

Victory Speech: Robert Menzies, Opposition Leader (UAP/LP)

December 11th 1949

“I am not going to proceed on the assumption that the Senate will act capriciously in its treatment of legislation which comes up from a House fresh from the country, and therefore possessing the immediate confidence of the public.

During an election, big differences of opinion are aroused.

Sometimes unnecessary attacks are made, but when the new Government is installed by the votes of the people it has an instant responsibility, not only to those who have voted for it, but also to those who have voted against.

This is the essence of democracy.

We will, therefore, try to maintain close and sympathetic contact with the trade union movement.

We also hope to stimulate a co-operative attack to increase production, so that rising prices and falling money values, which fall so hardly on middle income groups, may be arrested.

The more effectively production could be carried out in the Empire the less drain there would be on dollar reserves, and consequently British economy would be more stable.

I believe the new Prime Minister of New Zealand (Mr. Holland) agrees with me as to the desirability of an Empire conference.

The Liberal party has constantly advocated closer co-operation between Empire countries.

We want to see the closest consultation on all matters of a financial, economic and productive nature.

The second plank of the Liberal and Country parties foreign policy is the closest co-operation with the United States.

The new Government will take whatever steps that are feasible to establish closer relations with the United States, consistent with proper Empire obligations.

We have always been critical of the over-rapid expansion of the diplomatic service.

We want the best possible service in the genuinely vital places.

The basis of the migration scheme should be, however, to ensure that all migrants are such that they will become effective and good Australians.

That is why it is hoped to have substantially increased numbers of British migrants, although there is no prejudice against Europeans, many of whom made some of our finest settlers.

The results of the election has been better even than i had anticipated, particularly in Queensland. I had expected a win, but it now appeared that it will be a very substantial victory.

I believed part of the success of the Liberal and Country parties can be attributed to: –

Growing public resentment at bureaucratic controls.

A feeling that some Ministers had enjoyed so much power that they were becoming high-handed and contemptuous of public rights.

Reduction of three-corner contests to a minimum.

Completely unanimous approval by both parties of the issues of the election.

The common policy speech.

The reason for the big swing in Queensland could be attributed partly to the fact that Queenslanders, under centralised control and administration, fell remote from the Canberra Government.

Also, Queensland is a State of great developmental possibilities, and the people have perhaps been attracted by the big developmental programme submitted by the two parties.”

Source: Compiled from The Age, 12/12/1949, page 1, The Argus and The Canberra Times.