

Prime minister declares support for Britain

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When New Zealand declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage was recovering from an operation for colon cancer. Acting Prime Minister Peter Fraser issued a statement in his place.

Two days later Savage spoke to the public from his sickbed at his home in Wellington. The address was broadcast on the radio that evening and widely reported in newspapers over the following days.

Savage's speech was at once an attack on the evils of Nazism and an expression of the country's loyalty to and support for Britain:

Both with gratitude for the past and confidence in the future, we range ourselves without fear beside Britain. Where she goes, we go. Where she stands, we stand. We are only a small and young nation, but we are one and all a band of brothers and we march forward with union of hearts and wills to a common destiny.

Savage died just over six months later, on 27 March 1940, and was succeeded by Fraser, who led the government for the rest of the Second World War.

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