On this occasion, I want to talk to you about the importance of the rule of law. To us in country areas, this may seem an odd subject for a topical weekly radio talk.

After all, ours is, on the whole, a law abiding community. The plain fact is that neither you nor I normally query the proposition that laws are laws and must be obeyed, even though we may not particularly like them.

We have elected Members of Parliament whose main function is to make laws, and we accept the democratic obligation upon us to obey those laws.

While it may be self-evident to you that laws are made to be obeyed or changed, I raise the issue because in the last two weeks, the Australian Labor Party has opposed this fundamental principle of our society.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Whitlam, stated in Brisbane that draft dodging was not a crime. Once more, Mr. Whitlam, an experienced lawyer, has encouraged Australians to break a law made by the very legislature of which he is a member.

He did a similar thing eighteen months ago when he issued his infamous "mutiny" advice to young national servicemen. On that occasion, he said he would advise national servicemen who objected to the Vietnam war to declare that they would not obey an order to go to Vietnam.
The background to Mr. Whitlam's most recent outburst is this. The Australian Labor Party has endorsed Mr. Barry Johnston to contest the seat of Hotham in Victoria in the next Federal election. Commonwealth police are seeking Mr. Johnston who is wanted for failing to obey a call-up notice. A few days ago, Mr. Johnston spoke to an A.L.P. meeting behind locked doors at the Victorian Trades Hall. A little later, Mr. Whitlam said in a radio interview that draft dodging was not a crime. He then added, "After this next election there'll be no draft".

I believe that Mr. Whitlam's remarks amount to advocacy to break the law. That a Labor Government would change that law is no justification at all. Coming from a person in a position of prominence and authority, such an argument is thoroughly irresponsible. It amounts to an undermining of the rule of law which the vast majority of citizens in the Australian community accept without question.

I sympathise with Mr. Whitlam's deputy, Mr. Barnard, in his efforts to retrieve the situation. He told the House of Representatives on 2 March that there was a duty to obey the National Service Act until it was repealed. But it was too late. Mr. Whitlam had made the Labor Party's position quite plain.

I ask you to consider the repercussions of applying Labor's principle to the general area of law and order. Imagine the chaos that would result if people refused to obey laws on the grounds that the Opposition was committed to change those laws if it became the Government. Are people to be permitted to refuse to pay taxes or commit criminal offences because they anticipate a change of Government and therefore a change in those laws?
In taking this public position, Mr. Whitlam has sacrificed the basic principle of the rule of law purely in an attempt to satisfy the Labor Party's dominant left-wing which has consistently sought to weaken Australia's defence and security position.

I now turn briefly to an important local matter with which I have been involved in the last few weeks. On 25 February, I made an inspection of the television reception in schools in the Casterton area. Accompanying me was Mr. S. Brownless, a planning engineer at the Australian Broadcasting Control Board. The inspection was arranged with the Shire of Glenelg and it allowed me to see the poor quality of the area's reception, particularly as it deprives the schools of viewing educational programmes designed especially to complement the Victorian Education Department courses.

Several possible solutions were thrown up during the inspection. It was suggested that the A.B.C. could hire time on the Mt. Gambier commercial channel, SES8 for school programmes. Channel 8 is received adequately throughout the Casterton district.

Another suggestion was that since the A.B.C. Channel at Mt. Gambier is widely watched in the Casterton area, there could be coordination between Victoria and South Australia and with the A.B.C. on the screening of school programmes. I have had some discussion with the South Australian Minister for Education and he told me that his department would be prepared to cooperate to see if it would be possible to devise television programmes that would suit the curriculum of both States. I believe this could develop into wider objectives in having programmes that were suitable for all States, and I have asked my department to pursue the matter.
This sort of coordination could be extended to current affairs programmes. Some people in the area said they had no interest in S.A. State affairs, and would prefer to watch the corresponding Victorian programmes.

Among other suggestions was one to establish a community aerial to pick up the Victorian A.B.C. signal, presumably from Ballarat, for the schools and from there to households. But this could be expensive for local people. As another alternative, special tapes and video equipment enabling television programmes to be taped and played back through television receivers could be provided.

I have put all these matters before the Postmaster-General, and hope to have more information for you when my representations and the report of the engineer have been considered fully.

Goodbye for now.