

Concession speech: Herbert Evatt, Opposition Leader (ALP)

Sydney, May 30th, 1954

“The Government did not win the election fairly.

Throughout its campaign it resorted to the smear and hysteria technique adopted from the police States of Germany and Russia, he said.

In spite of that, Labor votes outnumbered Government votes by more than 250,000.

Yet Labor did not win the election.

This was because shifts of population and other factors had completely distorted distribution of seats and denied democratic rights to the people.

Under these conditions the will of the minority could easily prevail over the will of a large majority.

Nevertheless, it is still by no means certain that the Menzies-Fadden coalition will snatch a chance majority in the House of Representatives.

But if it does it will be a minority Government.

Even if the Government does survive for a while, the returns show that a clear majority of Australians have deliberately censured its record of broken promises, and have given a popular verdict in favor of Labor’s positive programme.

An analysis of latest returns shows that, compared with 1951 figures, there has been a swing of approximately 2½% to Labor, as against Liberal and Country Party losses.

This means that Labor has gained 5%.

In 1951 Labor polled 49.9% of total votes, and the Liberal and Country Parties, 49.6%.

In the present poll, Labor, so far, has 52.4% and the Liberal and Country Parties 47.1%.

The overall swing to Labor is clear, definite and conclusive.”

Source: Compiled from The Argus, May 31st 1954, page 2, The Age and The Canberra Times.