

Last week I mentioned to you about the torrent of telegrams that I'd been receiving protesting against the Opposition's unprecedented action in delaying the debate on the Budget Bills. Since then I've attended many public meetings - last Monday in Melbourne's City Square; on Friday in Sydney's Hyde Park; and just this afternoon in Melbourne's Town Hall. And on each occasion it's been remarkable, the sense of outrage that ordinary citizens have felt at this unprecedented and unprincipled action by the Liberals and the Country Party.

It was particularly moving in the Melbourne Town Hall this afternoon because there there were thousands of migrants - people who'd come from countries where, sometimes, democracy has been destroyed, or where democracy is weak, or where democracy is under challenge. And they, more than most Australians, in December 1972, were impressed by the fact that in Australia, after a vigorous election campaign, there was a change of Government at the ballot box - one Government was rejected and another one was elected by peaceful means. They were among the people who were most outraged, when after 17 months, there had to be another election in April and May last year. Again, they expected that the Government would be able to serve a three year term - and now, for a second time, they find this challenge to Australian democracy, which they had respected. And they particularly are alert to the stratagems to which conservative forces will resort in order to look after their vested interests. And this year there have been three such examples: first of all, for the first time in 25 years since there's been proportional voting for the Senate, we found that two State Premiers replaced Labor senators by non-Labor senators; now for the first time in 75 years we find that the Senate is contemplating rejecting the Budget. Very often in the past the Government of the day hasn't had a majority in the Senate, and if half the senators vote against any proposition, if the votes in the Senate are 50-50, then the proposition is rejected. Now there have been 139 money Bills over a three-quarters of a century of our Federation which have been passed by the Senate although the Government didn't have a majority in the Senate. This is the second principle, the second convention, which has been thrown out by the Liberals and Country Party last year and this year. And the third is that the Governor-General asks the State Governors to issue writs for the Senate and on 24 previous occasions the Governors have always obeyed the Governor-General's suggestion. Now, for the very first time in 75 years of our national Government, the Premiers are contemplating advising the Governors to rebuff the Governor-General.

Now I point out that the Opposition has not rejected the Budget - this would be too much for many of them. You might have seen in a program last night, and midday today, on another television station, where a Liberal senator said he would never vote against the Budget and he said that there were many of his colleagues of the same mind. But they're prepared to vote to delay the Budget - they haven't got any

Budget proposals to put in its stead; Mr Fraser has now used the great phrase about his own Budget proposals that they are 'inoperative'. He says that if there is to be an election to the House of Representatives, then they'd pass the Labor Budget - but of course he is not prepared to give the Government, which has a majority in the whole Parliament and a majority in the House of Representatives, the opportunity to govern for the three years for which it was elected. It can continue to pay the public servants, the soldiers, all the accounts, until the end of November. We're satisfied that after that, alternative arrangements can be made. I point out to you that the Government can get money by borrowing or from taxes, but the Constitution says no money shall be drawn from the Treasury except under Appropriation made by law. Now our opponents are trying to frustrate the Constitution by refusing to make those Appropriations.

I trust that everybody who is on the Australian Government's payroll - civilian and military, and people who rely on the Australian Government to pay for the services and the supplies they render will be patient and will expect the assurance that they will finally be paid. The Australian Government will do all it can to mitigate the hardships that they endure. But we are determined that the Government which has a majority in the people's House, the House of Representatives, will not be frustrated by this unprecedented, unprincipled use of the Senate, where nobody has a majority, where no Governments can be formed. The people are entitled to have the Government they elected.

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