



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS:

PRIME MINISTER CALLS FOR HARD LOOK AT FOREIGN,
DEFENCE ALTERNATIVES

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon.
William McMahon, C.H., M.P.

The Prime Minister, Mr McMahon, said today that of all the issues facing the Australian people at this election, the defence and foreign policies of the major Parties were undoubtedly the most critical.

"The other issues, important as they are, will count for nothing if we are unable to guarantee our people freedom and security for the future," he said.

"The one single factor in this election which should concern the Australian people above all others, is the future security of our country", Mr McMahon said.

"We must not throw away our safeguards. It would be more than foolhardy to do so - it would be the most dangerous risk that any political leader ever contemplated," he said.

"Put simply, Labor's policies call for the abandonment of our military treaties and regional agreements, and the withdrawal of our troops from South-East Asia to what would be a 'garrison Australia'".

"Labor has also declared that it would scrap the National Service programme which would cut the effectiveness of our Army by about half," he said.

"And, furthermore, the anti-American left wing would see to it that by imposing unacceptable conditions on the United States, they would force them to remove their communications installations from Australia.

"And, again, Mr Whitlam has said that he would establish diplomatic relations immediately with the People's Republic of China, throwing Taiwan to the wolves, and that he would set up an Australian Embassy in Peking in the New Year.

"That is Labor's attitude, but it could never be a substitute for a foreign policy," Mr McMahon said.

"The effects of these policies would be felt by our people for many years to come. You cannot rebuild treaties and friendships overnight.

"Labor's external policies would be disastrous for Australia and quite certainly irreversible", Mr McMahon said.

"It is important to consider what changes of this character would do to our standing with our South-East Asian friends and allies, and the effect that such changes would have on the various countries in our own region," he said.

"To cut our ties in this region and to jump in hastily, in sycophantic fashion, to close relations with the People's Republic of China, would bring about an equally quick reappraisal of us by our Asian neighbours.

"Certainly the stability and cohesion of the region would be shaken.

"If we were to show such scant regard for the security of our own area, could we expect the United States and Britain and New Zealand to accept the extra responsibility that was ours and be prepared to shoulder our burden?" He said.

"Of course we could not.

"If we were not prepared to play our part, all of our treaties would go by the board. The big powers would not stay in the region if we were to pull out. There can be no doubt about that.

"This would leave a power vacuum in our north, and a power of another kind would flow into that vacuum. The political leaders of South-East Asia know that - they have said so publicly - and that is what they fear.

"It is for these reasons that I urge the Australian people to take a long hard look at our foreign policies and those of the Australian Labor Party," he said.

"Labor's policies are left-wing madness.

"Far from being progressive policies, they are a positive danger to the future safety of our people.

"You cannot defend Australia with policies of isolationism and pacifism," Mr McMahon said.

"The pro-communist wing of the Labor Party has done its job well. It has written into Labor's platform a formula that would make Australia completely powerless and isolated.

"The Australian people must recognise that policies of this kind can only jeopardise our present position and imperil the security of future generations of Australians", Mr McMahon said.

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