

Concession Speech: John Curtin, Opposition Leader (ALP)

Kalgoorlie: October 24, 1937

“Labour went within an ace of winning.

The Lyons-Page Government has just scrambled home.

Labour increased its vote in every electorate in five of the six States, compared with 1934.

A few hundred votes from such seats as Hindmarsh, Newcastle, Bourke, Batman and Yarra placed in right electorates would have given Labour the government.

On figures to hand – I have not seen a newspaper yet – Labour will win Calare and Macquarie in New South Wales, Ballarat and Wannon in Victoria, Adelaide in South Australia, and Darwin in Tasmania. Riverina in New South Wales, Forrest, in Western Australia, and Maranoa, in Queensland, are bright prospects, and the Labour man is not out of the race in Bendigo.

In contrast, Government members have had their majorities substantially reduced. The Minister for Defence (Sir Archdale Parkhill) has been given a fright, the Attorney-General (Mr Menzies) has made rather an inglorious showing, and the Treasurer (Mr. Casey) must have had some anxious moments.

In addition three other Ministers – the Postmaster-General (Senator McLachlan), the Minister for External Affairs (Senator Pearce), and the Assistant Minister (Senator Brennan) – are not out of the wood yet.

Summed up, my pre-poll forecast of gains in every State will be borne out – with probably one exception.

For the Senate the figures are very inconclusive, but I shall be surprised if Labour does not win in three States at least.

When I reach Perth tomorrow I will have available later and more detailed results, and will make a full statement.

I will say this now: This election has definitely paved the way to a Labour majority in both Houses of the Federal Parliament at the next elections.

I say that not only on the results of yesterday’s poll, but because the Government was forced in the last fortnight of the campaign to give pledges it has no intention of carrying out.

Most importantly, the elections were a victory for the Australian Labour party's policy of no participation in foreign entanglements and no conscription of the Australian people.

The whole of the new Parliament is pledged against conscription, and that is a valuable contribution to the people's welfare, which Labour has achieved.

It was also a victory for the policy that the Federal Parliament must greatly enlarge the social services available to the nation.

The polls have given the Lyons-Page Government a salutary chastisement and have proved my statement that Labour is in the ascendant."

Source: Compiled from Tasmanian Mercury and Sydney Morning Herald, 25/10/1937.