



EMBARGO: 6:30 pm

# PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIASUNDAY, 24 FEBRUARY, 1980

## ELECTORATE TALK

Last week in Federal Parliament, by an overwhelming vote, the House of Representatives condemned the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union as a gross violation of the United Nations charter; as an act of aggression and tyranny, creating potentially the greatest threat to international peace and security since 1945.

It noted that a significant majority of world opinion, including the Islamic nations, has viewed the invasion with grave concern and called for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

More importantly, it resolved that all independently-minded nations should take action to register with the Government and people of the Soviet Union the international abhorrence of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

These views of the Australian Parliament reflect the unyielding belief around the world that action must be taken against the Soviets to show them that a price must be paid for blatant abuse of accepted standards of international behaviour.

Australia, like many other nations, has given urgent attention to measures against the Soviet Union. It is vital that the Soviet Union should understand clearly the choices that it faces. There is a need for a clear and unambiguous message that the free world will not tolerate their behaviour. Paramount consideration must be given to actions, taken by independently-minded countries, which will have the greatest impact on the Soviet Union.

Following discussions with leaders of the United States, Europe, and Asia, the Government saw no point in incurring punitive costs to Australia by action that would have little or no impact on the Soviet Union.

Our trade policy with the Soviet Union is consistent with that of the United States and other friendly Western countries. In particular, we have agreed not to pick up the shortfall in Soviet imports of grain brought about by the United States suspension of additional grain sales. But consistent with the attitude of major international exporters we have decided that trade sanctions should only be pursued if they are capable of having a substantial effect on the Soviet Union.

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That is particularly true of mineral exports. Not only is the Soviet Union relatively self-sufficient in mineral supplies, but they also have other sources of supply quite apart from Australia. It is not possible to have any impact on the Soviet Union in this area.

The same is true of wool. The Soviet Union is one of the world's biggest producers of wool and has large stockpiles. Australia supplies no more than 2 per cent of the Soviet Union's total fibre requirement. So here again is another area where we are not capable of taking a stand against the Soviet Union which would force them to recognise the cost that they must bear for their unacceptable and aggressive behaviour.

It is now accepted, not only by the Australian Government but by an increasing number of Governments throughout the world, that a boycott of the Olympic Games, more than any other sanction, would bring home to the Soviet Union an understanding of the international condemnation of what it has done in Afghanistan.

This is not a step to be taken lightly or happily by any Government, least of all by a country like Australia which has had a distinguished record in the Olympic Games since their inception in 1896. I am very much aware of the sacrifices it would mean for young Australians.

Strong feelings held by my Government about our participation at the Olympic Games in no way diminish our regard for the contribution made by Australian athletes to our national reputation and our international standing. And because these are highly regarded by all Australians, I have already indicated that my Government will do all it can to promote and support the organisation of alternative international sports competitions. I would hope that at these, opportunity would be given to all Australian athletes to test their skills and seek international recognition for their efforts. But we believe that it is wrong that a country engaged in the invasion, occupation and suppression of a people should be regarded as fit to host the Olympic Games.

We believe the Soviet Union's behaviour is clearly in breach of the Olympic ideals; clearly in defiance of accepted international standards by which we all must seek to live if we are to respect freedom and seek peace. The claim by some that depriving Moscow of the Games would be letting politics interfere with sport is foolish and empty.

In the Soviet Union every aspect of life, public and private, is subordinated to the demands of politics. And in no field of Soviet life is this principle being applied more intensely or more comprehensively than in the mounting of the Olympic Games. An official communist party document circulated last year in the Soviet Union claims that the holding of the Games in Moscow is "convincing proof of the universal recognition of the historical importance and correctness of the course of our country's foreign policy". It goes on to say, and I quote: "More than ever before ... the Olympic Games have turned into an event of great social and political significance."

The Soviets themselves have spelled out the way in which they would seek to use sport for their political purposes. Whatever the intention of the world's athletes, their presence in Moscow would be used politically by the Soviet Government. They would be photographed and filmed on television and discussed on Russian radio as paying homage to the Soviet Union. I have said before that the Soviet Union and its foreign policy must not be allowed such a triumph.

The world cannot afford to accept this only months after the Soviet Union has invaded a small non-aligned country and murdered thousands of its people. Indeed, a boycott of the Games is the only sanction whose effects could not be hidden from the Russian people.

The Russian people have been told for years now that the awarding of the Games to Moscow not only represents international acceptance of the Soviet way of life, but also that it will bring to Moscow thousands of athletes and tourists from the West to pay homage to the Soviet Union. That is the way the Soviet leadership operates. It tells the Russian people only what it wants them to know.

But a boycott of the Olympic Games and its effects - an Olympic village half empty; an Olympic programme of events decimated by absences; thousands of tourists absent; national flags missing from the main arena; an opening ceremony and march-past, featuring few nations, the visual opposite of what the Russian people have been told to expect - all these cannot be hidden from the Russian people. This is the kind of collective action independent nations of the world must take to prevent other Afghanistans.

The Australian Government's response to the Soviet invasion has been measured and realistic. The Government has an unequivocal obligation to protect the security and well-being of this and future generations of Australians. Along with other nations in the world, we have a clear responsibility to undertake a greater effort, a greater response - even if it does mean a greater cost, as it will - to preserve the independence and freedom of our people. We have met that challenge and we will meet any new challenge that might arise.