

SENATOR WRIEDT INTERVIEWED ON MR. PEACOCK'S FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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Huw Evans:

Senator, to what extent are you in accord with Mr. Peacock's with Mr. Peacock's analysis, particularly in relation to South East Asia.

Wriedt:

The Chinese themselves of course have said that the reason that they have invaded Vietnam is in order to punish Vietnam. They have not said precisely why they what to punish Vietnam. It may be because of the invasion of Kampuchea. It may be because of the treatment of ethnic Chinese by the Vietnamese Government. It may be because of the border dispute between the two countries. It may be because of the alliance between Vietnam and the Soviet Union. It is probably a mixture of those things but quite obviously China has taken it upon itself to exercise its unilateral judgement to punish Vietnam. I don't think one can isolate any of those factors.

Huw Evans:

But the Opposition has taken the view, has it not, that the Government is taking a pro-Chinese line in this issue?

Wriedt:

That was evident from the statement put down by the Prime Minister back in June of 1976 and this point should be stressed again and again. The Prime Minister is wanting now to appear as some sort of mediator on the world scene. He should have thought about trying to play that role two and a half years ago when he made it quite clear that the Australian Government would in fact be taking a pro-China attitude in the Sino-Soviet dispute. One cannot divorce that dispute from the events which are taking place now between Vietnam and China, and indeed Kampuchea.

Huw Evans:

What does it have, in terms of an affect in world policy though? I mean that we have aligned ourselves presumably with the United States, the western powers, those countries who have sided with China, presumably, against the Soviet Union?

Wriedt:

The operative word, siding with China, of course is the key point. It is a tendency of course, of nations to take sides in international disputes and as soon as you do that, particularly when you are dealing with the major powers, there is a tendency for the world to polarise into opposite sides. The more nations that do not allow themselves to become involved in either side, the greater force they are to acting collectively as mediators between the warring factions.

Wriedt:

Australia opted out of that role two and half years ago. I'm certain now Mr. Fraser wishes he had not done that.

Huw Evans :

Aren't there polarisations within the Labor movement itself as to who is right and wrong in this dispute?

Wriedt:

In every party you will find differences of opinion but we have taken a firm view, and I think this is substantiated by the debates which have taken place today in the Parliament, in both houses, that we are taking an even-handed view. We want Australia act in a genuine capacity of a nation that has the trust of both sides. That is the distinction between our position and that of the Government.

Huw Evans:

Can we have a look at one of the other major issues that Mr. Peacock has referred to today, and that is the question of Australia's assessment and reaction to the change of Government in Iran. Would Labor have responded any differently to what happened there than the present Government.

Wriedt:

I don't think that we are in a position to effect that. The Iranian people will decide what form of Government evolves from the present dispute within Iran. It's not the role of us or the Australian Government to try and dictate the course, or influence the course of those events.

Huw Evans:

Isn't it fair though, that Iranian exports of oil may well dictate the response of western countries to the new Government.

Wriedt:

Naturally all the traditional customers of Iran will wish to see Iranian oil back on the world markets as soon as possible. But I would have grave reservations about the comment which is contained in Mr. Peacock's statement in which he suggests the west may need to take certain action to protect itself in respect of the Iranian problem. I don't know quite what he means by that, but I certainly would disassociate ourselves with any implication, or any implied remark that any intervention should take place in Iran by any outside powers whatsoever.