



PRIME MINISTER

1972 FEDERAL ELECTION

RESPECT FOR THE LAW

Television Broadcast by the Prime Minister, the Rt.

Hon. William McMahon, CH, MP.

There is no issue which divides the Liberal and Labor Parties more than the issue of respect for the law.

Our approach is quite clear. We believe that the laws of Australia as made by Parliament and upheld by the Courts must be respected and observed by everyone. That is basic to the survival of our democratic society.

I am sure the overwhelming majority of you support this view. You know as we know, that to reject the authority of the law is to advocate force as a substitute for lawful authority. We will never accept this.

Labor leaders on the other hand hold opposite views. Many of them, including Mr Whitlam, have encouraged breaches of the law. In Victoria, they have endorsed a self-confessed law-breaker, Barrie Johnston, as a candidate for the elections. Mr Whitlam sought to justify his support of Johnston by claiming that draft-dodging is not a crime: An amazing proposition for one who seeks to be Prime Minister.

By holding this view, Mr Whitlam is advocating that every citizen has a right to put his own value on the law; to obey those laws which suit him and to disobey those which do not; this is a condition of anarchy.

The Liberal Party's attitude is clear. We will always defend the right of lawful protest and dissent. It is an essential element in the democratic process, and it must never be modified. But we believe there is only one way to change the law. That is by the will of the majority expressed through Parliament.

Labor leaders are quick to react when violence and law-breaking touch them. For years the Liberal Party has warned of the dangerous influence of communists in certain trade unions. We have condemned their militant tactics and their abuse of union power. But the response of the Labor Party has been a conspiracy of silence.

Labor has accused us of kicking the communist can. It took a physical assault on the respected union leader, John Ducker, the President of the New South Wales Branch of the Labor Party, for Labor leaders to admit that union violence might be a problem.

Yet Mr Whitlam uttered not a word of protest when some building workers hammered down work done by apprentices at a High School in his own electorate.

So strong is the power of the left wing militants in the Labor Party that it can silence the Leader of the Opposition, even when the rights of his own constituents are abused. What kind of double standard is this?

There is no double standard in our attitude to these issues. We believe that the law should apply with equal force to everyone, unlike certain members of the Labor Party.

We utterly reject the proposition that some people, particularly union militants, should be placed above the law. That is a dangerous concept - and an incitement to anarchy.

We shall always believe in the right of lawful protest and dissent.

But my Government and my Party say that Parliamentary authority and respect for the law are the basis of our society.

We stand fast by this concept and believe the great majority of you stand with us.

27 NOVEMBER, 1972