

MR. CALWELL'S REPUDIATION OF A. L. P. POLICY

Comment by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt.

Once again the wide division in Labor ranks has been demonstrated by Mr. Calwell's speedy repudiation of policy points extensively circulated in New South Wales, allegedly under the authority of the State Secretary of the ALP in that State. It is reported that more than 500,000 copies of a pamphlet containing twenty-five points of Labor policy are being distributed as the first shot of Labor's campaign in New South Wales.

After a detailed report of many of the main policy points had appeared in the evening press, Mr. Calwell issued a prepared statement last night explaining that the policy items had been taken from a document issued by the New South Wales Branch of the Party and comprised extracts from the Federal Platform of the Party. He denied that these items had been agreed on for inclusion in the Policy Speech. He asserted that the Policy Speech had not yet been written.

These developments highlight the confusion which exists in the ALP on policy matters. They add to the uncertainty in the public mind as to the source of Labor Party policy. Does it proceed from the Federal Executive, the so-called "faceless 36", or from the Parliamentary Party itself? The incident provides another instance of Mr. Calwell repudiating much of the official Platform of the Party on the eve of a general election. It will be recalled that he went so far in one election Policy Speech as to give an emphatic pledge that major, and highly controversial, areas of the Platform would not be given effect during the life of the ensuing Parliament. No one imagines that Mr. Calwell, a dedicated socialist has abandoned these policies. All but the most gullible would realise that, once firmly entrenched, he and his colleagues would at some point of time give effect to policies for which they have been striving throughout a political lifetime.

While Mr. Calwell says the Policy Speech has not yet been written, the Secretary of the ALP in the senior State of the Commonwealth, is apparently permitted to flood New South Wales with policy undertakings derived from the official Platform, but, on Mr. Calwell's statement, lacking any sponsorship from the Federal Parliamentary Party.

Mr. Calwell says "categorically" to use his own term, "that there will be no promise to introduce a thirty-five hour working week, with a subsequent reduction to a thirty-hour week in the lifetime of the next Parliament", although this is a significant objective set out in the Platform. He says he "will not mention tax cuts or tax increases". Is he trying to imply that there will be no changes in tax rates by a Labor Government over the three year term of a newly-elected Parliament? Apparently with no change in revenue, a glittering cluster of new benefits is to be provided. He says he "will not talk about the establishment of a non-profit national insurance office to compete with private enterprise". Does this mean he has no intention of adopting any such policy, or the other socialist objectives of the Party, over the life of the next Parliament?

Honesty and good faith demand that the Labor Party comes to clear decisions as to what it is the Australian people are being invited to endorse. What has so far emerged is a species of fraud on the public.

CANBERRA
20th October, 1966.