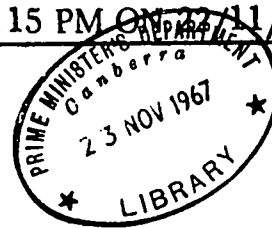


EMBARGO : NOT FOR RELEASE BEFORE 7.15 PM ON 22/11/67

Senate Election 1967



FINAL MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

(MR HAROLD HOLT)

22ND NOVEMBER, 1967

(This final message will be broadcast and telecast nationally this evening. The ABC will broadcast the talk at 7.15 pm (EST) and the telecast will be at 8.30 pm (local time))

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This is my last opportunity to speak directly to you all before you vote on Saturday. So I would like to sum up this Senate campaign as I see it. You will all know by now that this is not an election to choose a government. You exercised that choice a year ago - and your answer was decisively in my Government's favour. On Saturday, your responsibility is to elect thirty Senators - five from each State - and therefore I ask you by your vote to give us the majority we need in the Senate. You can do this by electing a majority of Government Senators in each of the six States.

The first and most obvious reason for doing this is that we cannot have the most effective administration if a Government with a big majority in the House of Representatives - the popular House - lacks a majority in the Senate. If you ask why, the answer may be stated quite simply. Although the Senate is intended to function as a House safeguarding State interests and as a House of Review, it acts - so far as the ALP is concerned - as a party House with a regimented vote.

I should also point out that the Senate is always fairly close to being evenly divided because it is elected by the proportional system of voting. That is an additional reason why I ask for a solid Government vote in all States.

Effective government is, of course, obviously necessary, but let me put to you an even more important reason why I ask for your Senate votes. I am not simply asking you to reaffirm what you said a year ago. I put the matter with more urgency than that. All of us in the Government would welcome from you today a repudiation of what the policy-makers of the Labor Party decided in Adelaide in July. The Federal Parliamentary Labor Party is under direction from the Federal Conference of the ALP to advocate withdrawal of our armed forces from Viet Nam if the United States does not bow to the Labor Party's demands.

This is serious enough, but more serious, I suggest, is the attitude now taken up by the Leader of the Opposition. His interpretation of his Federal Conference's binding decision must alarm all thoughtful Australians. We can only read into his devious explanations - his demand for cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam, and for converting the conflict into a 'holding operation' - that the communists of North Viet Nam should have unopposed access to the South with no restraint on their capacity to carry the war to our own troops and those of our allies, and that our Australian troops and the Americans should merely sit down and try to defend themselves. We are then told that if these courses are not followed, a Labor Government would pull out our troops.

The Leader of the Opposition puts forward neither a military nor a political solution. He talks about my Government encouraging escalation of the war, yet a plain man's view must be that he is encouraging defeat.

Let us not make any mistake about the significance of Labor's policy on Viet Nam. This policy, and all it implies, should be understood by every Australian as it will be understood by our friends and allies. The Federal Conference of the Labor Party has refused to accept the nation's verdict on Viet Nam and external security. It has contemptuously rejected the electorate's decision - a decision reached only seven months before the Conference met - and has threatened to break with the United States on South-East Asian policy. Anyone would be blind who cannot see this.

The Leader of the Opposition suggests that issues that seemed clear a year ago are not so clear now. They were never clear to the Labor Party. As far as we are concerned, these things are very clear -

- (1) That South Viet Nam has a right to choose its own way of life;
- (2) That a communist takeover in South-East Asia would be contrary to the vital interests of Australia;
- (3) That our alliance with the United States must be preserved; and
- (4) That we want peace as much as the Labor Party says it wants peace - but we want peace on decent terms - a just and enduring peace.

The Leader of the Opposition has a taste for challenges these days. Well, let him stand up in public and read in a loud, clear voice - and without running away from it, the actual resolution carried by the Federal ALP Conference in Adelaide. It has been hailed by Mr Arthur Calwell, and other leading Labor spokesmen. So why should Mr Whitlam be so elusive about his party line?

It is understandable, of course, that the Labor Party should, in this campaign, be eager to talk about anything except the country's external policy. But even when our opponents talk about the Australian scene it is all sour grapes. You may recall that a few weeks ago the Opposition was very peevish when we announced substantial financial help for the Ord River project in Western Australia and the Nogo Dam project in Queensland. They were critical when we gave effect to our promises to provide an additional \$50 million for beef roads. They were peevish, incensed and unhappy because these decisions were welcomed by people directly affected all over Australia.

If you think our opponents' reluctance to be pleased by these things is rather childish, what about the story they have been telling you about the state of the nation? When the Leader of the Opposition opened his campaign on the night of November 13, you would have thought this country was on its last legs. He was brimming over with synthetic gloom. He saw Australia as a backward, poverty-stricken, rejected country - and we - the Government - were cast in the role of the villains. That kind of political childishness only highlights the truths about the Australian scene today.

We are in an almost fantastic growth period and our economic progress is remarkable by any standards. I would not be so fond or foolish as to say that our governments since 1949 have been the magicians who made all this possible. But I can fairly say that sound and stable government has created the climate in which our national prosperity has flourished. We enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world and there is no limit to our potential if we go about this in the right way.

I say "in the right way" because the most sensible and practical domestic programme - designed to promote national growth and individual welfare - has little reality unless it is set in the framework of a foreign policy cementing our security. You can find plenty of shifting sand in Labor's policy, but not much cement.

I said at the outset that we cannot have effective administration unless the Government of the day in command of the popular House also has a majority voice in the Senate.

That is a business-like reason for voting for the Government's candidates on November 25.

I also put it to you that it would be bad for Australia to record a vote which could be interpreted at home and abroad as support for the dangerous policy decisions taken by the Federal ALP Conference in Adelaide.

I end this message with the words I used in opening the campaign - what we plan for the well-being and security of Australia and the development of our country must not be put at risk.

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