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BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. HAROLD HOLT

In the course of this campaign Mr. Calwell has said our system of selective compulsory National Service is immoral, unjust and undemocratic. He was saying the same thing nearly half a century ago.

When the whole world was in arms in World War I Mr. Calwell opposed conscription.

When his own leader, Mr. Curtin, decided in World War II to bring in conscription for service outside Australia Mr. Calwell, then a Member of the Labor Party in the House of Representatives, opposed Labor's Prime Minister stubbornly and bitterly. Presumably in Mr. Calwell's view Mr. Curtin's policy was immoral, unjust and undemocratic.

But Australia and the Labor Party rejected Mr. Calwell's view in 1942.

Australia will reject his view today.

What are the facts?

First, there is nothing unusual about National Service. All but a handful of the more significant countries of the world have some system of National Service.

Our form of National Service is selective. Only a small proportion of our young men reaching the age of twenty is required to serve.

We introduced National Service when it became clear that under our voluntary system we could maintain an army of only about 24,000 men.

Our military advisers and the Cabinet's own assessment told us that we needed an army of at least 40,000 to meet treaty commitments and our security needs.

We want an army of 40,000 because planning with our allies is so ordered that a quick response can be provided for various security situations that could arise.

We require forces that can be instantly available, among other things, to prevent a conflict growing to dangerous proportions.

Before we introduced the present system of National Service we examined alternatives. We found them all impractical or unrealistic from a military viewpoint.

For example, under a system - recommended by some - of calling for volunteers from national servicemen for overseas duty, our service planners would never know how many volunteers might come forward. Units trained together would have to be broken up and re-formed. Our response to an emergency would be weakened and delayed.

The suggestion that we should call for volunteers from the Citizen Military Forces is based on a misunderstanding of the purpose and the role of the C.M.F. This is two-fold: to provide back-up forces in a situation of defence emergency and to provide for expansion in the army in the event of general war.

Young men reaching the age of twenty have the alternative of serving with the C.M.F. if they wish to avoid having their names go forward for the National Service ballot.

Integration of the National Servicemen into the regular army units has gone very well indeed. There is a healthy respect and comradeship between the National Servicemen and the regular soldiers. They have pride in their units. They know the importance of their tasks. They know that they are well-trained for their tasks. In Vietnam National Servicemen have been as one with their regular army colleagues in efficiency, in resolution and in courage.

Where the security of Australia is involved, the Government must make the decisions to provide the forces the nation requires. That has been our responsibility. We have accepted it. We are confident that knowing the nation's needs you will support us.

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(This talk will be broadcast by the A.B.C. National Network at 7.15 p.m., Monday, 21st November, 1966.)