

Q: Mr Whitlam, what's the possibility of a half Senate election through either deferral or rejection of Supply rather than the normal circumstances now?

P.M.: There has to be an election for half the Senate before the end of next June because half the senators' terms of office will expire at that time. Now it's usual for the new senators to be elected in November or December beforehand and to do that one would issue writs about this time. I haven't made up my mind when I will advise the Governor-General to ask the State Governors to issue writs for that half Senate election. When I give him that advice will depend very largely how soon the Opposition makes up its mind about the Budget. They are threatening to reject the Budget Bills; they haven't yet done so. They've at this stage only carried a motion to defer debate on it.

Q: There's obviously a deadlock - who is going to back down?

P.M.: Well they'll have to. I can assure you that I shall not. There will not be an election for the House of Representatives just because the Senate wants it. The Governor-General issues the writs for a House of Representatives election on the advice of the Government. And the Government has a majority in the House of Representatives, and there is no sign that it will not keep that majority - that is, the Government will have an election for the House of Representatives at the ordinary time in another eighteen months.

Q: Well, Mr Fraser has suggested that the Governor-General could intervene. Is that possible?

P.M.: No, it would be completely improper for the Governor-General to do it. It was possible for the Kings of England to do something like that a few centuries ago, but it is not possible today. But not only that, our Constitution expressly says that the writs for a House of Representatives election are issued by the Governor-General-in-Council - that means by the Government.

Q: Just summing that up - you don't believe, well you believe that the Opposition will pass Supply; you don't believe there'll be a House of Representatives election next year.

P.M.: I'm certain that there will not be a House of Representatives election just because the Senate says so. I'm not certain that the Opposition will pass the Budget in the Senate; I'm not certain of that. I am certain of the other - there will not be an election for the House of Representatives except at the proper time, and that is not determined by the Senate.

Q: Well, if it doesn't pass the Budget, can we really expect the sort of chaos that we've been hearing...

P.M.: There will be very great disruption in economic matters, businesses and so on - very great disruption, that is true. But that is what the Opposition is risking.

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