



## PRIME MINISTER

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### ELECTORATE TALK

A peacekeeping force in the Sinai is an essential part of the Egypt/Israel peace treaty. This treaty, which requires Israel to move out of the Sinai Peninsula completely by next April was achieved after 30 years of unremitting bitterness and fighting between the two countries. In view of the distrust which 30 years of enmity has inevitably bred, it is not surprising that the two countries, at the time when they made the peace treaty, admitted that a peacekeeping force would be necessary to make the treaty work. And let me emphasise that it is a peacekeeping force - not a fighting force - but a group of military personnel who will be there to observe and monitor the implementation of the peace accords by the parties who have themselves made the peace.

The difficulty of making the treaty work has been made greater by the assassination of President Sadat but his successor is determined by pursue the same peace policy. In their search for a more permanent peace, Egypt and Israel both want a peacekeeping force to be established and they both want Australia to be part of it.

A United Nations sponsored peacekeeping force would obviously be the best option and I do not believe that anyone would have opposed Australia playing a part if a U.N. force had been possible. But the fact is that a U.N. sponsored force is simply not an option. The Soviet Union would have vetoed it as they vetoed the continuation of an earlier peacekeeping force in 1979. We cannot allow the Soviet Union to veto genuine peacekeeping efforts around the world.

The possibility that the United Nations might be prevented from lending its weight to the establishment of a peacekeeping force was foreseen at the time of the peace treaty and that is why there was provision in the peace treaty accords for the United States, whose President had played a key role in the achievement of the treaty, to take steps to establish a peacekeeping force if the United Nations did not do so.

The Middle East is a region of vast strategic significance for Australia as it is for the whole world. It is a volatile region and no other peace proposals apart from those which came out of Camp David have ever got off the ground. The Camp David accords are not a solution to all the problems of the Middle East but it is surely absurd to imagine that one single package solution could ever be found to all those problems.

There is no concrete plan for peace, other than the Camp David accords anywhere on the horizon. And the fact that there is every reason to suppose that the Egyptian/Israeli peace treaty will break down without the establishment of the currently proposed peacekeeping force, surely means that this peacekeeping force should be established to undertake its monitoring role.

The question of whether Australia should participate was under active consideration by the Government for months because there were weighty considerations on both sides of the balance, but I have no doubt that the decision that Australia is willing to participate on the terms which I announced in the Parliament last Thursday is right for Australia, and for the cause of peace.

This decision means that we will participate if Canada and Britain participate, although the Government is hopeful that other European countries, some of which are apparently reconsidering their positions, might equally take part. The decision also means that the extent and duration of Australia's commitment will be defined in advance and this gets rid of the fear which some people have expressed about an open-ended commitment. The decision also means that the Australian commander would retain the ultimate right to consult with Australian authorities before complying with orders which he believed were inconsistent with the agreed purposes of the force. No part of the peacekeeping force would have any association with the U.S. rapid deployment force and our participation would obviously be conditional on continued support for the peace treaty from Egypt and Israel.

The decision we have made therefore protects Australia's interests. It provides the greatest possible security for Australian personnel and its terms are such that every significant barrier that was seen in the way of Australian involvement in the peacekeeping force is avoided.

It is not good enough for those who seek peace to sit back and leave it to others to achieve. The history of our own century shows all too plainly that when that passive course is adopted peace goes by default and the world can fall into war.

So when people ask the question "Why Australia?", the very simple answer is because we are concerned for peace. It is my hope that it will not be long before the peacekeeping force is established so that it can start its work and thus help advance the cause of peace in the Middle East.

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