

PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
THE RT. HON. SIR ROBERT MENZIES, AT PARLIAMENT  
HOUSE, CANBERRA, ON TUESDAY, 22ND OCTOBER, 1963

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QUESTION: Any plans for your election policy speech, Sir?

PRIME  
MINISTER: November 12th I have in mind.

Q. Have you got any details of your itinerary thereafter?

P.M. No. I think perhaps when I say the 12th November, I ought to explain to you what I have in mind. You see, we are living in a new world nowadays. We have meetings, we have television, we have broadcasting - all of these, of course, I will have to employ very actively in all States. I am proposing this time to do something quite novel. I am proposing to do my policy speech on television. I know what that means. That means that I will have to do it - tele-record it, or whatever the words are - two or three days before because, of course, it will be necessary for it to be seen and heard in all States at the same time with, of course, simultaneous broadcasting. I have given a lot of thought to this and I think that with all these new means available to people of seeing and hearing, it is a modern thing to say, very well, the policy speech I will this time do on television so that some - I don't know how many - two or three million people will have the opportunity of hearing and seeing, if that gives them any satisfaction.

Q. It will be broadcast as well?

P.M. It will be simultaneously broadcast. Yes. That would go over all round Australia on the 12th November and then on the 13th I would propose to have my usual large meeting in my own electorate. You know, in the orthodox way, not just repeating the policy speech but making a major speech to my own constituents.....questions.... all the usual business.

Q. Could I ask, Sir, whether that will be in Canterbury or Kew Town Hall?

P.M. I haven't seen the details of the itinerary, but I do know that by meetings, by broadcasting - of course I always have to do a number of those - a number of televisions, a series of meetings, I'll go into every State and, I think I am right in saying, twice into Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. So it will be a pretty strenuous business with a lot of travelling and covering a lot of ground.

Q. Will your policy speech take a full hour, Sir?

P.M. Oh, I don't know yet. I haven't yet gone through the pangs of giving birth to it. A lot of work to be done on that yet. I haven't really got cracking on it, and we have to have, of course, Cabinet discussions, and a lot of work to be done on that. I couldn't undertake to say the length of it. All I know is that in the past when I have had to sit down..... only one man can write a policy speech. Of course lots of people put their ideas into the pool, but when it comes to the point, somebody has to write it. I usually start off by producing about 15,000 words and getting it down to 12,000 and then, following the advice of....Dr. Johnson wasn't it? - crossing out all the passages that seemed to

P.M. (Contd.) be uncommonly fine and ultimately you get down to 6,000 words. That is in a normal course. I don't know how long this time. I suppose in one sense, one might say, that the longest a television audience can be expected to survive.

Q. I take it, Sir, that you will try for a complete national hook-up?

P.M. Yes.

Q. By that I mean that you would use commercial stations.....

P.M. Oh, I am hoping so. Yes, Kew Town Hall, November 13th, I have just been given. That is the night after this policy speech. By the way, I don't know whether you knew it, but after I had come to this conclusion, I found that in the last West Australian election, both policy speeches were put on T.V. Any of you hear that? I'm told that was quite successful. People appreciated it.

Q. I recall, Sir, that Mr. Chifley did one policy speech over the radio.

P.M. Yes. That was by broadcasting, there being no T.V. at that time. Anyhow, T.V. will give people an opportunity of looking and listening.

Q. Can you tell us, Sir, whether you will be going largely on the Government's record or will you be breaking a fair amount of new ground?

P.M. Oh, don't ask me that. I haven't written the policy speech, my dear fellow. All that will emerge.

Q. Is there any significance, Sir, in that you have to go twice to Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales?

P.M. Well, I can answer that quite frankly. It is in those States that we, I think, have the more critical things. Of course, in West Australia we lost a couple of seats narrowly and I am going to West Australia, naturally, but it would be pretence to say that Queensland and New South Wales are not uncommonly important to the Government. They are.

Q. Would you like to give us your forecast, Sir, seat by seat? Mr. Calwell did it for us last week.

P.M. I know. Mr. Calwell has a faculty for prophecy, and a taste for it that I have never sought to imitate. All I know is that by midnight on November 30th, we will have a pretty good idea.

Q. He is prophesying that you are giving Mr. Holt an armchair ride into the Prime Ministership.

P.M. Yes, I have noticed this. He seems to keep on repeating this. Very interesting. Let's see. It is interesting for two reasons. One is, of course, in saying that, he assumes that I am going to win the election, which is a rather agreeable assumption because, of course, if I lose the election, we will all have an armchair ride to the Opposition benches, so obviously Mr. Calwell - and he has made that clear anyhow - doesn't expect to win the election; doesn't want it; doesn't expect to win it and is therefore afraid, so he says, that Mr. Holt will get an armchair ride.

P.M. (Contd.) Unlike me, unlike any of his predecessors, he is to have an armchair ride. Well, (a) that assumes that I am going to win. I think that is not a bad assumption. In the second place, Mr. Calwell knows as well as I do that if the day came when - I suppose in the course of Nature it will come some time - when I go out, presuming that I am in office, the succession to me in the leadership of the Liberal Party will be determined by the members of the Parliamentary Liberal Party in both Houses. They will make their own choice, not I, not Mr. Calwell.

Q. Sir, his assumption apparently is that having won the election, you will then retire somewhere about next June.

P.M. Ah, I see. Well, just to finish that other one. Nobody gets an armchair ride. People have to be elected and the parties decide that on my side just as much as on the other. So the only interesting thing about the prophecy is its implicit assumption that we are going to win. Well, as to what happens to me.....Really, one of these days if I ever get round to writing some memoirs, I will have to set down, election after election, what the prophecies were. Three times now - Vote for Menzies, and before you can say "knife", he will be in the House of Lords. You won't be happy, some of you chaps, until you make some wretched thing like an Earl or a Viscount out of me. Dear me, I have no ambitions whatever in that direction. Sorry to disappoint you. None whatever. Then having made me a peer of some kind, two and three times, now I am going to resign out of hand. Well, I am feeling pretty well, thank you. I have heard this sort of story about people..... I remember years ago when Mr. Lyons - I think it was in 1931; the end of 1931 - when he had become the leader of what was then the United Australia Party. Everybody said: Ah, you wait. Of course if they win the election, he won't be Prime Minister for more than a month or two. One of the other fellows....I think it was Sir John Latham on that occasion... he was going to be Prime Minister. Well, it didn't happen. Joe Lyons was Prime Minister for seven years and I am not putting a terminal date on to my term of office. The electors may, if they think fit on November 30th. But I'm not.

Q. Sir, can we take it that you have got no intentions at this stage of retiring.....

P.M. I haven't got it in contemplation at all.

Q. Sir, there is one other thing about the November 30th election. Mr. Bob Holt, on the day after you made your announcement of November 30th, the State President of the A.L.P. in Victoria, said he welcomed the election. Mr. Calwell now says that the A.L.P. doesn't want the election on November 30. Have you any thoughts as to why?

P.M. Well, I didn't know that Mr. Holt wanted one. R.W. Holt is it? I knew that Mr. Calwell didn't want one because having been very eager to have one for a long time in this Parliament, he has devoted the last five or six weeks to explaining what a terrible thing it is, and I understand the other night he said he doesn't want one. Of course he doesn't want one. If I thought I was going to lose the election, I wouldn't want one either. It's just as simple as that. Politics is a real business.

- Q. Well, Sir, what about his other charge that having got back on November 30, you will immediately put in some sort of a credit squeeze? In other words, he talks about a snap election and a snap credit squeeze.
- P.M. Oh yes, I read that. Very clever phrases these are. He has got to say something. This is a mere figment of his imagination about a credit squeeze. After all, I sympathise with my friend, Mr. Calwell. For the last eighteen months, he has been talking about nothing but unemployment and now it is disappearing out of the window - in fact, completely gone - well, you have to get on to something else. I have been an Opposition Leader, I know what it is like. Credit squeeze. Sometimes these fellows ought to make up their minds as to what they really do believe. In one breath they say the country is in a terrible state of depression and misery, and in the next breath, they say there is such a boom that you fellows will impose a credit squeeze. They can't be right both ways.
- Q. Sir, in Queensland which seats do you plan to concentrate on?
- P.M. Oh, I don't know. I haven't seen the itinerary, but your guess is as good as mine. You know the seats we lost. Of course nowadays with so many ways of addressing the electors, you can occasionally cover a couple of seats from one place. I haven't worked out this itinerary yet. All my fellows are working on that.
- Q. Do you, Sir, intend to use television much more extensively - this is for personal interview - than you have done in the past?
- P.M. Well, I have forgotten how much I used last time, but I think it runs something like this: that I am proposing to televise the policy speech for obvious reasons and this is a modern matter. Then I think that I may do a couple more much shorter television pieces - you know, under the allocation that is made for purposes of the election. I know that I am taking part in two or three or four party television set-ups - you know, the kind of thing that happened last time. So I daresay I will have to gaze into the camera, into that wretched unresponsive lens, what? Half a dozen times. Perhaps more. Then I think I am up for about half a dozen five-minute broadcasts and perhaps a final broadcast which takes longer. But apart from that, I will be on the platform and having meetings in the orthodox way and no doubt receiving the compliments from the boys at the back of the hall. But I enjoy that.
- Q. Will you be making any statements, Sir, before the House rises, on the timetable or the proposed form of the restrictive trade practices?
- P.M. Oh, don't ask me this. Look, now you're asking me to say what is going to be in my policy speech. Oh, no.
- Q. In Western Australia, Sir, will you have time to get to Geraldton?
- P.M. I would doubt it. I'm not sure. You see, the trouble is, within the limited period of time, there is a limit to how far you can go. I will have to travel many thousands of miles anyhow.

Q. Do you recall that trip last time to Geraldton?

P.M. I do. I do very much. Anyhow we came back with some Dongara crays. Did you get any? I wondered what was wrong with you.

Q. Moving away from elections in a way, has the Government provisionally chosen the bomber, or will the bomber to be chosen depend on the outcome of Mr. Townley's discussions?

P.M. Look, all I can say about that problem is that Mr. Townley went over especially on this matter. He is extremely well acquainted with the Secretary for Defence, Mr. McNamara in America. They are on very close terms. He is at this moment engaging in discussions with him. I can't say any more than that at the present time, but when I can, I will.

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