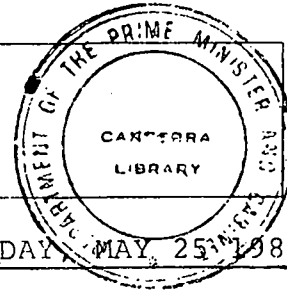




# PRIME MINISTER



FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, MAY 25, 1980

## ELECTORATE TALK

The executive of the Australian Olympic Federation, against the strongest possible advice of the Government, has decided by a 6 to 5 vote to send an Olympic team to Moscow.

The executive is plainly uneasy about its own decision. The way Mr Grange announced the decision pointed to a conflict of interest - duty to Australia against duty to the Olympics.

It is plain that that 6 who voted for Moscow placed their duty to the Olympics above their duty to Australia. The Government had said it was a matter of the highest national importance - one that touched the national interest and the future security of this nation.

The decision is wrong. It remains wrong.

It fills me with great sadness because it is a decision taken for today regardless of its impact on tomorrow, next year and the years beyond. It is a decision in the interests of a small band of Olympic athletes. It is a decision contrary to the interests of hundreds of thousands of young Australian men and women - and of all other Australians - who will not be going to Moscow.

There were many of those who competed in the Berlin Olympics of 1936, who paid the supreme sacrifice after the World War began in 1939. In that war, tens of millions of people were killed. It could so easily have been stopped in the middle '30s if Britain, France and the United States had understood what it was all about.

Now, the United States and major countries of Europe are trying to avoid making the same tragic mistakes in the early part of the 1980s that were made in the latter part of the 1930s.

Determination and support of their own people, courage in the face of difficulty, and a clear and direct understanding of what it is all about is essential to the leadership of free nations. It is essential if the world is to tread a peaceful path through the international dangers that lie ahead.

The Australian Olympic Committee could have contributed to this overall purpose. They could have said to themselves: "What does playing games in Moscow really mean?"

We have stated repeatedly how the Soviets will use the decision. Those nations who compete in Moscow will be regarded as not firmly opposed to Soviet expansion. What athletes and officials think of that is irrelevant. That is how the Soviets will depict it.

They will therefore be emboldened. They will be encouraged to say: "We invaded Afghanistan. We moved our armies into that non-aligned, inoffensive country, and the Western World has not exacted a price".

How a majority of the 11 men of the executive of the Olympic movement could place games in Moscow above this vast and large national interest, I cannot understand. I fail totally to comprehend how 11 good Australians, as they are, can take such a short term view of life, of their future, of their obligations to this nation.

Perhaps the issues became confused in Australia because Mr Hayden started supporting an effective boycott and then opposed it. The governments of the nations of our region, of New Zealand - supported by the Labor opposition in New Zealand - were all strongly in support of the boycott.

It needs to be clearly understood that there is an effective boycott in place. A boycott must be measured, not by the numbers of nations who attend, or by the numbers who stay away, but by the sporting strength of those athletes who attend, or who stay away.

The great sporting nations - the United States, Canada, Germany and Japan are staying away. They are supported by other countries such as Kenya, of notable athletic prowess, a number of others from Africa and the Islamic world, and by nearly every other nation from our part of the world - China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Fiji. That beyond doubt, constitutes an effective boycott.

Medals won in Moscow will be devalued medals. But again, the tragedy may be that even those who win medals, a short time after the event, may well wish that they had not attended, may well wish that they had not won. They will not carry the mark of pride, excellence, normally associated with the Olympics. They will be the "1980 medals", which will carry a connotation all of their own.

Some people have said that if the Government feels so strongly why does it not direct the Olympic Federation. If we had the formal power to do so - if it had been our responsibility - of course we would have. But Olympic Federations have been established independent of government. They have been busy asserting their independence. In Australia, by that very assertion, they themselves carry that responsibility to act not only as Olympic administrators, but also as Australians.

They have told Australia which they put first. It is a sad and tragic decision. Young athletes do not remember of course, what happened in the 1930s, it was before their time. That cannot be said of the majority of the Olympic Federation executive - most of whom lived through that time.

I think we all know that the views I have had of Soviet expansionism are not new. My concerns and fears about the use to which the Soviet Union might ultimately put its military might, have been expressed many times over many years. They were often stated when it was an unpopular view. I regret they have all too tragically been proved right. That gives me no pleasure at all.

Let me make the point strongly. Australia is not an insignificant nation. If members of that Olympic executive thought that an Australian decision did not matter in the wider equation, then they are wrong. Australia is not only a great sporting nation, we are a middle ranking power.

We have always been a firm ally of those great nations fighting for world freedom and independence. In this instance, our history and our future placed obligations upon us which should have demanded a certain decision of the Olympic executive.

That they forgot their history and denied Australia's future, that they forgot Australia's role, in the taking of this decision compounds the tragedy, because I know they are all good Australians.

While an acceptance had to be lodged with the Soviets by 24 May, the Olympic Executive could still reverse that decision any time until shortly before the Games begin. I would not be surprised to see the position of additional European sporting bodies move at a later date to non-attendance in Moscow. In a number of countries, there is a good deal of disquiet about the decisions to attend.

In Australia, the passage of time has not diminished the strength of the Government's view. We never thought we were embarking on a popular path, trying to persuade a great sporting nation like Australia to stay away from the Olympic Games.

It was bound to have opponents, but we were impelled to take our stand because we believe it to be right - because we believe it to be necessary in the discharge of our responsibilities to every Australian.

Let me ask one final question. How many lives is a medal worth? How many people have to be killed by Soviet armies before we will have total unity in this country on whether or not to compete in Moscow.

The Government puts Australia before the Olympics. I ask all Australians to do just that. There is still time.