



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SATURDAY 31 MAY 1980

SPEECH TO THE YOUNG LIBERALS IN THE GREAT HALL NATIONAL GALLERY

I am happy to be here tonight and to share a birthday with you.

The Young Liberal movement was ten years old when I entered Parliament.

I suppose it could be said, without exaggeration, that the 25 years since then have been years of excitement and innovation; years which have confirmed Liberalism as the driving political force behind Australia's progress.

Tonight provides a fitting opportunity to acknowledge the contribution during this time by the Young Liberal movement.

Its efforts have been characterised by a consciousness of the need to be attuned to the problems and the potentialities of young Australia.

In order that we meet this need adequately, it is important to recruit more and more of each generation of young Australians to the cause of Liberalism; to enjoin them with us in an unyielding commitment to meet successfully the challenges that confront us.

The passage of 25 years since my entry into Parliament has strengthened me in the belief that, as Australians, we have an unrivalled inheritance in Australia.

We have increasing responsibilities to protect that inheritance.

What I want to suggest to you tonight, is that we must never vacate the battlefield on which is waged the fight for Australia's freedom and values - the fight for our very security.

Those who have preceded us, by sacrifice and example, are the source of our rich legacy.

Now, opportunities beckon us which, if taken, promise to make our inheritance even greater for generations who follow.

That is why, in celebrating a birthday, in reflecting on the passing of another year or another decade, we need to ask ourselves whether as individuals, as a movement, or as a nation we are growing up as well as growing older.

Because we are a bit older, we need also to expect that we are a bit wiser; a bit clearer about what we want from our country; a bit more committed to the part we are to play in the nobler tasks of humanity.

This will require from us the determination to seek from our philosophy a relevance for the times ahead.

25 years ago, it would have been difficult to anticipate the changes that have occurred since then, at home and abroad.

At home, in 1955, there were ten universities in Australia; now there are nineteen.

There were 49,000 students in tertiary education; now there are 317,000.

There were 220 vehicles per thousand head of population; in 1979 there were 490.

And our national development has undergone tremendous change.

A rich, artistic and cultural talent today complements our national performance.

The world of theatre, opera, ballet, film science, literature and sport has produced great Australians.

Our record at home and abroad is a catalogue of diversity and achievement; for our size, perhaps unparalleled throughout the world.

Yet, on the international front, even in 1955, there was an air of world uncertainty.

Australian soldiers had been involved in the Korean conflict only a few years before.

One year earlier, a European power had been defeated in Vietnam; and in Europe, the Cold War continued to threaten another disaster involving the great powers.

At that time, as young Australian men and women, none of us would have been able to say with confidence that there would be no world war for 25 years.

Yet that has been the case in spite of major and tragic conflict especially in South East Asia and Africa.

Perhaps one of the consequences of a long interval of relative peace has been the very real danger that those for whom peace and freedom are secure, lose sight of the predicament of those to whom both are denied.

That those who enjoy the privileges of freedom become complacent about the need for vigilance in its defence.

Generations in the West have grown up without knowing the horror of war; without understanding the price of freedom; without having an example in their lifetime of the barbarism of which mankind is capable.

This is a momentous achievement which we must continue to defend.

Indeed, in the period since 1955, many of us in the West have been part of an era of unprecedented economic expansion.

As part of that expansion, two new powers, Japan and Germany emerged from the wreckage of World War II.

Two former enemies, now our friends, provide for Australia a greater sense of security and a stronger alliance in the free world.

This is symptomatic of many changes in the world order; a simple index of that change is the rise of nation states reflected by membership of the United Nations.

At the beginning of 1955, there were 56 member states.

Today the membership is 152.

These new members are predominantly from Africa and Asia - former colonies of the European empires.

This has meant reduced political domination by Europe with the emergence of the Third World as an increasingly powerful force in world affairs.

Further, the concept of monolithic communism that arose from the Second World War has also changed.

The disillusionment of China with Soviet behaviour, during the period when the two were closely allied, is manifest in continuing Chinese distrust of Soviet imperialism and in China's determination, now, to pursue its own course.

The same spirit of independence guided Tito's Yugoslavia.

In this way, both countries have come to play important roles in world affairs.

With these and other changes, and our relative remoteness over 35 years from major international disturbances, has come a change in attitudes.

For too long, there has been a pernicious complacency surrounding much of the well-being we enjoy.

Our advantages have been, to some, de-valued by familiarity.

For too many, the contrasts between political systems have become blurred.

Too often, the delusion is promoted that many of the benefits of democracy are consistent with socialism; that most social systems have the same fundamental objectives; that a free society can survive without effort, without will, without commitment.

This view is taken by those with so little understanding of the incomparable benefits and virtues of democracy that they are willing to allow them to be chipped away.

By people with so little understanding of the future, that the present does not matter that much.

By people who are luke warm and uncommitted to idealism and Liberalism; uncritical of socialism or communism.

By people who ask apologetically, what is in a name?

By people with so little to believe in that they have nothing to defend.

When an appreciation of the virtues of a way of life is lost, there is no will for its defence.

Is it not time to understand that what we de-value today, we may lose tomorrow?

Is it not time to ask whether we have taken the precious gift of continuing peace too much for granted; whether we have been spoiled by economic growth; whether we have been in receipt of so much of the world's goodness that we have become blind to the world's threats.

There are those who argue that our blindness derives from a convenient habit of accommodating the behaviour of many countries and regimes which pose as the enemies of freedom.

Solzhenitsyn argued only a few years ago that:

"The anguish of a divided world gave birth to the theory of convergence between the leading Western countries and the Soviet Union."

He spoke of this as:

"A soothing theory which overlooks the fact that these worlds are not at all evolving towards each other and that neither one can be transformed into the other without violence."

"Besides," he said, "convergence inevitably means acceptance of the other side's defects and this can hardly suit anyone."

We seem to have moved too close to a tolerance of the defects and human misery inflicted on peoples of the world by oppressive regimes.

Indeed, it was the acceptance by the West of the defects of the Soviet Union in the period since World War II, that prompted Solzhenitsyn to proclaim that a decline in courage, is the most striking feature, that an outside observer notices in the West.

Acknowledging the existence of courageous individuals in public life and in the influencing of events of the West, Solzhenitsyn went to to condemn those who exhibit:

"A depression, passivity and perplexity in their actions and their statements; even more so in their self-serving rationale as to how ... morally justified it is to base ... policies on weakness and cowardice."

He spoke of these forces in the West as being:

"Tongue-tied and paralysed when they deal with powerful government and threatening forces; with aggressors and international terrorists."

It is not easy to dismiss such criticism.

Especially when the Soviet leadership has shown, all too often, that where it perceives the opportunity for a Soviet advance, the concern for peace is instantly put aside.

Remember the invasion of Hungary in 1956; the Berlin Wall in 1961; the Cuban missile crisis in 1962; the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

We do not need to condemn them; for them condemn themselves.

In the wake of instability and tension created by this behaviour, attempts at Detente developed in the early 70s.

But it soon became apparent, that Detente meant different things to different people.

Under its umbrella, while the United States diminished its relative expenditure on defence, Soviet defence spending remained high and absorbed 11-13 per cent of the total Soviet income each year.

The comparable United States figure was around 5 per cent.

Detente, in the sense of meaning a lessening of tensions, applied in Europe; but elsewhere it had no meaning at all.

It is doubtful if the high expectations raised by Detente were ever justified.

Speaking on Moscow radio on November 12, 1968, President Brezhnev had outlined the extent to which the Soviet Union would go to protect socialism, when he said:

"... the establishment and defence of the sovereignty of states which have embarked upon the road of building socialism is of particular significance for us communists ... when internal and external forces hostile to socialism seek to reverse the development of any socialist country towards a restoration of the capitalist order ... this is the concern of all socialist countries."

Here is explicit proof of the Soviet determination that once a country adopts socialism, it will be prevented by the Soviet Union from ever throwing off its shackles.

And after Detente had been welcomed in Western Europe, President Brezhnev himself proclaimed that Detente:

"...does not in the slightest abolish, nor can it abolish or alter the laws of the class struggle."

As a result, since Detente, we have seen the Soviet Union actively and openly seeking to further its international influence by subversion, by the provision of arms and the use of surrogates in:

- . Angola
- . Ethiopia
- . The Yemen and
- . Vietnam.

Of course, the most recent and most brazen example has been in Afghanistan.

As a result of this invasion, the Soviet Union has so far succeeded in achieving:

- . the creation of a buffer state
- . a closer proximity to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean
- . access to alternative bases for strategic aircraft, should the USSR desire it
- . an ability to deploy troops across the Pakistani border
- . an inherent ability, depending on the type of aircraft that may be deployed, to provide tactical air support over the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the eastern half of Saudi-Arabia.
- . the inherent ability to provide limited air support to the Soviet Indian Ocean squadron.

Who could deny that these developments represent an unqualified threat in a critical region of the world.

In these circumstances, there is no substitute for effective co-operation in the support of national independence and individual freedoms.

There is no substitute for effective co-operation in the defence of values we cherish.

In all our history we have stood with allies when values important to our way of life were threatened.

Unless like minded countries and people so stand today, one by one we will fall, diminishing everywhere, liberty and the right to be free.

This is the lesson of history.

It is the lesson that has not been learnt by our political opponents.

Why is it that Mr. Hayden accuses President Carter of election year politics almost as though President Carter had engineered the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan?

In his eagerness to criticise the Australian Government Mr. Hayden slips into the error of seeming to make excuses for the Soviet Union.

I know he says that he opposes the invasion of Afghanistan.

Yet he and his Party have put themselves in the position of opposing measures designed to send a clear signal of our abhorrence and determination to the Soviet Government and people.

We are entitled to know why.

The recent months have provided a new and significant opportunity for independently minded countries, individuals and thinkers to indicate that this is the time when we must demonstrate a collective international rejection of Soviet imperialism.

This opportunity has been welcomed and accepted by countries in our region: by Fiji; by Indonesia; by Malaysia; by Papua New Guinea; by the Philippines; by Singapore; by Thailand; by China.

By our powerful trading partners and friends: Japan, Canada and Germany.

And in New Zealand, where the Olympic Committee has decided to go to Moscow, the Leader of the Labor Party has joined with the Government in a strong call, as recently as 15 April, that New Zealand should

"take the strongest possible stand against ... competing at the Games."

Is it strange or is it natural that the Australian Labor Party, in the face of such concerted support for freedom and national independence stands as the odd man out?

The decisions concerning participation at Moscow are decisions concerning national and international priorities and principles.

The United States of America is the unchallenged leader of the free world.

It remains the only country with the power ultimately to defend the free world.

To undermine support for this power, is to insult the priority we give to freedom and to deny the recognition we owe to those strong enough or willing enough to defend it.

A new international challenge confronts us.

But challenge has been with us throughout history.

It has involved nations, and men and women, in difficult choices, significant decisions.

Such decisions and choices always have greater significance for young people, the quality of whose lives in the years ahead depend so much on the response that is made to challenge now.

We need to understand the challenge, the danger, the threat.

We need a clear eye for our own objectives; a firm hand in reaching our goals.

Let us proclaim the principles that guide the values we defend.

When decisions appear hard and complex let us look to our principles and our objectives in order to clear the course that we must pursue.

But in pursuing our principles and values, we must remember that the Soviet Union is also of this world; that, ultimately, they and we must find a means of living together if peace is to endure.

It must be understood that our determination is not directed against the Russian people; but against the policies of expansion and domination pursued by the Soviet leadership.

These policies have come together in Afghanistan.

That is why world leaders and individuals, concerned for human values, concerned for the cause of mankind, have determined to send a clear signal to Moscow.

A signal, whose strength demonstrates to the Soviet Union that the judgements of the world cannot be ignored.

Each of us has a role to play in sending that signal.

Each of us has a commitment to our own future.

Without that commitment, our freedom and, perhaps, in the end, its existence will not be sustained.

This is why each generation must be prepared to defend for itself the right to liberty, if liberty and the pursuit of happiness are to be guaranteed and secured.

What we defend is an inheritance which extends beyond the span of a lifetime.

Today's responsibility is ours.

Let us fulfill it well.