It has become almost trite to say that we live in a time of great change, but the expression is no less true because of that. One of those areas of change with which governments must remain constantly in touch is acceptable community standards. Our attitudes to issues such as censorship changes as the years go by. In many matters, some of the hypocrisy of the Victorian age has given way to frankness in the treatment of a whole range of subjects in books and films and on television.

These moral issues - censorship, abortion and others - are difficult ones for governments. Politicians must respond to changes in people's attitudes with great caution, taking care that in their enthusiasm for reform they do not destroy the basic community values that underpin our way of life.

I believe that in the last few days, some of Australia's politicians have so committed themselves in the areas of censorship and abortion as to threaten the fundamental moral basis of our society.

First, Senator James McClelland declared at a forum at Monash University this month that his party would abolish all censorship except for cinema advertising. In saying this, I think Senator McClelland confirmed what many of us...
have suspected for a long time - that given the opportunity, some political leaders in Australia would go far beyond the bounds of acceptable community standards in 1972. How you can possibly believe that there should be no restriction whatsoever on the material available to our children, I cannot understand.

In this respect I am convinced that Senator McClelland and his colleagues are completely out of touch with the Australian community. The need to prevent some material reaching the hands of children extends beyond the field of pornography. It embraces excessive violence and, perhaps worst of all, incitement for impressionable young minds to reject lawful authority and that normal degree of discipline which I believe it is necessary to maintain, both at school and in the general community.

Like many other people I believe that ideally adults are capable of censoring for themselves the books, films and other material that they may wish to see. But there is available in the world today pornographic and violent material so extreme that I am convinced most Australians would be offended to have it inflicted upon them and their families.

Only two days after Senator McClelland's statement, his party's Victorian State Council changed its abortion law reform policy to allow for abortion on request. I hardly need elaborate except to say that where a woman's life is endangered by the continuation of a pregnancy, an abortion can today be legally performed. I might also add that abortion on request is the publicly stated view of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Whitlam.
3.

Even though the Federal policy of the Senator's party says that its members should have a free vote on the issue, the Victorian decision really amounts to a directive to members. I say this confidently in view of the dominance of the Victorian Branch on the party throughout Australia. This has been demonstrated so many times.

The whole tenor of the campaign against lawful authority, against the rule of law, has been generated in Victoria. Less than two years ago Mr. Whitlam offered advice to young national servicemen which, if they had followed it, would have resulted in mutiny in the armed forces. And earlier this year Mr. Whitlam, a lawyer, declared that draft dodging was not a crime. Just to ensure that the Australian public were aware of the pressures on Mr. Whitlam to commit the Labor Party to breaking the law as a prelude to changing it, the Victorian Branch endorsed a draft dodger as a candidate for a Federal electorate in Melbourne.

It has now become perfectly clear that Senator McClelland and his political colleagues are opposing everything in the community which would retain an element of discipline or self restraint. The results of this attitude could only succeed in weakening the place of the family in the Australian community.

I recently had cause to talk about some of these matters following the publicity given to the Australia Party's policy. I believe that Party is unreasonable in its advocacy of the abolition of censorship and the legalisation of abortion and prostitution. But I recognise that the Australia Party is most unlikely ever to achieve office and be in a position to implement its policies.
However, the official Opposition is a very different kettle of fish. As a party which aspires to govern Australia, its policies must be taken most seriously indeed. Adventures such as the abolition of censorship and the introduction of abortion on request, in my view would be highly irresponsible and would have tragic results for the nation and the traditional family and moral values on which it rests.