

EMBARGO : NOT TO BE PUBLISHED, BROADCAST, OR TELECAST BEFORE
7.15 P.M. ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14.

BROADCAST NO. 1

BROADCAST BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. SIR
ROBERT MENZIES, OVER NATIONAL STATIONS AT 7.15 P.M.
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1963

Already I have been encountering a whispering campaign which is also being shouted aloud by Mr. Calwell.

The story is that, having won the next election, I will then "hand over" the Prime Ministership to Mr. Holt, giving him what is described as an "arm-chair" ride into office. This story is not only a silly and malicious story, but it is also the greatest confession of weakness that Mr. Calwell has made.

Where did Mr. Calwell get the idea that, after being re-elected, I would move out? The fact is that, if the people of Australia wish me to continue as their Prime Minister, I will continue to do so so long as I have health and vigour. So far as I know, I am in full possession of both.

You have heard this kind of story before. Over the last fourteen years my opponents have promoted me, in anticipation, to the House of Lords. Now they seem to have given up the idea of the House of Lords.

Where did they get this idea of someone having an "arm-chair" ride into the Prime Ministership? I did not have one. Mr. Calwell will not have one. How did Mr. Calwell become Leader of the Labour Party? By the votes of the members of his Parliamentary Party. How did I become the Leader of my Party and Prime Minister? By the votes of members of my Party at Canberra. If and when the day came that, being still in office, I decided that the time had come to make way (and I am not contemplating this event) who will choose my successor in the leadership of my Party? I won't. The Parliamentary Members of the Party will make the choice and they will do so with complete freedom. Is that an "arm-chair" ride?

I said that this story was malicious. I will tell you why. My distinguished colleague, Mr. Holt, is the Treasurer. Three years ago, on behalf of the Cabinet as a whole, he produced a series of special financial measures. Even Mr. Calwell should know that a Federal Treasurer does not act on his own without regard to Cabinet opinion. Well, the 1960 measures were, as we felt they would be, unpopular for the time being. So Mr. Holt got the blame. It is in human nature that we should like to blame someone in particular. So instead of blaming me or my colleagues, as they were entitled to, some people blamed Mr. Holt. So what does Mr. Calwell do? He says, "Now, I must cash in. I do not think that, if the issue is between Calwell and Menzies, the people will choose Calwell. If I can persuade them that the issue is Calwell versus Holt, and that Menzies is not in the picture at all, I might snare a few people."

I take a poor view of such tactics. But I emphasise to you that this is an amazing public confession on the part of Mr. Calwell that in a fair fight he would not expect to beat me, or the Government. After all, if he really believed that he could defeat us in a general election which involved a contest of leadership, he would not have found it necessary to resort to this rather nasty manoeuvre designed to persuade people that for purposes of this election, I am a mere figurehead, to be set on one side when the election is over.
