

FOR PRESS :

FINAL STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
THE RT. HON. SIR ROBERT MENZIES, ON  
THE SENATE ELECTION

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If Mr. Calwell were Prime Minister, would he be prepared to accept the professional advice of his Chiefs of Staff?

He has made it clear during the past few weeks that he considers it most improper to reject such advice - as he so wrongly alleged that I did. What then, would he do, having sought and received the same advice as did my Government? Where would he be on a measure of compulsion in providing the numbers needed by the Army?

This simple question remains unanswered though the very decision it demands has become the most debated and discussed issue of the Senate election for which voting, on Saturday, is compulsory.

It is one of three related issues which have proved to be of outstanding importance, concerning foreign policy and defence and the position of the Senate in relation to both.

You know that the Labour Party normally does not believe in the Senate. It wants it abolished. Now, however, it asks you to give Labour control of the Senate for the express purpose of crippling the Government (which you elected so recently) controlling its legislation and interfering with its administration.

All this is at a time when any reasonable person must admit that we have real dangers to our north and that we need strength and certainty in our own plans and in our relations with those great nations who are our allies, and in some eventualities, our partners in defence.

We believe that the essential requirement of a defence policy is that we keep the prospective enemy as far away from our own soil as possible. So, we have done two things. We have made treaties, ANZUS and SEATO and we have pledged our support to our sister Commonwealth country Malaysia in her defence against armed attacks. Broadly, we have planned for defence in depth, with highly mobile and modern forces of all arms capable of effective use, preferably outside Australia, to keep any enemy away.

It is a defence conception fully shared by our allies, but completely rejected by the Left-Wing of the Labour Party at Canberra which, make no mistake, will be considerably strengthened in numbers and authority within the Labour Party, should Labour gain control of the Senate.

Our proposal for the rapid increase in the strength of the Australian Regular Army from 22,750 to 37,500 has, among other things, been recommended by our highest military advisers and has been accepted by us.

Again, on the specific advice of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, we have decided on a limited selective call-up of 4,200 next year and 6,900 in each of the two following years. Voluntary recruiting will, of course, go on and will be encouraged in every way. Alone, it simply cannot produce the numbers we need in the time we need them.

Of the 100,000 or so men who turn twenty each year, some will be deferred for a variety of reasons and the relatively small number required will be chosen by a process of ballot.

Mr. Calwell describes this as a sort of lottery. But how does he think they should be chosen? By selection, or by political influence?

All military provision must have relation to our military obligations and duties. Today, and completely apart from limited local defence, Australia has obligations under SEATO and has troops on the Thailand frontier and in South Vietnam. We have forces of all services in and around New Guinea. All of these current obligations make it necessary that we should have adequate numbers and first-class equipment and training and means of transportation.

And, since our opponents control the time-table, as do all aggressors, we have no time to lose.

That is why we stand where we do.

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CANBERRA,

4th December, 1964.