

E M B A R G O : NOT FOR RELEASE BY ANY MEDIA BEFORE
8.30 PM, WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER 1970

SENATE CAMPAIGN

FIFTEEN MINUTE OPENING TALK ON TELEVISION

BY THE PRIME MINISTER

MR. JOHN GORTON

National Network and Commercial Channels - 8.30 pm

Wednesday 4 November 1970

(NOTE:

The Prime Minister will officially open the Campaign with a public meeting in the Malvern Town Hall, Melbourne at 8 pm Wednesday 4 November 1970. This Opening Talk on television touches on specific issues and is not a complete summary of the Prime Minister's Opening Speech.)

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Tonight I want to talk to you briefly about the coming Senate Campaign.

I shall report to you on our achievements in the last year. I shall touch briefly on the further objectives we have in mind and I shall point out the great differences between Labor and ourselves in defence, foreign policy, and responsible non-inflationary internal Government.

The result of a Senate Election does not usually affect Australia's future. But it is possible that this election could result in Labor's gaining a blocking half in the Senate - that is 30 Senators.

If that happened Labor would not have power to do anything positive. But it would have the power to obstruct, frustrate, and delay all the processes of government. It could refuse supply, or defeat a budget. And I believe it would use that power, as it would use any power it could gain, to damage Australia's security, to destroy Australia's alliances, to disrupt Australia's economy - and to affect Australia's future very greatly.

Nevertheless the election is not an occasion for us to advance new policies, or make new specific promises. The occasion for that was one year ago, at the General Election, when we put before you a programme, policies, and promises for a three year period. And you elected us.

I can report to you that in the one year since then we have carried out most of the promises we said we would carry out over three years. I shall not weary you with a detailed list in this short address. But we have brought in a vastly improved health scheme. We have reduced the burden of direct taxation in one year by the amount we promised to do in three years. We have continued to protect and advance greater Australian ownership of our developing resources. We have greatly increased spending on education and on new initiatives in social services. And we have given the States a new financial deal by greatly increasing the funds they require for their own responsibilities.

These are only a few of the year's achievements. The complete list is much longer. I think that I can justly claim "that which we promise, we perform". "While they talk, we act."

We have additional objectives. We shall attain these as we feel it financially responsible to do so. We wish to continue the improvement of social welfare services generally; and I remind you that in three years of Government the variety of social services, and the buying power of pensions generally, have been increased more than they have ever been increased in a comparable period of time.

We wish to reduce the burden of long-continued illness on those in nursing homes as we have already done for those in hospitals. We wish to initiate throughout Australia, in conjunction with the States and voluntary bodies, a network of kindergarten-cum-child-minding centres. We wish to undertake a programme in rural areas designed to help farmers obtain long-term credit and to enable rural reconstruction to take place where it is necessary. And we have taken a firm decision to establish an Office of the Environment and seek to join with the States in the formation of a National Council to co-ordinate the fight against the growing problem of pollution of all kinds.

This, in brief, is the story of what we have done, and what we hope to do. And these things are important.

But even more important is the harm which Labor would do to our security.

Let me first discuss with you the question of Vietnam. Why I think it was right, and in our interests to go there to help. Why I think it is right and in our interests to remain there until the Vietnamese are organised enough, and strong enough, to defend themselves.

May I remind you how this War began.

For a number of years after the Geneva Accords of 1954 the people of North Vietnam lived under their communist government and the people of South Vietnam lived under their non-communist government. The people in both sections lived in relative peace. That peace could have continued.

But the Government of North Vietnam was prepared to wage war rather than let the people of the South retain the right to choose their own Government and way of life. And the people of the South were prepared to accept war rather than have their right of self-determination taken from them - rather than have an alien government imposed on them by force.

And so the war came.

It came at first through an uprising armed and directed by the North and then through an invasion of the South by the North Vietnamese Regular Army. I do not ask you to accept this on my statement alone, for the present Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, Mr Lance Barnard, has endorsed what I say. In May 1967 - after a visit to Vietnam - he reported publicly that there was a large-scale invasion of South Vietnam by North Vietnamese troops. "I am satisfied", he said, "that this is more than just a guerilla war and I suppose it can be compared with the earlier conflict in Korea".

So there was invasion. And the object of that invasion was to destroy self-determination in South Vietnam; to take away the people's right to choose how and under what government they would live.

Again, I do not ask you to accept this on my statement alone. For in his Evatt Memorial Lecture of 1966 the present Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Whitlam, wrote :

"It is, however, quite clear that victory by the Vietcong and Hanoi would destroy any hope of self determination in the South - as it has destroyed it in the North".

And this invasion was accompanied, as Mr. Whitlam has admitted, by "Vietcong brutalities and cruelties in Vietnam".

Don't you think it was right to help fight that aggression? Were we immoral to do so - as we are now told - or were the invaders immoral? Should we follow the dictates of Mr. Whitlam's present conscience and cease to resist invasion, the imposition of communist dictatorship, and the brutalities perpetrated, or should we continue to resist and finish that which we began.

Well, the invasion was resisted with the help of the Americans and of ourselves and other countries. It has been resisted for six years. And in that time the strength and purpose of South Vietnam has so grown that it is now able to take over more of its own defence; it has so grown that the Americans and ourselves have been able to reduce our troop numbers without endangering the objectives we sought.

It is possible for us to make this reduction because we stayed and fought when Labor was clamouring for us to withdraw. And because we stayed and fought it is now possible for President Nixon to offer a cease fire, an end to the killing, and negotiations designed to allow the South Vietnamese to elect their own government from the candidates of any political party - including the communist party.

Who then is immoral? We, who offer an end to killing - or they who insist on continuing the killing to achieve military conquest and who refuse a cease fire?

What does that present conscience, of which Mr. Whitlam speaks so much, suggest we should do? To continue to resist brutal and unprovoked invasion To help a small nation retain the right to govern itself? Or to withdraw all our troops now as Mr. Whitlam presently demands.

If we did that we would betray the people of South Vietnam. We would negate the heavy sacrifices already made. We would be recreant to the hopes for future universal peace because future peace can only endure if small nations are not threatened with invasion and conquest.

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We would destroy the confidence of the **other** small countries in Asia, and by doing that, we would increase the possibility of future danger to Australia itself.

We look forward to the day when, with South Vietnam able to guard its own independence without help, we can withdraw all our troops. That day is coming nearer as the military war is being won. But until it does arrive I suggest that morality, conscience, and self interest all require that we should finish the task we began.

But Labor under Mr. Whitlam would renege in Vietnam.

Having done this - and thereby increased the danger to other Asian countries including Malaysia - they would then withdraw from the Five Power Arrangements designed to help Malaysia and Singapore and at the same time they would drastically cut the strength of our own army by abolishing National Service.

We would be alone, with our alliances shattered, regarded as accepting no responsibility to help maintain peace in our region. And with our own army halved.

That is what I meant by saying Labor would damage Australia's security and destroy Australia's alliances.

And that is one reason I ask you not to give them the chance to do this damage. Just as I ask you not to give Mr. Whitlam the chance to wreck our internal economy. Both he and Mr. Hawke are pledged to attain a 35 hour week. The only difference between them is that Mr. Hawke is pledged to do this all the time, and Mr. Whitlam is pledged to do it all the time, except at election time.

If he achieves that aim our rural industries will suffer a loss of at least 9% of their income and many farmers now in great difficulty will be utterly destroyed. Those living on superannuation will be hard hit, the value of all pensions will be drastically reduced, prices to the housewife will soar, confidence in our country will be destroyed, and our development will wither away.

There are many other issues to be debated in this Campaign. There is our intention to introduce laws which will not interfere with the right of the minority to dissent, but will protect the civil rights of the majority of citizens. Labor appears to oppose this. There is the question of whether the growing industrial unrest, hitting workers harder than anyone else can be avoided and the means by which it can be avoided.

There is the question of whether the way ahead for Australia is best assured by a continuance of private enterprise and competition or through the direction of business by socialist dictation to which Mr. Whitlam is pledged.

There is the need to consider the divisions within the Labor Party -- you have heard these words "divided" and "divisive". There is need to consider the divisions in the Labor Party, particularly in Victoria where the saga of the struggle for control of the Executive is rapidly assuming the character of a serial like Blue Hills. Will Gough 'eat jim? Will the TUDC still control the Party? What of Hawke lurking in the wings? Will the meeting called bogus last week be bogus or beneficial this week? Listen for our next thrilling episode! It would be funny if it were not clear that what Mr Whitlam has called a monolithic junta-ridden group is still so significant in Victorian Labor affairs and therefore in Australian Labor affairs.

But these issues we must deal with later in the campaign. All I ask now is that you weigh these matters very seriously.

I ask you to remember that Whitlam has talked while we have acted, and I ask you to give us the chance to continue to act, free from obstruction in the Senate.
