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## 5-1-2-85



Speech & media  
files: Australian  
Liberal Federal  
Council, 20/9/76

3/1/85

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# Conservative Central Office

## NEWS SERVICE

876/76

Release time: 01.00 Hours/Monday, 20th September, 1976.

**The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P. (Barnet, Finchley)**

**Leader of the Opposition**

Extracts from a speech by The Rt. Hon. Mrs Margaret Thatcher, M.P., (Barnet, Finchley) speaking to The Liberal Party Federal Council at the Lakeside Hotel, Canberra on Monday, 20th September, 1976.

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The real difference between the Conservative Party and our socialist political opponents is that we believe that government should act to enlarge the freedom of the individual to live his own life whilst they believe the government should diminish it.

Our way upholds the importance of the individual and makes provision for him to develop his own talent. To us, all individuals are equally important, but all different. It is this difference which gives richness and variety, and strength, to the life of the community.

This philosophy is diametrically opposite to the Socialist approach which insists in putting everyone into efficient units to do whatever the collectivist socialist wisdom considers best. But freedom is individual.

There is no such thing as 'collective freedom'. Nevertheless a false 'collective' mystique has entered the language of Socialism.

Common to all collectivist theories is the presumption that "Social justice" is more equitable than justice to the individual; that the "social wage" is more desirable than the income a man or woman earns, and spends or saves; that "classes" matter more than people; above all, that "collective rights" are more important than the rights of the individual citizen.

/It is high

It is high time we exposed these fallacies. Take the notion of "collective rights" now ingrained into the vocabulary of Socialists.

Of course, by joining together to do things collectively we can and we do acquire greater power. But we do not win greater rights. The Socialist concept that rights belong "collectively" to groups, and not to individuals is extremely dangerous. It implies that some men, those in groups, are entitled to such rights, while others are not. If this sounds rather theoretical let me remind you how it can work out in practice.

The most conspicuous example is the Soviet Union. There, more than anywhere else, the collectivist dogma has - in the name of the "people" - made the State the owner and manager of all the means of production, distribution and exchange.

All rights in Russia are "collective rights". All justice is "social justice"; all assets are "public assets"; even morality is judged by reference to "Socialist ethics", "State crimes" or "Marxist-Leninist principles". And the result?

Far from abolishing poverty Socialism has kept the vast majority of the Soviet people miles behind the western world in standards of living and quality of life.

Instead of "superior productivity", based on workers' control, its State owned industries and collectivised farms are steadily falling further and further behind those of the West.

Indeed, it was reported in March 1975 that 27 per cent of the total value of Soviet farm output comes from private plots that occupy less than 1 per cent of the nation's agricultural lands. At that rate, private plots are roughly forty times as efficient as land worked collectively.

Beyond these material comparisons is the spiritual measure of collectivism's failures in Russia. Socialist "Liberation" has meant the extinction of even that modicum of liberty which the Russians were beginning to gain under the Tsars.

Socialist "realism" has meant that neither artists nor writers have been free to express their own ideas. Anything that conflicts with the collectivist mystique is feared, and is accordingly condemned and banned.

Note, too, this further perversity. The "condemning", and the "banning" are all done in the name of "the people". Thus, the People's Courts, the Public Prosecutors, the State-controlled industries are presented to us as organs of "collective" democracy.

#### CONCLUSION

We have seen that the increasing power of Governments can lead to the extinction of freedom. Can we be certain that our ancient institutions of Parliamentary Democracy and the Rule of Law would prove sufficient to prevent that from happening to us?

Regretfully the answer is NO. By themselves, democratic institutions are not enough to preserve democracy.

Parliaments act by majorities, and majorities are not always right. Let me illustrate the point. If two people vote to take everything away from a third, the decision would be by a majority; but it would not be right. This is an extreme example, but there have been cases where majority legislation has been less than fair to some citizens.

Then, can the rule of law stop a parliamentary majority using their majority unjustly? Again the answer is NO. The courts would have no alternative but to administer any law that had been passed by Parliament.

/It follows that freedom

It follows that freedom cannot be guaranteed by these institutions alone. Ultimately its survival rests on an unwritten moral law, on our belief in certain natural human rights.

They are the rock upon which the institutions of Parliament and the rule of law are built. If the foundations crumble, everything built upon them will perish. It is this underlying moral code which leads ordinary people to judge what is right and just.

But now that so large a proportion of our economy is in the hands of nationalised industries the dismissal of an employee for refusing to join the monopoly union in a monopoly industry can - and sometimes does - mean that a man trained as a train driver, steel worker, or telephone engineer will never again be able to work in his chosen trade.

Is this not a case of the collective right being exercised at the cost of extinguishing personal rights?

A few brave souls have resisted. It is this code which impels Parliament to use its majority as a trust, and pass laws in accordance with our concepts of fairness and justice. It is this code that maintains the rule of law. We are all responsible for upholding these values and standards, not only our national leaders, but citizens as well.

Freedom is our most precious possession. To defend it and maintain it is no passive task, but one that requires continuous vigilance and resolve.

Let it never be said that the dedication of those who love freedom is less than the determination of those who would destroy it.

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LIBERAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

FEDERAL COUNCIL 1976

SPEECH BY THE RT HON MRS MARGARET THATCHER, MP

INTRODUCTION

First, I want to say how delighted I am to be invited to this victory conference. I like celebrations at the best of times but when one is invited to celebrate the return of a party to government that believes in freedom of choice and initiative, I am doubly pleased to join in.

May I say, too, that I hope - indeed expect - this to be the first of a number of celebrations of a similar sort. It is not only victory, but what you do with it, that counts.

Many of us back home have watched with admiration the way in which Mr Fraser and his government have tackled the many problems that face them. Their courage and resolve have been an inspiration to others.

We hope you will enjoy as long and successful a period in office as Sir Robert Menzies, whom I was so very pleased to see the other day.

In politics it is essential from time to time to raise one's eyes - as Winston Churchill said in one of his speeches - from the pages of economics and statistics, and look towards the broad sunlit uplands beyond. Today, I would like to try and do just that.

We face the last quarter of what by any standards is a fascinating century to live in. A century which has seen enormous scientific and technical change. Indeed, I doubt whether we shall ever again see so much change in such a short period.

The whole of the communications and transport revolution, for example, cars aeroplanes, telephones, radio, TV, the advances in medicine, automation in industry, and the immense output of labour-saving devices for the home. And most of this within the span of a single life-time.

Political and social changes in the Western World have been just as far-reaching. The century has brought full adult suffrage - 'One person, one vote'; a vastly increased standard of living on a scale which has made yesterday's luxuries today's minimal necessities; and a range of educational opportunities so wide that it is sometimes difficult for the student to choose between them.

Against the background of technological, economic and social change, a new political debate has commenced in the Western world. It is a debate about the nature and future of democracy. It is an encounter that concerns all free peoples.

It arises between the Socialists who consider they know best what is good for people, and those who think the people know best: between those who think a caring society is one in which everyone irrespective of need is provided with services from the government, and those who think it is one where people are given opportunity and encouragement to provide for themselves and their families, and where those in real need are given generous help.

You will argue that these issues are almost as old as the political debate itself. And that the arguments have been deployed since Aristotle first disagreed with Plato. Yes - but it is not the desire for an intellectual exercise but events themselves which have caused us to look afresh at where we are going, and see whether it is where we want to be.

We know from observation that in countries where the State owns everything, regulates, everything, and directs and controls what people can do, political freedom is rapidly extinguished.

Now, one of the most obvious changes in Western Societies in recent years has been the great increase in the power of government at the expense of the citizen. The question is how much further can we go along this road and still remain a free and democratic society.

Is it possible to lose our freedom, not by some dramatic change but slowly, almost imperceptibly, so that we can hardly notice the change from day to day? If so, oughtn't we to turn back now before we reach the brink?

Let us then consider the role of Government in modern-day society and see what we think it ought to be and what purpose it should serve.

#### 1. The Role of Government

I am reminded of an American saying: "Any Government that is big enough to give you all you want is strong enough to take away everything you have." Much of our history in fact has been devoted to setting limits to the power of Government, but the process has now been reversed.

Twenty years ago the private sector of the British economy constituted 60% of the National Product. It carried a public sector of 40%. Those proportions have changed places. The State sector now forms 60% of the GNP and the private sector 40%.

As one of my colleagues said, - "In the mid-1950's the private horse was larger, stronger and heavier than its State jockey. Now the State jockey is half as big again as the horse". No wonder the horse can't run very fast in the Economic Stakes.

We call ourselves a mixed economy; but the British mixed economy is more out of balance today than any other mixed economy in the West. Even some Socialists are saying that if the public sector gets much larger, democracy itself will be in danger. One consequence of this increasing role of Government is that in Britain the citizen is suffering from one of the highest direct tax levels in the world. Our starting rate of income tax on earned income at 35% is not merely the highest in Europe - it is actually the highest in the world according to one of our Treasury Ministers. In addition only three countries in the world - Algeria, Egypt and Portugal - have a higher top marginal rate of income tax than our own of 83%.

Like you we not only look for reductions in the total of public expenditure, but we must make it our business to see that what is spent in our name is well spent.

We do not doubt the essential need for the Government to take the lion's share of responsibility for the things that it can do best. Defence and law and order must clearly be in this category - though, ironically, these are the very services - defence in particular - some Western Socialist Governments seem least willing to maintain.

Among the other essential services, which only government can efficiently provide in an island like Britain, are most road and public utilities, and nearly all our schools, hospitals and social security insurance. Government also has a clear duty to help care for the sick and the old; to provide a safety net for all those who, through no fault of their own, fall into unemployment, poverty and deprivation.

It is no part of my Party's thinking that we should dismantle the Welfare State, any more than it is yours. Many of its most valuable benefits were introduced by Conservative Governments, and I see you too have made a point of improving services where you think it is advisable and increasing charges where justified. We must remember that nothing is free and, as one phrase has it, "There is no such thing as a free lunch."

The real difference between the Conservative Party and our Socialist political opponents is that we believe the government should act to enlarge the freedom of the individual to live his own life whilst they believe the government should diminish it.

Our way upholds the importance of the individual and makes provision for him to develop his own talent. To us all individuals are equally important, but all different. It is this difference which gives richness, variety and strength to the life of the community.

This philosophy is diametrically opposite to the Socialist approach which insists in putting everyone into efficient units to do whatever the collectivist socialist wisdom considers best. But freedom is individual; there is no such thing as "collective freedom". Nevertheless a false "collective" mystique has entered the language of Socialism.

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Take the notion of "collective rights" now ingrained into the vocabulary of Socialists. Of course, by joining together to do things collectively, we can and we do acquire greater power. But, we do not win greater rights.

The Socialist concept that rights belong "collectively" to groups, and not to individuals, is extremely dangerous. It implies that some men, those in groups are entitled to such rights, while others are not. If this sounds rather theoretical let me remind you how it can work out in practice.

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And the result?

What began as a collectivist ideal degenerated swiftly into tyranny. "Land and freedom" is what the peasants were promised. Lenin and Stalin is what they got. The dream of a People's State abolishing poverty, establishing peace, promoting the brotherhood of man, turned into a nightmare.

Far from abolishing poverty, Socialism has kept the vast majority of the Soviet people miles behind the western world in standards of living and quality of life. Instead of "superior productivity", based on worker control, its State-owned industries and collectivised farms are steadily falling further and further behind those of the West.

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But they have nothing in common with democracy as we in the free world know it. They are the creatures of a new dictatorship. The people's revolution becomes the tyranny of whichever group, or gang, wins the struggle for power.

But what you may ask is the relevance of Russian Socialism to the debate about the role of the State in the Western world? It is the relevance of degree - and of warning.

Fundamentally, the collective mystique which inspires the Socialist parties of much of Europe, including Britain, differs from that in the Soviet system more in degree than in kind.

Thousands of British people have recently lost their individual right to work unless they join a trade union. And in many cases they no longer choose which trade union to belong to: they must join one chosen for them, on pain of being dismissed, and without compensation.

Where numerous private firms are freely competing for labour, this may not be decisive. But now that so large a proportion of our economy is in the hands of nationalised industries dismissing an employee for refusing to join the monopoly union in a monopoly industry can - and sometimes does - mean that a man trained as a traindriver, steel worker, or telephone engineer will never again be able to work in his chosen trade.

Is this not a case of the collective right being exercised at the cost of extinguishing personal rights? A few brave souls have resisted. But for the moment they are trapped between the collectivist pressures of trade union leaders who would rather a man was sacked than that he should defy their demands for conformity, and a Socialist State which has taken away - in the sacred name of equality - any effective protection for the rights of the individual.

That great observer of society, de Tocqueville, was right when he wrote that: "Democracy and Socialism have nothing in common but one word - equality. But notice the difference - while democracy seeks equality in liberty, Socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude."

Democracy - the word is used in all sorts of ways and its meaning has become distorted. So let us look at what it really means. It was Abraham Lincoln, in one of the finest speeches of all time, the Gettysburg Address, who gave us the truest definition of democracy - Government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Note well, what this does not mean. It does not mean government of a section of the people, by a section of the people, for a section of the people. On the contrary, its aim is to ensure that no section or group predominates over any other. The interests of each and every group are equally entitled to consideration. No interest, no minority is to be discarded or forgotten. Nor is government's consideration to be limited to those who are represented by some trade association, union or action group. Most people don't belong to such organisations but their rights are every bit as important as those who do.

Every adult has a vote to elect Parliament. Parliamentary democracy is thus the only institution in the nation that truly represents all the people. A belief in Parliamentary democracy is incompatible with belief in the superior rights of any group, section or class over any other.

But Parliamentary democracy will be meaningless unless those who are elected to take the decisions actually do so. Of course they must consult with all important organisations, have constant discussions and dialogues with the people, see that the issues are clearly put so that everyone may know the consequences of any particular course of action - but the decision; that rests with Parliament, and it must yield to none; or democracy will die.

#### The Rule of Law

There is one other vital safeguard on which so many of our fundamental liberties are based - the rule of law. Without it there can be no freedom.

Some Socialists tend to talk about freedom as if it were just freedom for some to oppress or to exploit others. But that is not freedom, it is tyranny and it is just such a tyranny that the law is there to prevent. The purpose of the law is to protect the weak against the strong.

Conclusion

We have seen that the increasing power of Governments can lead to the extinction of freedom. Can we be certain that our ancient institutions of Parliamentary Democracy and the Rule of Law would prove sufficient to prevent that from happening to us?

Regretfully, the answer is No. By themselves, democratic institutions are not enough to preserve democracy.

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Then, can the rule of law stop a parliamentary majority using that majority unjustly? Again, the answer is No. The Courts would have no alternative but to administer any law that had been passed by Parliament.

It follows that freedom cannot be guaranteed by these institutions alone. Ultimately, its survival rests on an unwritten moral law, on our belief in certain natural human rights, and that no one should displace them.

They are the rock upon which the institutions of Parliament and the rule of law are built. If the foundations crumble, everything built upon them will perish.

It is this underlying moral code which leads ordinary people to judge what is right and just.

It is this code which impels Parliament to use its majority as a trust, and pass laws in accordance with our concepts of fairness and justice. It is this code that maintains the rule of law.

We are all responsible for upholding these values and standards, not only our national leaders, but citizens as well.

Freedom is our most precious possession. To defend it and maintain it is no passive task, but one that requires continuous vigilance and resolve.

The broad sun-lit uplands can only be reached, and kept, by the efforts of the many as well as the few.

Let it never be said that the dedication of those who love freedom is less than the determination of those who would destroy it.

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