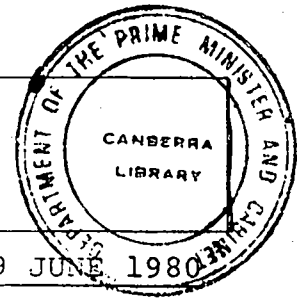


Anne, please give me the no. when you have it.

LIBRARY FILE 16.



PRIME MINISTER



FOR MEDIA

THURSDAY 19 JUNE 1980

OLYMPIC GAMES - A.O.F. EXECUTIVE DECISION

The Prime Minister said today that the Government deeply regretted the decision of the Executive of the Australian Olympic Federation re-affirming participation by an Australian Team in the Moscow Olympic Games.

The Prime Minister said that no Member of the Executive had contested the Government's analysis of the world situation as described by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and Mr. Ellicott.

Members of the Executive were specifically asked whether they agreed or not with the Government analysis of the seriousness of the world political situation following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was clear that all Members of the Executive agreed with the Government's analysis.

Against that background, the Prime Minister said, he was at a loss to understand how the majority of the Executive could re-affirm its earlier decision.

The Government remained firmly of the view that a boycott of the Moscow Games is correct, for two specific reasons. The Soviet Union has made itself an unfit host for the Games because of its continued aggression and brutality against Afghanistan. In addition, the Australian Government is strongly and unrepentantly of the view that we should stand with regional friends and partners and with major allies.

It is a sad day for Australia to find ourselves alone with Communist Laos and Vietnam from our part of the world. All other countries of South-East Asia and the Pacific are supporting the boycott and de facto New Zealand also supports it, leaving Australia in company with Laos and Vietnam alone.

The Government makes no apology for putting its view consistently and firmly. We had a duty and an obligation to add Australia's weight to the scales, to the cause of liberty and independence of nations.

Australia has not been alone in this view. Governments of nearly all major freedom loving countries, of a number of different political complexions, have taken the same view. Indeed, 67 countries are not going, including three of the five top medal winning countries at the last Olympics; and an effective boycott is in place.

It is to the profound regret of the Government that members of the Executive of the Olympic Federation, who agreed with the Government's assessment of the international situation, chose to isolate Australia from her regional friends and major allies on this issue.

In the Government's view, the AOF Executive's decision is wrong. Nevertheless the Government has told the Executive that it will not use arbitrary and totalitarian powers to prevent participation. The only power effectively available to the Government would be to deny access to a passport to travel overseas. That is not a proper power for a democratic Government to use in these circumstances.

We have sought to persuade the members of the AOF Executive as Australians to put this nation first. The majority has not done so.

I ask all Australians to note the substantial contradiction in the Executive's statement.

A majority of the Executive says that it is too late for them to change their minds about attendance in Moscow, but in the same breath they urge individual sporting bodies and individual athletes to consider my remarks carefully, implying that it is not too late for those sporting bodies and individuals to change their minds.

How the Executive can reconcile these points of view is beyond comprehension.

It represents a failure of executive leadership and a denial of national responsibility.