

FOR PRESS:



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SENATE ELECTION

Eve of Poll Message from the Prime Minister, Mr Harold Holt

When you vote for a government or a party, you expect to know where it stands on the big issues affecting the nation's security and well-being. I have stated all through this campaign that the great issue of the 1966 House of Representatives election - whether we should desert our allies in time of conflict - is still the critical question we all have to answer.

You know where I stand on this matter. You know where the Government stands. Where do the Labor Party and its leaders stand?

We know where some leading Labor members stand. They say their present policy is, in essence, the same as at the last general election. We cannot say for certain where the Leader, Mr Whitlam stands. He has conducted so evasive an action since this campaign began that he must have misled even himself.

So we are forced back to the policy itself - the policy laid down by the ALP Federal Conference - binding under the rules of the ALP on all Labor members, including Mr Whitlam.

At the Adelaide Conference in August, the ALP declared itself to be opposed to the continuance of the war in Viet Nam and to Australian participation in it. It laid down conditions which, if not accepted by our American allies, would lead to withdrawal by a Labor-led Australian Government of our armed forces. Writing in "Fact", the official Labor newspaper, shortly after this conference, Mr Calwell said :-

"In its present mood, the United States will not accept any one of the conditions a Labor Government would lay down, and it would rather pull out altogether and if it does this it will abandon its entire Asian communist containment policy and most of its Pacific Ocean bases, including Okinawa and Taiwan. It will resume its policy of isolation."

Does Mr Whitlam accept or reject Mr Calwell's assessment of the United States' reaction to Labor's conditions? Does he persist in believing that these conditions would promote an alliance with America, which he now claims his party recognises to be of such crucial importance to Australia?

Instead of saying in simple terms what Labor's policy is, the Leader of the Opposition has tried to make it impossible for the electors to understand Labor policy. This kind of political smokescreen is not good enough when the security of the nation is involved. It is not good enough to hide behind the word "peace" if what you mean by peace is retreat, stagnation or surrender.

I ask the Australian electorate to support us at the polls not only for reasons of high national policy but for the good and practical reasons that we cannot have an efficient administration unless the Government, with a clear-cut mandate of two years to run, has a majority voice in both Houses of Parliament.

Far-reaching and historic decisions we have taken even in the heat of this campaign offer you the most potent cause for ensuring that the business of government is not impeded by hostile Senate groupings in the critical months ahead.

When in due course the country is called upon to make its choice of a government, you will be able to decide then whether the Labor Party should be given an opportunity to demonstrate its capacity or incapacity to govern.

Meanwhile, there are formidable tasks in front of us, your present government. A clear vote for the Government in this Senate election will allow us to get on with the job.

CANBERRA,
24 November, 1967.