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TEXT OF PRIME MINISTER'S "MEET THE PRESS" TV INTERVIEW

SUNDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY, 1966

Following is the full text of the interview given by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt, in the "MEET THE PRESS" programme telecast by BTQ Channel 7 in Brisbane tonight.

The Prime Minister recorded the programme while in Brisbane last week.

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Introduction by the Chairman, Mr. Reg. Leonard :

Way back in the 1930's when Mr. Lyons was Prime Minister of this country, the reporters in the Parliamentary Press Gallery at Canberra - and I happened to be one of them - were writing rather glowing phrases about an athletic young lawyer who had entered the House in 1935 as Member for the Melbourne metropolitan seat of Fawkner in succession to a blind barrister named Maxwell. Well, looking back, I suppose in retrospect some of those phrases look a bit corny now - references to the baby of the House and so on - but there was a prediction made for a shining political future for this young man and that certainly was right on the beam, because today he is this nation's leader, and I am sure that all you people after such a long association will appreciate my pride when I introduce to you the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Harold Holt.

MR. HOLT : Thank you, Reg. Good evening to you all.

MR. LEONARD : Your Panel tonight: Alan Underwood, Elgin Reid and Lionel Hogg.

And even with the Prime Minister, you know, there must be a message or two from those who pay the bills, and here they are.....

MR. LEONARD : Well, Sir, it's been a long climb to the top. This is the first time that we have had the honour of a Prime Minister in our studio and with that we are very pleased. Now, will you submit to this grilling of ours?

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MR. HOLT ; Certainly, Reg. It is not the first time you have taken me apart and I don't imagine it will be the last.

Chairman: Thank you. Well, now, Mr. Underwood, perhaps.....

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, when you announced postponement of the Referendum a day or two ago, I think you said that Cabinet felt there should be a thorough review of current policies. Now, can we take this to signify that you meant changes, modifications or even departures from Menzies Government policies.

MR. HOLT: Not necessarily at all, but each government has a character about it which is very much influenced by the person and policies and thinking of the Head of the Government, and here after a long administration of 16 uninterrupted years, we felt it appropriate - or at least I did - when I began my own Government, to take a look at some of the things we had been doing. I would think that in the main they would be fully confirmed, but we live in a changing world. Australia itself has been striving vigorously forward, and we are looking now to a future which, as Denis Healey, the Minister for Defence from Great Britain when he was out here was saying, took him in his thinking to the 1970's, even to the 1990's. Now, a review of policy looking forward doesn't necessarily connote dissatisfaction with what was done. Indeed, I was part of what was done and very proud of it, but I am sure the Australian people would want us to take a fresh look at some of the basic policies we have been pursuing to see whether they adequately meet the situation we see ahead of us or whether there should be some modification. I wasn't implying anything more than that.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, are you satisfied that you and Mr. McEwen will be able to reach the same satisfactory relationships that marked the Menzies/Fadden and the Menzies/McEwen Government?

MR. HOLT : I am completely confident on that point. What seems to be overlooked by some is that Jack McEwen and I have been close colleagues now for thirty years, for more than two-thirds of that time in office together. Even in Opposition, we sat on the Opposition Executive together. We are good warm personal friends and I am glad to say that the new administration has opened in terms of complete cordiality and full co-operation.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, the latest ALP upheaval. Do you really think this stems from State Aid or do you think it is a revolt by the Parliamentary Party against the dictation of the Federal Executive?

MR. HOLT: I think it is a product of the disintegration and decay that has been going on now for many years inside the Labor Party. Here is a party, once a very great party, which had conviction and cause over years, which followed the gaining of many of its more important goals. I think that spirit has gone from it. It was a socialist party and, nominally, still professes to be a socialist party but its own members realise that the Australian community of today doesn't want a socialist programme in that doctrinaire sense, and yet there it is. They haven't found something which they can substitute which would meet the needs of the modern Australia, and so lacking a cause, lacking conviction, then their attention, I think, tends to be turned more to personalities and to organisational problems.

Q. Would this be the split again - the DLP split, do you think? With the same source?

MR. HOLT: Well, there you did have this major split. Certainly there were important policy elements but the division is more likely to occur because there is nothing to which any of them can point as firm Labor policy which they in their Caucus have evolved. Indeed, their rules don't enable them to do that unless they have gained the approval of the group to which Mr. Whitlam made this rather unkind reference of the "witless 12". We at least were rather more polite when we talked about the "faceless 36".

Q. Do you subscribe to the theory, politics apart, that it would be a better thing if the quarrel were patched up and you had a stronger Opposition on the basis that government is better when opposition is strong?

MR. HOLT: I think the Parliament functions better when there is a strong Opposition, but in my experience when the Opposition is weak, there tends to be rather more internal opposition developing inside the Government's own ranks. We found, for example, when we only had a majority of one, there was closer cohesion and unity of action on the part of our own Government parties than has been the case since we had a majority of more than 20, and at a time when the Opposition was weak. I don't think a government can ever relax and feel things are so good or so comfortable that it doesn't have to worry about the future.

Q. You don't really think that where you have a large, thumping majority that the Heads of the Government tend rather to neglect the insignificant members who are supporting them?

MR. HOLT: Well, that's not the way it works out in my experience, because the insignificant members that you speak of have significant votes on issues which arise inside the party room, and in my experience, Ministers, however highly placed, (and this went for the former Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies) are very sensitive to the feelings of their back-bench supporters. No, I don't think you need worry on that score, but I do agree that it is not a healthy thing for a Parliament to lack an effective Opposition. But this is up to the Labor Party to produce it. We will naturally try to win as many seats as we can.

Q. You are not actually plugging, Sir, for a one majority again in the next election, are you?

MR. HOLT: Certainly not! I would hope to improve on the twenty-odd that we have at the present time.

Q. What significance do you see, Sir, in the ALP's having elected five Left Wing members to its Foreign Affairs Committee?

MR. HOLT: This is the Federal Executive?

Q. Yes.

MR. HOLT: Well, I think the significance of this is where the source of power currently lies inside the Australian Labor Party. The Labor Party has been the voice of the trade union movement in Australia and for some years now, the more significant of the unions - or several of them - have been under strong Left Wing leadership. Now this has made its impact on the thinking of the Caucus and quite obviously it is reflected in the Federal Executive.

Q. What do you think, Sir, of this State Aid plan for education that Mr. Calwell has put out - 10/- for each.....

MR. HOLT: This dollar-a-week plan? Well, obviously it was a hasty product designed to offset the argument in the other direction, and it doesn't require very much analysis to show how unsatisfactory it could be in practice. Certainly, those who received an extra dollar a week would be glad to have it. People are always glad to have some extra money. But what about the parents whose children are under the school age and who are not included in this benefit but who have to pay increased taxation in order to finance the 80 million dollars which Mr. Calwell estimates the new proposal to cost.

Q. Would you say it is a child endowment policy rather than an education policy?

MR. HOLT: Well, it is not even a general child endowment policy. This is the point I've just been trying to make. It would apply to some children but not to many others who, for the parents concerned, represent a family burden.

Q. Do you think there could be any guarantee that the dollar would be devoted to education and not to other purposes?

MR. HOLT: I don't think there would. I think ours is a much more practicable approach, but as I said earlier, this has all the atmosphere and mark about it of improvisation to meet a political situation.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, we notice that housing construction is down, car sales have been down and the effects of the drought are still with us. Could you give us, please, your comment on the state of the economy?

MR. HOLT: Well, Mr. Underwood, you have picked on some of the weak spots. There are, fortunately, a good many strong spots and you may have noticed that Professor Horrie Brown, who Mr. Calwell said had helped him with his last Budget Speech, recently went on record as saying that the economy was currently in excellent shape. The soft spots that have been referred to have been receiving consideration from us but it is about this time of the year that Cabinet makes a thorough review of the economy, and we shall be doing this before Parliament meets. I prefer to reserve any more specific comment until we have done that. We do intend, of course, to maintain a full employment situation and a buoyant economy throughout the year.

Q. Just to clear up one point on this Cabinet review, Sir. Would that by any chance point to a supplementary budget?

MR. HOLT: In practice this doesn't occur unless the drift in the economic situation has reached a degree that seems to call for some abnormal action. It has occurred in the past, but I don't see anything in the current situation which could call for more than marginal treatment.

Q. For some months now, Mr. Holt, economists have been warning of the drifting payments position with our import and export balance. Are you worried about this at all, unduly?

MR. HOLT: Well, Australia always has to be concerned to some degree about its balance of payments situation. We are affected by fluctuating climatic conditions. We are affected by fluctuations in the prices we get for our export products, and we import heavily for the requirements of an affluent society and for a growing economy, but there is nothing in the current situation which gives us cause for alarm. Indeed, over recent weeks, as I've seen the figures, the balance has tended to rise rather than fall. This is largely because there is a tendency now for imports to steady down and there is a very strong and sustained inflow of capital.

Q. There is no chance now of another squeeze, another tight squeeze like the last one, coming up?

MR. HOLT: Well, that should not be necessary.

Q. I don't want to embarrass you by asking you for exact figures - this is a snap question - but our overseas reserves are healthy at the moment, are they?

MR. HOLT: Yes, very healthy in historical terms. I mean there are not all that many years when Australia could point to external reserves as high as they are now plus the fact that we have drawing rights which constitute our second line of reserves with the International Monetary Fund, and these have recently been increased as a result of us taking up the opportunity available to us in expanded reserve availability which the Fund had decided upon.

Q. Sir, this would mean that neither the level of our reserves or the trend of our balance now would be likely to cause your Government to have to take any emergency action.

MR. HOLT: No, but what we have been doing for some time is trying to bring the economy into a better state of balance. I think that's been effectively achieved.

Mr. Chairman: Well, now, could we change the subject, perhaps. There is a lot of territory to cover. What about our commitments in the near North?

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, what is your short answer to the people who tell you that we ought not to be fighting in Viet Nam?

MR. HOLT: Well, I don't encounter very many of them, I am glad to say. I think most Australians recognise that what is happening in South Viet Nam constitutes a great struggle involving eventually the security of this country, that here we are meeting one of the critical challenges in the history of mankind, and that is the way we see it, and this is why we are there in Viet Nam, helping to strengthen by our presence, not necessarily by the size of our forces, the United States which has undertaken tremendous burdens on behalf of the free world in this context.

Q. Overseas, Mr. Holt, a lot of people apparently see this as a national war of liberation in Viet Nam in which Australia and America are interfering.

MR. HOLT: Well, some people see it that way. There are some people in Australia who see it that way, but I have studied this as closely as I can. I have been present at discussions between men of the highest authority in these matters from the United States and from our own Departments of advice, Service Departments, External Affairs, and I have studied a good deal of the evidence which comes to us, and there can be no doubt that this goes far beyond the sort of civil war that Mr. Calwell has been talking about. There is clear evidence not only of infiltration, of subversion from the North, of the supply of equipment from the North, but now, of course, military forces as well, and behind it, the guiding hand of the Chinese communists with their goal of world domination.

Q. There have been constant rumours of more troops, Australian troops, being sent to Viet Nam. Is this correct?

MR. HOLT: Well, these are rumours, and I am not able or prepared to comment on those matters. Normally, when the Government has any announcement to make of this sort, it involves simultaneous announcements with other governments, or some notification of other governments. I couldn't make a comment on that.

Q. Should Australians accept the probability, Sir, that we will be maintaining troops in Viet Nam for probably some years? Or do you have a hope of an earlier peace?

MR. HOLT: Well, nobody can say with any authority how long this struggle will be drawn out, or whether negotiations are in the picture. Certainly the United States has been maintaining the most active peace offensive that any country could, in all sincerity, be making, but it took us a long time in Malaya, as it then was, to tidy up communist guerrilla activity in that country, and a much less complicated task than the one which is faced in South Viet Nam. On the other hand, of course, the forces which have been supplied are very considerable indeed, and the pressures and sensitivities around the world are very much greater than was the case in the Malaysian situation. We can only hope while at the same time making it firmly clear that we are not departing from the safeguarding of what seemed to us to be essential conditions, essential principles as we see them from Australia.

Q. Excuse my asking this, Sir, but it relates to your previous answer that simultaneous announcements are made about such matters as sending more troops. I am going to ask this because I think a lot of viewers out there will be asking it. Doesn't that at once indicate that more troops are to be sent because you would not be making simultaneous announcements if nothing was .....

MR. HOLT: I say this is the practice, and therefore you don't answer a question of that sort just off the cuff at even the most respectable of television sessions.

Q. I gather that you are not going to answer.

Q. Mr. Holt, I have two very short questions about the first battalion in Viet Nam. (a) When will it be relieved, and (b) Do you intend to strike a special medal for the troops for Viet Nam service?

MR. HOLT: I can't give you a precise date on the first question, but I can say it is the intention that there should, in respect of the troops who go there from time to time, be a programme of relief and the Service people would have this matter well in hand. As to a special medal, again I am not able to give a decision, but I can say that this matter has been engaging my attention, that there is a document which has recently become available from the various Departments and Services involved and now available for the Cabinet, which will be discussing it, I hope in the next fortnight.

Q. Can I just get in this question? You have said, Sir, that this is a battle against communism and its encroachment. Could I ask a question that has been puzzling us a little while - what happened to the Government's promised - I don't know whether it was promised, but indicated - White Paper on communism in Australia?

MR. HOLT: Well, again, we have had a look at this one on more than one occasion, but we haven't as yet decided to release such a White Paper. I am not going to canvass now the arguments which run pro and con on this matter or the difficulties which arise in relation to it. It would take more time than we have available here. All I can tell you is that it has engaged the attention of Cabinet more than once over recent years.

Q. It indicates that, at any rate, it is prepared . . . .

MR. HOLT: Not in any final form. There have been earlier draftings of the sort of thing that could be released if the Government decided that this should be done.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, you have had, very recently, talks with the British Defence Minister, Mr. Healey. Are we right in gathering that you feel reassured that British Defence Forces will be staying in the Indian Ocean and South East Asian area longer, perhaps, than you had first thought, and that we can expect UK defence co-operation?

MR. HOLT: We were able to impress, I am sure, Mr. Healey with the importance that Australia, New Zealand, and, I would think, the United States, attaches to a British presence in that area, and the assurance which apparently Mr. Healey gave the Premier of Singapore recently would be in confirmation of what I am now putting. And therefore we can expect the United Kingdom to hold on for a considerable period of time in Singapore. But discussing the matter quite realistically - and remember, our talks with Mr. Healey were looking many years ahead; I repeat, he got as far as the 90's of this century, and that is, although a long way away, still not too far away for us to be thinking and planning for contingencies which could arise, and we felt it would be useful if our Service people could talk over together ways in which, if we were, for example, establishing some service establishment here, either Army, Navy or Air Force, that we might have in mind that a situation could arise in which British servicemen would be wanting to make some use of that facility also. But there is no commitment, and no firm decision of detail on this matter.

Q. Does this mean, Mr. Holt, that if these forces you talk about do come here when and if Singapore is given away by Britain, that you will give bases to Britain in Australia?

MR. HOLT: There has been no decision on this point, but it is clearly in our interests, and we would hope in the common interests, for the closest collaboration and Service co-operation between ourselves and the United Kingdom and New Zealand, and we would hope that, so far as the area generally is concerned, this could extend to the United States of America. They have, together, an interest with us in the stability and economic progress of this region.

Q. Would you agree, Mr. Holt, that it is to America, and not so much to Britain these days that Australia has to look primarily for defence aid?

MR. HOLT: We have our arrangements under ANZUS and SEATO with the United States. Of course the United Kingdom is a party to SEATO, and this assurance we've had from the United Kingdom about their continued presence East of Suez in substantial force is an indication that they will be playing a part in the security of the area. I don't think I would want to be distinguishing publicly as between one or the other; in some situations we will be involved with the United Kingdom to a greater extent than, say, we would be with the United States. This is what is happening in respect of Indonesian confrontation. On the other hand, in Viet Nam, there we are involved with the United States.

Q. It would be realistic, Sir, would it not, to imagine that in the event of a crisis for Australia, Britain couldn't provide massive help on the lines that the United States might be able to?

MR. HOLT: Well, I don't think we are expecting Great Britain to fight our battles for us. On the other hand, Australia, at this stage of its development, can't meet every challenge which could conceivably be directed against it entirely of its own strength. That is why we have these alliances, but I wouldn't like to pursue against suppositions or contingencies, too much public discussion on a matter of this sort. I think we have probably covered it about as widely as I feel I wish to at this point.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, the Defence programme is expanding, and this money has to come from somewhere. Does this mean that eventually there will be new taxes? You must raise this money somehow.

MR. HOLT: This, of course, depends on the degree of growth. Certainly the possibility is there of some increase because of the growth in the Defence programme. On the other hand, we have an expanding economy, returning increased revenue to the Government, year by year. It becomes a matter of judgment as to where any increase which comes to us from the growth in our national product and the taxable income derived from that, where this should be directed, and this is one of the teasing aspects of government, this problem of balance or the distribution of resources.

Q. This revolution in Indonesia, Mr. Holt, do you think that this has given Australia the chance to improve relationships with Indonesia and vice versa?



MR. HOLT: Australia wants to be a friend of Indonesia. We've demonstrated that many times, not merely because they are our neighbours immediately to our North - 100 million of them - but because it is our general disposition as a people to want to be friends with the countries that lie to the north of this country, indeed, friends around the world. But at this stage, I think it is rather too early to say what the prospects are of an improved relationship. I may say that I had a very cordial message from the President of Indonesia, Dr. Sukarno, when I became Prime Minister, and also on Australia Day: a message also from Dr. Subandrio. And I did have the pleasure of meeting General Nasution when he was out here and was very much impressed by him. I would hope that he has a growing influence in the affairs of that country, and that this could be a contribution to better relations between us.

Q. Mr. Holt, just how seriously do you regard Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia at the moment?

MR. HOLT: Well it is a serious matter for us and for the British. Apart from anything else, it ties up a considerable body of servicemen from our respective countries and is very costly on that account if on no other, but it creates tensions for us all; it is disruptive in respect of Singapore and Malaysia. We would certainly look to see an end to it, hopefully, but there is nothing in sight which would encourage us to believe that this was going to happen.

Q. Have there been any indications of Indonesian trespassing in Australian New Guinea?

MR. HOLT: None that has come to my notice.

Q. Do you think that Indonesia will allow West Irian to make up its own mind eventually? Will they go to the people there at all, or do you think they will just take over?

MR. HOLT: Oh, I wouldn't wish to comment on that one at this stage. I think we are getting into the realm of possibilities. There is nothing specific on this before us at the present time.

Q. Then perhaps the Asian nation which we would have reason to fear most, if we have to fear a nation, that would be, of course, China.

MR. HOLT: Well, China has made known its intention to go to world domination with its philosophy, if it can achieve that goal, and the Chinese are a patient people, but they have shown a firmness and a resolution on this matter quite unwaveringly since they took office. Now, we have learnt to our cost in the past that it is dangerous to ignore what dictators say about their intentions. This was so of Hitler, this was so of Mussolini, this was so in the case of the Japanese general who stated the Japanese intentions. And the Chinese have set out their goals clearly enough, I think, for us to know where they intend to go.

Q. Well, gentlemen, would you care to change the subject now .....

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, you were Minister for Immigration at one period. What is your viewpoint to-day on immigration? Do you think our present immigration policies are liberal enough?

MR. HOLT: You are speaking of the restricted aspect of immigration?

Q. Yes.

MR. HOLT: Each country, of course, reserves to itself these days, the right to the content of its population, and all countries, in our neighbourhood anyhow, maintain quite restrictive immigration policies, but in Australia, we have maintained the policy, over recent years anyhow, with what I described when I was Minister myself, humanity and good sense. Now there have been changes in the scene around us which, while not going to some fundamental change in our own policy, might indicate to us that we should be reviewing the conditions which operate in respect of certain classes of migrant or settler in this country. For example, we do currently have a difference in the period required for naturalisation between the European settler and the non-European. Now this is a matter which, I think, should be looked at. There may be powerful reasons why the distinction was observed at the time the rule came into effect, but it's one of the matters I am having currently examined.

Q. Just to make it clear, Sir, you were in this referring ..... we are talking about Asians, no doubt.

MR. HOLT: That is so.

Q. Would your review include the possibility of allowing Asian students to remain in Australia?

MR. HOLT: I don't think we would be doing any service to the country from which they came if we were to do this. I know that our own students at the universities form strong friendships with many of the Asian students who go through the universities, but they have come to Australia with the primary object on the part of the country whence they came of strengthening the economy and administration of that country, and if Australia was to reap by some change in its present rules, the cream of those who pass through the university here from Asia, I don't think we would be very popular with Asian governments.

Q. Would it encompass such matters as that which many people thought was inhumane, the deportation of a little girl named Nancy Prasad? Cases like that, I mean. I don't know the background of the case, and I make no special pleadings in it.

MR. HOLT: Well, I was long enough in the Department of Immigration to know that it is unwise to condemn a decision on what can be stated publicly. There are frequently personal, private family reasons which have a bearing on these matters, and I am not familiar with all the details in the Prasad case, but I do have the confidence in the warm humanity which the Immigration Department displayed over the years since the war while this programme has been in effect, so that I am not prepared to prejudge the matter without a full awareness of all the circumstances.

Q. Mr. Holt, can we infer from all of this that there is certainly not going to be any wholesale rescinding of the White Australia policy?

MR. HOLT: Well, we don't have a White Australia policy. You mean restrictive immigration policy.

Q. That's the public service term for it, perhaps, but perhaps you will allow us to use our term.

Q. I think we should get away from it as much as possible.

Chairman: In any case, the question is clear.

MR. HOLT: Yes, the question is clear. The current policy is supported by the great majority of the Australian people, but there is scope at times for liberalisation of conditions. This was done by us in the case of marriages to Japanese wives. This has been done in a number of other instances, and we shall have coming to Australia as our trade builds up with the countries of Asia, an increasing number of technicians, executives; they will want to bring families with them. Some of them will find themselves settled here for a number of years. The point I am making about review is that we don't necessarily go to the fundamentals of the policy when we make such a review; but there may be aspects of it that we should be looking at in the light of what we see, the circumstances with which we are likely to be confronted in, say, the next decade.

Q. With great respect, Sir, don't you think that the majority of Australians are taking a more liberal approach on immigration now than they were say ten or fifteen years ago?

MR. HOLT: I think they are.

Q. Mr. Holt, we have had an encouraging preliminary report from Sir William Hudson on the Northern Development. I think he dealt with irrigation. Can you tell us, please, if we can expect, Sir, any new kind of breakthrough in northern development?

MR. HOLT: I think a very great deal is going on in the way of northern development. What is overlooked is the commercial activity, the industrial activity of the private operators. I heard a figure mentioned - I think I am right in quoting this one - of \$800 million of development expenditure currently going on north of the Tropic of Capricorn. Now don't hold me to that, because I haven't got this precisely in mind, but there is, if you take the programme as a whole, the private programmes and the Government programmes .....

Q. Including the West

MR. HOLT: ..... a great deal of activity going on at the present time. Yes, but Queensland is also sharing this and certainly the Northern Territory.

Q. Talking of the North, this week in Dawson. What makes you think the Country Party can hold this against the very strong ALP onslaught?

MR. HOLT: Well, first of all, the ALP itself is not very strong at the moment, and I am sure that this is well recognised in Dawson, judging by some of the comment I heard while I was up there. But as to the confidence we have in our capacity to hold the seat, our own candidate is a practical man, an enterprising younger member of a sugar-producing family, and sugar is a vital commodity in the Dawson electorate. He has been overseas as a member of the Young Farmer group, he has shown an intelligent and modern approach to the problems of the area, the farming problems, agricultural problems, and I think he will speak the language of Dawson much more realistically over the years ahead than a man who is crusading very commendably for one particular line of activity but hasn't so far taken a battleground other than that of northern development; and a representative of Dawson will have to involve himself in a great many more issues than this. And, of course, I would believe that the electors of Dawson would like to feel they had a voice in the Party Room of the Government.

Chairman: I ask you that because we did have Dr. Patterson here a couple of weeks ago, and we did not have Mr. Fordyce, so I think now we have presented both sides.

Q. A bit further north than Dawson, Mr. Prime Minister - New Guinea. In your reviews of policies, are you having a look at the likely time it will take for New Guinea to reach a stage where it will be independent, whether you will have to change policies in New Guinea to any extent?

MR. HOLT: No, we have got a very active programme of development going forward with our assistance in New Guinea. This is not only in the economic sense, but in the sense of governmental administration, constitutional development; we have been making reviews from time to time of the pace of constitutional development with the idea of leading or guiding the people in New Guinea to a point of viable independence. The interesting thing is to see how they caution themselves against too rapid a pace. They want this to be done in a way which will leave them sufficiently strong when they assume independence to be able to stand on their own feet, and to be able to conduct their own affairs in a proper fashion.

Q. Do you favour a recent suggestion, Mr. Holt, that the New Guinea people be given an opportunity of a referendum to cast their own vote as to whether they would like to become in fact a seventh State of Australia?

MR. HOLT: Surely this is a very involved matter which would require far more than a casual comment from me at this point. I am not sufficiently well-informed on it to make the comment.

Chairman: Look, with time running out, you know that before the end of this year, Mr. Holt has to take on a job he has never had to do before. He has to lead a government in an election. Would anybody like to touch on that facet?

Q. Yes. Mr. Holt, in the next, in the coming election, would you rather do battle with Mr. Calwell than with Mr. Whitlam?

MR. HOLT: After all, I have been involved in many elections since I came in in 1935. Indeed, I cut my campaigning teeth in 1934 against Mr. Scullin. So I am not .....

Q. Obviously you weren't leading the Government then. It makes it a much more difficult task.

MR. HOLT: No, but I have been in a senior role in Government for many years now, and there have been times in particular campaigns when I have been leading the campaign of the Government in a particular State. I am not troubled by the prospect of going into a vigorous election campaign, and, frankly, I think we will win handsomely, regardless of what emerges from the present disarray of the Labor Party.

Q. Do you think they will vote for the Government and not worry about the Opposition?

MR. HOLT: I don't think the Opposition can produce, even if it could find the complete answer in terms of leader, I don't think it can produce in that time the policies needed for the Australia of to-day. They would have to scrap so much of their existing policy structure in order to achieve that result, and I don't think they will achieve it in the time.

Chairman: Well, we will regard that as the first shot in the next election campaign, and our forty-five minutes is up, and I have, to my great regret to close down, but I am coming back again to the Prime Minister after this message .....

Well, Prime Minister, I didn't think that so much ground would be covered in the forty-five minutes that we had at our disposal, but it has been covered and a great deal of useful information given. I am quite sure that our viewers recognise that there were some curly questions to which you had to play a straight bat, and as a former inquisitor at Canberra, I can certainly appreciate it. All that remains for me now is to say thank you very much. We are greatly privileged that you have come to Queensland for your first full-scale interview of this kind. We do hope that we will see you again. Good night, Sir.

MR. HOLT: Thank you Mr. Leonard. Thank you to you all.