

Concession Speech: John Curtin, Opposition Leader (ALP)

September 22, 1940

“With the cessation of counting tonight the position is still in doubt. Even if Labor fails to secure a majority the Government parties have received a very doubtful mandate. It will be remembered that the Prime Minister asked for ‘a clean sweep either way.’

Labor will emerge as the strongest party in the House – in any case stronger than in the last Parliament. The gains, losses and doubtfuls suggest that although Mr. Menzies had a remarkable vote in his own electorate his Government has not had an exclusive testimony of public approval.

In fact, the position of the Government parties will not be as strong in the new Parliament as in the old, even if they manage to carry on, but at present this is doubtful. I am still hopeful that Labor will win.

Owing to its being highly probable that I have been defeated for Fremantle I feel that I am not entitled any longer to speak authoritatively for the party I have been proud to lead for the past five years, and which I have served with all that is in me.

In the circumstances it is fitting that I should request that the Deputy Leader (Mr. Forde) be considered the proper spokesman for the party as things stand.”

Source: Compiled from Canberra Times, The Age, 23/9/1940, page 7, Sydney Morning Herald.