

HIGINBOTHAM EY-ELECTION

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies

The vote is naturally disappointing, but I cannot say it is entirely unexpected. We knew quite well that, in the short run at least, our recently announced policies would be unpopular. That fact alone, added to the high personal popularity of the late Mr. Timson, made it practically certain that there would be a substantial reduction in the Liberal majority. In the last week of the campaign, the events in the Senate undoubtedly contributed to a further reduction. The whole matter is reminiscent of the Flinders by-election of 1952.

Mr. Calwell's statement about the convening of the meeting of the Liberal and Country Party members for February 7, is rather curious. The obvious fact is that at the beginning of an election year it is most desirable for the Leader of the Government to have a substantial meeting with Government members. As I have to be in London for the Prime Ministers' Conference the day before the Australian Parliament meets, an earlier date for a party meeting became inevitable.

CANBERRA,

12th December, 1960.