

REMARKS TO PRESS AT LIBERAL PARTY RALLYMT. BARKER, S.A.25 MAY 1969

Q. If you were asked questions about why you haven't told them about Pine Gap or the F-111s, why they are crashing, how will you answer them?

PM. If they ask me why are the F-111s crashing, I will say all aeroplanes in the course of development have a number of crashes. The F-111s at this stage of their development have had less crashes than any other aircraft. As to when we are getting them I can only answer by saying not until we are thoroughly satisfied that they are completely safe and will meet the specifications which we expect them to meet.

Why haven't you been told about Pine Gap? Well, I think I answered that the other day. If your military advisers and your scientific advisers say that the giving of any information might be of assistance to an enemy just as in war you wouldn't give that information, so in peace you don't give it either.

Q. But there is a lot of unrest and a lot of feeling about Pine Gap. It is said we could become a prime nuclear target. We are being kept in the dark. Is this true? Are we being kept in the dark purposely?

PM. No. We are being kept in the dark because of the advice tendered that to say anything about the station would be of assistance to a potential enemy. It would help them to know sooner than they otherwise would. They will probably find out in eighteen months or a couple of years. But it would help them to know sooner than they otherwise would just what particular purposes the station is designed for. In the case of the North-West Cape station, of course, it was different because everybody knew what it was for anyway. It had been built in other parts of the world. It was a low frequency communications station. But these ones, for good and proper military security reasons, we are advised should not be spoken about.

Q. It seems almost out of place talking about this sort of thing at an LCL rally, but about this student unrest and the meeting on Tuesday. Can you predict any likely outcome of this meeting?

PM. What meeting on Tuesday?

Q. There is a meeting in Canberra on Tuesday discussing the student unrest. We were just wondering whether there were any possible outcomes regarding heavier penalties against student demonstrations.

F 111
Pine Gap

Students
Demonstrations

Demonstrations

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PM.

Well, I don't know what meeting is being held on Tuesday. It is not a governmental meeting, so I don't know quite what meeting you are talking about, but I think our own approach is the one which the Minister for Science and Education, Mr. Fraser, had the other day. This is primarily.....one doesn't object to dissent as such. This is good. This is questioning. This is putting forward different ideas. This is fine. But if it erupts into violence or the organised takeover of buildings in a university or something of that kind then that is in effect a negation of democracy because it means that people who can't get majority opinion are prepared to take action by force. And that, I believe, is quite wrong. But it is primarily a matter for universities to take action, and secondarily a matter for State Governments to take action because the universities are set up under State Government acts. If something boils over into the street and there is a riot of some kind or other then that clearly must be prevented and I hope would be prevented by State legislation.
