

KOOYONG BY-ELECTION RESULT

Comment by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt

The Kooyong result has given to the Federal Parliamentary Liberal Party a very able young recruit who should have a long life of fruitful parliamentary service ahead of him. His majority is considerably below that attained by Sir Robert Menzies in 1963, but it is unrealistic and misleading to attach the significance to the percentage of movement which Mr. Calwell has done. It is notorious that by-election figures tend to run against the Government of the day. In 1963, Sir Robert Menzies, then at the height of his prestige as a national leader with a record tenure of office, scored his highest vote in Kooyong in an election which increased the Government's majority from one to more than twenty.

Another factor which undoubtedly affected the scale of movement was the fact that both the A.L.P. and the D.L.P., which had merely put in a token campaign against Sir Robert at earlier elections, each mounted a most vigorous and thorough campaign on this occasion. Each saw in the by-election an opportunity to score tactical political gains and campaigned accordingly. In the circumstances, whatever he may say publicly, privately Mr. Calwell can take little comfort from the result. The D.L.P. vote has increased by approximately the same proportion of the total as the A.I.P. vote.

The A.L.P. attempted to convert the Kooyong by-election into a national forum on the issues of South Viet Nam and the National Service scheme. In the result, the combined vote for parties supporting the Government's policies on both these issues has been nearly two-and-a-half times that secured by the A.L.P.

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