



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, 31 MAY, 1981

ADDRESS TO NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DRAMATIC ARTS DINNER, SYDNEY

This I think is the unfairest night of all. How can a rank amateur be asked possibly to get up and address you. You have had all the advantages. You have been through that terrible place with all those frightful facilities, and you are all professionals. But I am just the amateur; an amateur from the country, from the bush. To have to speak in front of those who really know how - Tamie suggested that I get a few quick lessons from Kate at dinner. I thought that I have got too set in my ways and that I needed more than a few quick lessons at dinner.

When I saw that film, it reminded me rather of our Party Room. That is that they were crowded in together, because we use our Party Room for all sorts of purposes too. But then a year or so ago the Parliament decided that it should get a new Party Room and they were going to have a new building for that, so I suppose it would be rather unfair to insist that you continue to use your old one.

That film, I think, takes an enormous risk; the one we have just seen. It was done by the A.B.C. and they are very expert and very professional. I just wonder whether they had some subterranean reasons: did they really think that this was going to help NIDA get that extra money or did they really think that as a result of that film, the Government would take the money away from NIDA and give it to the A.B.C., because they made it quite plain that in those awful, terrible facilities which are beyond belief, with no equipment whatsoever, but you have done all these wonderful things and produced all these great films and great artists. Now, how you could ever justify a new building; I just want it written down, I just want those cast-iron guarantees for the 10 and 20 years ahead after this new building is completed. How are you going to give me those guarantees so that we know that you will take Australia's reputation that much higher than it is right at this very time. That I suppose is going to be a challenge for those in charge of the school, those who will go through it, those who will be producing our plays and writing our plays and producing Australia's films.

There is a bit of a sore point about films right at this moment. If I could tell you how it all began. Before the last election I was being made up for one of those terrible commercials that politicians try to do but which they never should. We had not finalised the policy speech for the last election at this time. The girl who was making me up had done it on a number of occasions and always at election times because she had always been successful. That is the way you win elections; you have the right make-up.

But I just said, how is she going and what was happening. She said 'no good at all'. 'Why not'? Because she had just had 16 films cancelled. I think she used to contract doing her make-up work to films and whatever. John Howard, in his keenness to stop all those terrible tax-avoiding cheats, had caught up with scheme which had been used quite successfully to fund Australian films. I thought, well that is no good, I had better really find out what the score is because we want Australia's films to go on being made, with a high reputation right around the world. Then, Bob Ellicott, as a result of that, proposed policies which we adopt. Then everyone advised us that there were going to be people who will do things that they should not and that that would discredit the scheme. As a result, some modifications were made, and as a result of that there are some people in trouble; and as a result of that John Howard has had discussions over this last weekend. As a result of that we will have another discussion tomorrow morning or on Tuesday morning.

There is no promise in that except the consciousness of a problem, and also a very firm desire to make sure that the professionals in this room are to be able to go on doing great things for themselves, but for Australia also.

I do not really know what to say about the Razor Gang, because before I came along here tonight, I said "what am I allowed to say about NIDA". We promised \$3 million but we did not specifically say when we were going to give the money. We could keep that promise after the election in the year 2001 or something or other. But Wal Fife has told me that you would not be able to start building under two or three or four months anyway. He assured me that he believes that he can have all the necessary support available to enable you to start building when you want to start building. I put it that way because John Howard rather frightens me, but I am sure he does not frighten Wal Fife, so he would expect the funds.

There is one other thing which I have discussed with both Ministers concerned, and that does involve the future recurrent funding for the school, for NIDA. Some sort of compromise I think has been reached. I will give you the good news first and the bad news after. The specific responsibility of NIDA will be transferred to Home Affairs and the Environment, where I think it ought to be. The bad news is that unofficially and informally the Tertiary Education Commission will still be asked to give advice on the level of recurrent funding. That does not necessarily mean that advice will be followed, but it does mean it will be sought. If you can go on co-operating with the ABC to produce films like the one you just did, I suppose you will not have any trouble with the Tertiary Education Commission either.

There is only one other thing that I would like to say. I suppose in many ways my Government over the years has got the name - or I hope it has - for trying to run the economy better. But that is not an end in itself. It is only the start. We try and run an economy better so people can look after their own affairs; so that the company you have asked along here tonight can make profits and there contribute to that million-dollar appeal. I do not think they will contribute very much if they are not making profits. They might, but they would be strange sorts of companies I think if they did. But also so that the nation will have resources to do the things that it needs to do and wants to do well and more effectively than it otherwise could; and supporting the National Institute of

Dramatic Arts, supporting the Australian Ballet, the Australian Opera, supporting the arts in general terms through the Australia Council, and so many other things which Australians can do well whether it is medical research or marine science or whatever.

Without resources, without managing an economy well, we are not going to be able to do any of these things. Doing that, is just the first thing, but the end result is so that we can all build a better Australia, but more particularly so that Australians with talents, with energies, with initiative, with imagination and heart can go about doing the things they want to, to create a better society and to provide some fulfillment to themselves and to give enjoyment to their fellow Australians.

That, in my unprofessional and amateurish way, is perhaps my understanding of what your profession is about. It gives great pleasure to many tens of thousands of people. But it also gives pride; pride in what Australians can perform in a way which is recognised around the world as of world quality and better than most. Good fortune to all of you.