PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SENATE TEAM
ADELAIDE - 29 JUNE 1987

It is now six days since I stood in the Opera House and launched our Party's campaign for a renewed mandate from the Australian people:

- Six days in which our campaign has continued to derive strength from the Australian people;

- Six days in which our opponents have continued to demonstrate their lack of fitness for the responsibilities of Government; and

- Six days which have borne out the truth of my statement in the policy speech, that never in peacetime has Australia's future depended so much on a single decision as the choice Australian people will make on 11 July.

For it is a choice between the starkest of alternatives.

On one side of Australian politics stands the Government offering strength and stability and coherence in the administration of the nation and the management of the economy.

On the other side stand the collection of Opposition parties, seeking to impose on the nation all the instability and disunity they have inflicted on themselves.

July 11 will be a choice between our record of steady economic progress against their certain waste of our hard won achievements - our credibility and responsibility against their cynicism and recklessness.

For South Australians it will also be a choice between the jobs and industrial growth opportunities presented by the submarine contract, and the question marks which hang over the timetable and funding of the contract as a result of statements by the Liberals' Defence spokesman.

I come before you proudly as the leader of a single united team.

And I give you one overwhelming pledge - that that united team will continue and intensify its undivided efforts in the task of repositioning Australia so it can meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond.

Against that, I ask you to look at the extraordinary way in which our opponents are offering themselves to the Australian people:

- Not just with a Liberal leader whose authority has been irretrievably weakened by the factional rivalries within his party;

- Not just with a Nationals leader whose party has been stolen from him by the Premier of Queensland;

- Not just with policies, including the centrally important tax policy, which have been put together in haste and which could only set back the interests of the families they are allegedly intended to help; and

- But also with the incredible claim that they could patch it all up after the election.

'Trust us' they say. 'Don't worry about the fact that we are offering three different tax policies and three or four or five different leaders'.

'Forget that we have spent the last four years in opposition fighting each other. Just vote for us on July 11 and then on July 12 we will sit down and decide which of our promises we will implement, which of our leaders we will follow, which of our tax scales we will set.'

This squalid post-election horsetrading has been best described by Ian Sinclair himself, when he said just after the Coalition split:

"It will be necessary to go into the election campaign with our separate policies and then, after the election, to enter negotiations with the Liberal Party, form a coalition and then work out which of the policies that have been presented to the people are going to be in fact, put in place."

These divisions and deceptions utterly rule out the conservatives as a force capable of forming a stable majority in the House of Representatives.

But their divisiveness and inability to agree on a single course of action has also characterised their record in the Senate. And it is to the Senate that I want to draw particular attention today.

Because let's not forget that this election is a double dissolution sparked by the Senate's consistent obstruction and frustration of the Government program.

Let's not forget the Australia Card legislation, which my Government sees as essential to our continuing campaign of cracking down on welfare fraud and tax cheating. This legislation was knocked back twice by the Liberals, Nationals and Democrats in the Senate.

By doing that, the conservatives have allowed nearly $900 million a year to stay in the pockets of the tax cheats and the welfare frauds.

And let's not forget the Resource Rent Tax legislation which was designed to ensure that the benefits derived from exploiting Australia's non-renewable resources are passed on fairly to all Australians. The Liberals, the Nationals and the Democrats combined to oppose that legislation too.

And let's not forget the Equal Opportunity legislation which the Liberals rejected so as not to upset the Nationals - despite it being legislation for which the Liberals' own Shadow Minister on Women's Affairs, Senator Peter Baume had explicitly called. Mr Howard sacrificed his Party's principles for a coalition he couldn't save.

And let's not forget the media legislation which will bring to five million Australians living outside the capital cities the same commercial television services available in our metropolitan centres.

It will curb cross-media monopoly and it will boost the production within Australia of drama and sport and current affairs programs.

This legislation too was opposed by the Liberals and the Democrats in the Senate.

One of the extraordinary features of the last Parliament was that when the Senate rose for this election campaign there were some eight splinters and factions staring across the Senate chamber from the Opposition benches.

And in case you have forgotten who they all are let me quickly list them:

- The dry Liberals and the wet Liberals;

- The Sinclair Nationals and the Queensland Nationals;

- The Haines Democrats and the Siddons ex-Democrats; and

- Let us not forget Senators Harradine and Vallentine.

One Government but eight opponents.

Here in South Australia you have your own direct evidence of this question.

Offering themselves for election is a Liberal Senate team in which two Senators who crossed the floor to support equal opportunities for women were dropped down the ticket. And there is a National Senate team. And there is an independent Liberal Senate team led by Don Jessop, who was dumped by his colleagues because he was unable to adopt the ideological straitjacket of his leader.

And there is not just a Democrat Senate Team but a splinter group led by Senator Vigor.

In considering all this, voters in South Australia and around the nation will have to ask themselves whether they can afford to waste their vote on one of these splinter groups?

That is why Australian voters should make sure they cast an effective vote on July 11 - a vote for Labor candidates in both Houses of Parliament.

A protest vote is a wasted vote - it is a vote for uncertainty and a vote for frustration of our program of reform.

This is a program of vision and growth for the future.

We are entering this campaign determined to:

- Continue the economic repositioning of Australia;

- Improve the lot of the neediest Australian families;

- Expand the education and training opportunities of Australian youth;

- Continue our efforts to protect our magnificent Australian environment;

- Build on our achievements in helping bring the superpowers to the negotiating table;

- Implement our strategy for the effective and cost efficient defence of Australia; and

- Govern the nation with stability and unity.

For us to implement that program we need not just a majority in the House of Representatives but as large a number of Labor Senators as possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Australian Labor Party is proudly campaigning in this election under the theme, 'Let's stick together, Let's see it through'.

Those words encapsulate not only the great task of economic revitalisation in which we are engaged and on which the future of our whole economy depends.

It also summarises the way in which we have gone about that great task - fairly, compassionately, in the interests of all Australians.

Let's stick together.

- City and country together,

- Families together,

- Australians together,

Let's stick together in the Senate.

Let's see it through - together.

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