

E M B A R G O : NOT FOR RELEASE BY ANY MEDIA BEFORE
7.15 PM, WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 1970

S E N A T E C A M P A I G N

SUMMING UP BY THE PRIME MINISTER

MR. JOHN GORTON

EMBARGO : 7.15 pm, Wednesday 18 November, 1970.

The Senate Election is nearing its end. And it is time to sum up the matters at issue. The results of the election will not change the Government, But it is not like an ordinary by-election. For if Labor were to win they could frustrate the Government's programme, delay legislation inordinately, and even refuse supply.

That is why it is just as important to vote for the Government at this election as it would be to vote for it at a general election. The election itself has not been an occasion for new policies or new specific promises. For as I said to you fourteen days ago, when the Campaign opened, the occasion for that was at the general election last year.

Rather has this election given to Australians the opportunity to consider the great differences between the Government and the Opposition on matters which affect Australia's future. Those matters are defence, the maintenance of our alliances, the management of our economy, and the future of our rural industries.

The differences between us in these fields have become even more marked as the Campaign has progressed. For the Opposition would withdraw from Vietnam regardless of whether or not the South Vietnamese had sufficiently built up their strength to defend themselves. They would quit as we are in sight of our goal. We will not.

They would withdraw from the Five Power Agreement with Britain, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore. We will not. They would reduce the fighting strength of our Army by a half by abolishing national service. We will not. They would damage the ANZUS Treaty by refusing to have joint Australian/U. S. Defence bases in Australia. We will preserve and strengthen the Treaty for the sake of our own security. They would seek to bring in a 35-hour week. We will not. Our concern is to raise real wages and living standards, and to get production from which the requirements of the public in schools and hospitals can be met.

They have no policy to assist rural industry. We have. And we have spelt it out.

There has been some attempt, during the Campaign to put pressure on me to give specific promises on pension rises. I think it would be wrong to do that in the course of an election campaign.

Elections are not auctions.

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And I have not once commented on the matter of whether or not pensions will be raised in the near future. But I think I can fairly claim this.... our record in improving social welfare is better than that of any other Government over a comparable time. On that record I believe it fair to ask you to conclude that improvement in social welfare is important to us and improving it is a course we will pursue in the future, as and when we can responsibly do so.

Besides the differences in policy there is another difference between us and the Opposition. I have tried, in the course of the campaign, to state clearly and unequivocally our policies on defence and internal economic management.

I believe Australians are entitled to unambiguous statements of policy from both the Government and the Opposition. That is surely essential to the proper working of a democratic system. But Mr. Whitlam will not adopt this course. He has evaded, and refused to answer direct questions on matters of great moment to Australia's future.

He has refused to answer questions as to whether he favours a 35 hour week - and on whether he will conduct a political campaign, in conjunction with Mr. Hawke to bring it about. The honest answer he could give to that would be to admit that he was bound to conduct such a campaign and that he would do so.

But he evaded giving that answer.

He has refused to admit that he would withdraw from the Five Power Agreement - and Agreement entered into for the defence and stability of our near north. When questioned recently he evaded the issue and talked instead about the value of having Indonesia as our defence umbrella. And a bulwark against Communist China.

Again an honest answer he could have given would be that he would withdraw from this Agreement, because Labor's policy would force him to. But he avoided giving the direct answer.

He began this campaign with a number of false statements. I publicly branded them as false. He has not tried to sustain them. Since the opening he has made additional false statements. For instance one was that we had provided no money in the Budget for railways in South Australia.

He began to post - late in the campaign - as a champion of higher pensions. And we were at once told by Mr. Griffiths, a Labor Party Member - that when he, Mr. Griffiths, sought a programme of higher pensions in caucus, Mr. Whitlam rebuked him and said Mr. Griffiths was trying to featherbed the pensioners.

All these matters, taken together, must surely raise some doubts as to our opponent's credibility and as to his readiness to deal openly with the Australian people.

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I believe this, too, should be carefully weighed by electors.

I was asked, at one stage in the Campaign, to tell Australians what I am for. And I am glad to do so. I am for an Australia which keeps its alliances, and which helps to maintain stability in its region, an Australia which is not left friendless and isolated.

I am for an Australia which will provide adequate defence for itself. I am for an Australia which will develop its resources - and retain the greatest possible Australian ownership of those resources while it does so.

I am for an Australia whose citizens will seek more production, rather than more leisure, so that prices can be kept down, real wages can rise, and the public facilities required by Australia including adequate social welfare can be provided.

I am for an Australia which will continue the war on poverty, and seek to relieve the neglect and loneliness which some old people who may not be poor, may now feel. I am for an Australia where ordinary citizens can exercise their civil rights to use the streets and other public facilities without having those rights denied them by a minority. I am for an Australia where the performing arts are encouraged to develop.

And in this and other fields my government has acted to achieve the goals for which we stand. But I am against a political Party which would destroy our alliances and our own defence. I am against a Party which seeks leisure rather than production. I am against a Party whose Leader must follow policies dictated by an outside body which has never faced the electors.

I am against a Party which is so deeply influenced by communist elements as is our opponent. I am against a Party which mocks at the maintenance of law and order, whose Leader advises young servicemen to refuse to obey a legitimate military order. I am against a Party whose every utterance ignores the danger of inflation, and urges courses which must create inflation. I distrust a Party as openly and deeply divided as is the Labor Party today.

We have policies before you we believe in. We think that no nation which puts ease before effort can be great. We think no people which talks only of its rights and not of the duties and the responsibilities that go with rights will ever be secure, and we do not think Australians are this kind of people. And so at this crucial election we ask you to give us Government Senators and let us get on with the job.
