



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA · THE SENATE

OFFICE OF SENATOR GARETH EVANS

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT OFFICES
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MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 3000
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10 November, 1982

GE:r

Mr George Preston,
C/- Caroline Hogg, MLC,
690 Sydney Road,
BRUNSWICK 3056

Dear George,

Thank you for your note requesting my participation in efforts to regenerate interest within the Party in the East Timor issue.

I'm happy to do so on the basis that I have always been profoundly unhappy about the Indonesian take-over, and the way in which we in Government contributed to that coming about. I certainly fully support all aspects of the present 1982 policy.

I should mention, however, that I have some reservations about the wisdom of trying to go further than the existing Federal Policy. I fear that, whether we like it or not - and I certainly don't - the Indonesian annexation now has to be accepted as a fact of life, and that it is unrealistic to hope for a genuine exercise of self-determination. The question we will have to confront in Government is whether we immediately move to a stance of confrontation with Indonesia, with all that entails both in terms of larger regional relationships and the possibility of influencing for the better the condition of the East Timorese, or whether rather we should seek, though without abdicating the right to criticise intensely, a more normalised relationship.

I am planning to spend a few days in Jakarta in January - the first time I have been there since the 1960s - trying to find out for myself what the current atmosphere is like, and whether there is anything to be gained by a gentler as compared with hard-line approach. I may be in a better position then to make a judgment about the matters to which I have just referred.

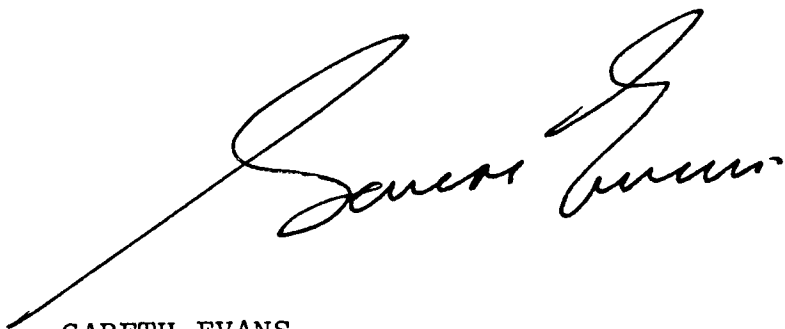
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I repeat that I am in general support of the aims of your group, and am happy to sign an appropriate letter supporting existing policy and focusing party members attention on the issues involved. I do have some reservations, as a possible member of a Labor Government which is going to have to be making some hard decisions about where we go on this whole question - about going further than that at this stage.

I would be happy to discuss the issue with you or Caroline Hogg at any stage.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Gareth Evans'. The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

GARETH EVANS
Senator for Victoria
Shadow Attorney-General