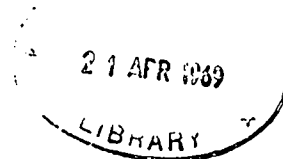


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CURTIN BY-ELECTION

Comment by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton



I congratulate Mr Garland on winning the Curtin by-election with what it appears will be an absolute majority.

Voting in by-elections traditionally goes against the Government. In this particular poll, neither ourselves nor the Labor Party can draw much comfort from the figures. Factors influencing the drop in Liberal support included the large numbers of electors who failed to vote (which is not unusual in by-elections in a blue ribbon seat) and the loss of Sir Paul Hasluck's personal vote.

An interesting aspect was the relatively large vote polled by the Independent candidate, Mr Scoggins, who had campaigned on a non-party basis with social service questions as his exclusive issue. Social welfare is a matter concerning the Government and one on which it is having a thorough examination made.

The figures can be of little encouragement to the Labor Party, whose candidate improved only slightly. Indeed, it is the smallest increase in Labor Party support in a Government-held seat at a by-election this decade.

CANBERRA,
20 April 1969