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SHOP STEWARDS' INCITEMENT TO MUTINY

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

However much some Australians may be opposed to the conflict in Vietnam, I believe that every responsible and thoughtful citizen will condemn with repugnance, as does the Government, the attitude of the meeting of Union Shop Stewards in Melbourne yesterday.

To the average reader, this attitude is a stark incitement to mutiny in the Armed Forces and defiance of the law in Australia.

It is not perhaps so surprising that Shop Stewards drawn from some of the Unions involved should have adopted this irresponsible and lawless attitude.

But it is disturbing in the extreme that Mr. Crawford, the President of the A. L. P. in Victoria, should have been associated with this course. Dissent from and criticism of the Government's policy in Vietnam is one matter - incitement to mutiny is quite another.

Those urging this seek to defy the law, and endanger the lives of Australian servicemen in order to achieve illegally what they have not been able to achieve democratically.

Such action is typical of the extreme left and it is noteworthy that the move comes from Victoria where the most extreme elements of the A. L. P. are found. It is tantamount to a call to Australian troops to surrender to Communist forces on the proposal of unions - a number of whom are Communist led.

The Shop Stewards' meeting in Melbourne, and the Victorian Leader of the A. L. P., have urged a dangerous, undemocratic and disloyal course. If the A. L. P. does, in fact, want a Communist victory in South Vietnam, it should say so and the dividing line between the Government and the Opposition would again be starkly drawn. If it does not, then the Leader of the Opposition in Australia should at once condemn and disassociate himself from the resolution passed in Melbourne.

For its part the Government does condemn it, and is ready to take any steps necessary to see that the course advocated does not succeed.

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