**Moratorium March**

*The Age, 9 May 1970, p.15 (Editorial)*

It was, without doubt, the most impressive demonstration seen in Melbourne. The sheer weight of numbers alone was staggering; at least 70,000 people packed in close marching rows across Bourke Street and stretching from Elizabeth to Spring streets. More significantly, the demonstration was non-violent: there were neither broken heads nor broken windows to mar the pleas of the marchers for peace in Vietnam. It was an admirable achievement - especially in view of the size of the crowd and the diverse elements which comprised it.

The demonstration was a forceful reply to those MPs who described intending marchers as “bikies who are pack-raping democracy”. The marchers showed their concern was human agony. Whether we believe their tactics effective, useful or even sensible, they renewed democracy, rather than raped it. By taking PEACEFULLY to the streets, the demonstrators showed that they understood the importance to democracy of effective public expressions of opinion by the people - who are, after all, the ultimate rulers in a democracy. Yesterday’s march cannot be written off by the Government as the antics of communist-influenced fools. It was a legitimate expression of opinion by a substantial expression of the population.

Obviously, the potential for violence was present during yesterday’s demonstration. It was prevented by four factors. First, the professional organisation of the Vietnam Moratorium campaign (whose pamphlet “Tactics to Avert and Minimise Violent Incidents” should be compulsory reading for all demonstrators); second, the responsibility displayed by the marchers themselves; third, the excellent supervision of the marchers by their radio-controlled marshals; fourth, the sanity and understanding displayed by the police. The Victorian Police Force deserves high praise for its performance: it handled a most difficult situation with restraint, good humour and unflappable calm.

The successful demonstration virtually guarantees that more mass demonstrations will be attempted, perhaps in support of causes other than Vietnam. The Vietnam Moratorium Committee has given enlarged meaning to the notion of peaceful public dissent - a right which is basic to free people everywhere. It has also shown that Victorians can bear all the responsibilities attached to this right with maturity and good sense. Yesterday’s demonstrators advanced their cause