



PRIME MINISTER

LIBERAL PARTY DINNER

DEAKIN ELECTORATE, Vic.

15 MAY 1972

Speech by the Prime Minister, The Rt Hon.

William McMahon, C.H., M.P.

Mr President, Mr Alan Jarman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for coming along tonight and for giving me the chance to talk to you for a few minutes, and to join forces with my colleague, Alan Jarman, in getting the Liberal message across to the people in this election year.

We depend on you to help us do that. You are closest to the voting public and therefore in a good position to "sell" the Government's policies, and also give us in Canberra a "feedback" on what people are thinking.

I see the Labor Party has got a haberdasher slogan called - "It's Time" - Well, true enough - it is time - time for the mask to be ripped off Labor pretensions and policies. Time for Liberals to be out in the market place telling the Australian people what they have been doing as the major party in Government in the last twelve months or so. If we all get down to this task and press on with it, enthusiastically and energetically, then later in the year I have no doubt it will be the Labor Party "for whom the bell tolls".

I am confident that the policies we are putting forward are honest, open for all to see, and in the best interests of the people of Australia. Now, Mr President, there is one theme that I want to give some time to tonight, because it is important to all Liberals, important to the Government as the voice of the people, and important to the people themselves as individuals in a free society. I refer to "freedom within the law" in our community.

Most Australians are "fed up to the back teeth" with disorderly demonstrations like those in Melbourne and other cities last week. This isn't freedom of speech and of assembly - two ideals Liberals hold dear. These disorderly demonstrations involve unbridled licence by the few - illegal in themselves but dangerous to all. It is anarchy by a militant, subversive few who inflame thoughtless people and are encouraged too much by some sections of the Labor Party.

Last week's events were more than just another demonstration that got out of hand. They were a symptom of a sickness in some parts of our society which left wing elements and Labor politicians are promoting. Naturally, I was delighted to see Henry Bolt taking a firm stand about these events. As Liberals we have a duty to take our stand in support of the law. Demonstrations in Melbourne were once promoted only by the hard-core communists and a few fellow-travellers, but in the last year or two the left-wing unions and Labor politicians have added their weight. This, now, is exploding into a serious challenge to the authority of the law keepers-the police-and the authority of Governments-Commonwealth and State. The clearest demonstration of this occurred during the recent Springboks Tour when the A.C.T.U. President and certain Labor Politicians openly inspired mass disruption. There was no industrial motive for their actions. Indeed there was no really genuine political motive. It was attempted anarchy for anarchy's sake.

We in the Liberal Party stand for the freedom of the individual and for free enterprise. We believe it is the duty of the Government to exercise the authority within the law - I repeat within the law - vested in it by the Australian people.

That is why, for example, we have taken action against draft dodgers. We believe Australian citizens have the right to go about their business. In Melbourne, or Blackburn or anywhere else in Australia without being interfered with by dangerous demonstrations. Ordinary decent people, the great majority of Australians have every right to expect their Government to act in their interests.

I want to put this matter in perspective. I am sure that the majority of people like my Government, respect absolutely the right of dissenters to dissent, and the right of demonstrators to demonstrate. But it must be within the Law. We support South Vietnam. Our soldiers fought there with great courage. We are still helping with training even though our troops are home. We support the latest action by the United States. Why? - because it is honourable and right, and because we are opposed to aggression. Yet - what do we see on the other side of the political fence?

Support for North Vietnam has been given by the Labor Party here in this state. Support for an aggressor, exposed for all to see. No longer can the Labor Party talk nonsense about the war being an internal rebellion or civil war and therefore nobody's business.

Let's look at another example of the false and dangerous values of our opponents. They have declared themselves against compulsory National Service. We, the Liberals are for it because there is no other way of keeping our armed forces up to the strength required to meet our defence obligations to the Australian people. The Labor Party has always said it would scrap National Service. That would be - mark you - a political not a defence decision. But in the last day or two they have started to talk with two voices and adopt two standards. Perhaps they wouldn't scrap it right away. Or perhaps they would. Who knows? And perhaps they wouldn't pull out of the five-power defence arrangements in Singapore-Malaysia: Or perhaps they would. They have always said so until recently! Well, who knows?

I mention these matters because these are at the heart of the demonstrations which have been bringing chaos to the streets of our capital cities. The Australian people must judge for themselves, the degree to which demonstration and violence would grow worse with a Labor Government looking with a benevolent eye on the law-breakers - the draft resisters - the violent demonstrators and the aggressors against friendly countries.

My Government wants to minimise the divisions within the Australian community not to enlarge and inflame them. We want the Australian people to know we stand for respect for the Law. In the face of the challenge that is so clearly aimed at the Government by militants and some Labor-inspired agitators.

We have had economic difficulties as a major preoccupation in this past year. We have been quick to react to changing conditions. In the months ahead I am confident we will make steady, solid progress which will prove to be the justification of everything we have done in the past year. I ask you to join me now in preparing and working for a handsome election win. You have your part to play in securing that victory. Let us do it together.
