FOR PRESS:

Defence:
Isolation Result of A.L.P. Policy
(By Mr. Malcolm Fraser, Member for Wannon and Minister for Defence)

The Labor Party again introduced an urgency motion in Parliament seeking immediate withdrawal of Australian forces from Vietnam.

This motion underlined the Labor Party's isolationist approach to the problems of defence and foreign policy, to the problems of ultimate security.

That Party's members sometimes speak as though they are the only ones who want peace. In truth, however, there is not a single member of the Federal Parliament - and I doubt if there is a person in Australia - who doesn't want peace.

Isolation may be an attractive short-term policy. I am utterly convinced, however, it would place the future of our children in jeopardy.

If we want to achieve permanent security for Australia we need to try and achieve security and freedom from aggression and from fear for the small and independent countries in our own part of the world.

In the debate I said Labor's policies meant repudiation of our allies on both sides of the Pacific. They would damage Australia's own security.

I contrasted this with the Government's objective which has remained firm - to establish the circumstances in which the people of South Vietnam can work out their own future without interference, without aggression and without fear.

There had been progress in Vietnam, I said, on the military, political and economic levels.

The U.S. had a withdrawal programme, but the scale-down to something like 260,000 men by around mid-1971 still represented a strong commitment.

The Australian Government was withdrawing the 8th Battalion and some supporting troops, and we were establishing mobile advisory training teams in Vietnam and supporting the proposed jungle warfare training school in Phuoc Tuy Province.

In the debate I again asked why the Labor Party wanted to withdraw from Vietnam immediately.

Was it because the party was tired? Was it because they believed such a course would be popular - to end a war, no matter what the result?
2.

Did the Labor Party believe South Vietnam unworthy of protection? Did it believe that it was a civil war and none of our concern?

On the last point, I asked, if North Korea again attacked South Korea would the Labor Party say it was just a civil war?

If it was none of these things, was it because they want the North Vietnamese to win, as their colleague Senator Wheeldon had said in the Senate?

Labor's policy of withdrawal extends to Singapore/Malaysia, emphasising their isolationist approach once again.

If Australia had not had a policy of continuing involvement there I firmly believe no British government would have been able to reverse the British Labor Government's policy of complete withdrawal from those two countries.

At the very time the British Minister for Defence, Lord Carrington, was in Singapore and Malaysia, Mr. Whitlam was lecturing them in a manner which indicated that he thought they should not accept these general defence arrangements.

All our history indicates that there is no safety in isolation. I wonder how often democracies are going to have to learn the lesson that just because they want peace from the bottom of their hearts, other people do not all have the same view.

We all want peace, but it must be an enduring peace that stands for the stability of the region.

Labor's isolationist policy would not only turn our policies upside down, it would make it very difficult to encourage the British to maintain an interest in the area to our North as she now has.

It would mean doing less on our own account and would weaken other general alliances which are the ultimate lynchpin of Australian security.
Library Digitised Collections

Author/s:
Fraser, Malcolm

Title:
Defence: isolation result of Labor Party policy

Date:
c1970

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/39990

File Description:
Defence: isolation result of Labor Party policy

Terms and Conditions:
Copyright courtesy of Malcolm Fraser. Contact the University of Melbourne Archives for permission requests.