

# The Motto

## **"The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance"**

The motto of the RSL has an interesting history.

In the fourth century BC Demosthenes enunciated the spirit of the motto although he used these words:

"There is one safeguard known generally to the wise, which is an advantage and security to all, but especially to democracies as against despots. What is it? Distrust"

In 1770 the following words were apparently first used by John Philpot Curran in his speech upon his election as Lord Mayor of Dublin:

"The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance."

Then Wendel Phillips, in an address before the Massachusetts Anti Slavery Society in 1852 said:

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty"

Some people have attributed this also to Thomas Jefferson but no one has found any records of Jefferson using the sentence.

In the early 1920's the Victorian Branch of the League suggested that the League should have a motto, and the NSW Branch of the League recommended:

"The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance"

In November 1923 the 8th National Congress of the RSL agreed on the motto recommended by NSW.