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MR. CALWELL'S TELEVISION DEBATE

Comment by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt

This is the latest bright idea in Mr. Calwell's series of quite frantic attempts to stem Labor's ebbing tide. Not surprisingly, he seems rattled to find that, at this stage of his leadership, support for the ALP, as revealed in the two latest public opinion polls, has fallen to what must be about the lowest point in his Party's history.

There is no novelty in a Leader of the Opposition trying to provide himself with an enlarged audience by luring a Prime Minister into public debate from the same platform. He receives from me the same answer that Prime Ministers from his own Party have given when similarly challenged.

The need is not so much for debate as clarification of the alternative policies Labor would offer.

The Government's policies on Viet Nam and national service were fully debated in the recently concluded session of Parliament. There were almost daily exchanges on the issues between the Leader of the Opposition and myself. We have both expressed ourselves at length, since then, at public meetings, including some held in the current Queensland election campaign.

There is no ambiguity about the Government's policies which have been supported by all members of the Government Parties in both Houses of the Parliament. The obscurities are to be found in the conflicting versions of policy from Mr. Calwell himself and his understandably bewildered caucus.

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CANBERRA,  
27th May, 1966