But we both recognise that ultimately the decision to contest any electorate is made by our political organisations. We therefore have no authority to make a pact, and have not made one.

I have consulted Mr. McEwen before issuing this statement. He completely agrees with it.

CANBERRA,

13th August, 1963.