

PRIME MINISTER ON "TALK TO THE GIANTS", PERTH.  
INTERVIEWED BY SCHOOL CHILDREN

(VIDEOCASSETTE HELD IN PRESS OFFICE)

John Hudson

In this series young Australians have the opportunity to discuss with the nation's leaders the decisions which will affect their future life in this country. We are delighted to bring together an audience of over 120 and a panel of four young people whose ages range from 12 to 17, and they will "talk to the giants". On this programme we have a very special guest. Will you please welcome the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Malcolm Fraser.

Prime Minister, thank you very much for being with us. Let me set the field a bit. All the questions which are going to be fired at you tonight have been prepared by the people here. They've researched them, they've gone into them very thoroughly, as I think you know. I reckon the next best thing is for you to meet the panel, if you will.

Panel

Leon Cohen - 17-year old student  
Megan Simpson - 16, from Perth College  
Evelyn - 14  
David Monohan - Madington High School.

Question

Mr. Fraser, what is the Australian Government doing to stop strikes?

Prime Minister

Stopping strikes is a continuous battle -if you like to put it - and I think there will always be some unions that go out on strike. One of the things we are doing now in the Commonwealth employment is to make sure that anyone who doesn't do their full job, as directed, as asked, immediately gets stood down and doesn't get paid. So there is a financial penalty if people act in that way. We've tried to strengthen the law so that individuals in a union can have a greater say in that union's affairs and we will continue to do that.

Question

Do you think the unions are more powerful than the Government?

Prime Minister

No, they are not more powerful than the Government, but they are sometimes very powerful and they sometimes behave with total disregard for their effect on other people - people working in other industries - and for the harm they can cause throughout the whole community. I strongly believe that unions

Prime Minister (continued)

cannot and must not be placed above the law. They've got to be responsive to it, just as you are, just as I have to be.

Question

The thought of atomic radiation and leakages and things like that - it kinds of scares me for my future. Why was there no referendum on uranium?

Prime Minister

Governments are elected to govern and if you had a referendum everytime there was an important question, then I don't think Government decisions would ever really be made. You've got to make a decision, you've got to argue that decision, and if people like it they will presumably go on supporting you. If they don't like it, they presumably won't.

Question

Sir, but don't you think this matter was of sufficient importance to have a referendum?

Prime Minister

No, not more important than a lot of other decisions, no I don't. The only decision the Commonwealth Government has made is for mining and export of uranium. I've got no doubt that at some stage-- and I know this State has made a decision to move into nuclear power for peaceful purposes -- it is worth noting that in spite of the accident that took place at Harrisburg, the nuclear power industry has to this point been the safest, more safely developed, as a power industry for peaceful purposes than any other form of power. I saw Professor Titterton on television the other night making a point that a petroleum truck had exploded in Spain and 100 people had been killed. The record, in terms of not hurting people, in the nuclear power industry, is a tremendously good one and that needs to be understood.

Question

With respect sir, I can't contain myself. You said the uranium issue was not of sufficient importance to have a referendum. Are you implying that it is of less importance than the National Anthem?

Prime Minister

I think that's a good question and you've probably got me there. But I felt even though I was in favour of Waltzing Matilda because this is the song that stirs Australian hearts right around the world and which is recognised as Australian. I think this seemed to be a decision which is something that belonged - is personal - to all Australians. But the nuclear matter was one which was complex, difficult and we believed it was a matter that Governments ought to decide in terms of the mining and export of uranium.

Question

But sir, democracy is rule by the people of the people. Now, this is a decision which is going to affect us all and if there is obviously such contention over it, shouldn't it be put to the people rather than you making a decision which perhaps they could totally reject?

Prime Minister

If they wanted to totally reject it, they can do something - that's what a ballot box, that's what a vote, an election is for.

Question

With the next election coming up very soon, how do you think the people...

Prime Minister

Not too soon. It's not next week.

Question

Coming up in a while - how do you think the people will react to your judgement, the decision you have made?

Prime Minister

I believe when the next election comes around, we will end up with a pretty good majority after that election.

Question

Don't you think it's really like a totalitarian Government, if you say we know what's best for the people, we will make the decisions for them?

Prime Minister

It's only totalitarian when you don't have elections. One of the very odd things -- I've been told the last two elections were democratic. I hope people aren't going to go on telling me that elections are not democratic because that's almost an incitement not to have any more elections. That would be a terrible thing.

Question

This is related to the questions of elections. To be able to live up to all of the promises which a Government must make around election time, a Prime Minister would either have to be a Solomon or a second Messiah. Do you ever regret always having to make these promises?

Prime Minister

I think in one or two things that maybe we were over-ambitious, but basically I try to say nothing which I don't believe can be fulfilled. I have enormous confidence in the capacity for judgement of the Australian people and I believe that politicians who promise too much will certainly be seen through, and quite quickly.

Question

Sir, in all probability, the public is using this criterion as a method of gauging how successful the Government is. Can you think of a better way for them to gauge how successful a Government is?

Prime Minister

It's not just a question of what you say at an election time. It's also a question of what you are doing between elections - in the whole period of Government; whether you respond to the problems that face the country and how the way you govern generally affects the lives of Australians in every corner of this country.

Questions from Audience

Question

Why is so much money being poured into nuclear power and the research into it, when surely solar energy would be Australia's most valuable and safest form of energy?

Prime Minister

Australia isn't putting all that much money into nuclear power research. We need to stay up with modern technology. We would be putting more money I think into research into alternative uses of coal. But for many countries overseas that haven't got different - that haven't got coal, they don't have much oil, and they've come to believe the only way they can keep their factories going and their homes heated in the winter is through the use of nuclear fuel. A number of European countries will have a very very high proportion of their total fuel requirements supplied by nuclear reactors in five or ten years time. I don't think they've got any option, as it is at the moment. The scientific advice available to me indicates that solar power is not really feasible as a source for major production of power for maybe 30 years or more; for heating your hot water, for doing some other household things of that kind, yes, there is a role.

Question

A great number of Vietnam boat people have arrived in Australia and many of us feel that they have been deliberately sent by their Government. What views have you got of this?

Prime Minister

I don't think deliberately sent by their Government - in a sense that they were wanting to get people into Australia - but I do think for a while the Government of Vietnam was actively trying to move people out who were dissidents in Vietnam and was co-operating in a sense of an export of people. That was a pretty horrible sort of way for a Government to go on. I think you've got obligations - refugees from Vietnam - and we seek to meet those obligations as best we can.

Question

Your inflation policy seems mainly to benefit big business and then they use their benefits to increase technology which increases unemployment. Do you follow this policy as closely as you do, because they fund a lot of your campaigns and therefore tend to dictate to you a bit?

Prime Minister

No, but I don't think you are right in the original assumption. An anti-inflationary policy helps everyone and nobody does well if there is too much inflation. One of the significant local industries in Perth right at this moment has just signed contracts for fishing boats to Burma. It has been able to do that, the Managing Director wrote to me, because inflation was down, there is a stable labour force and because there are export incentives. Now, that's a middle-ranking Australian company doing a very job with Australian labour. There are many companies in the same position. Getting inflation down will enable all businesses to do better and sell more of their products in Australia and more of their products overseas. That's the only way we are going to be able to have Australians fully employed again.

Question

How can Australia possibly put up with the indiscriminate acceptance of refugees into our country, many of them who may not be true refugees, having the power and the money to buy their way onto these boats and obtain a fairly simple way of migrating to Australia compared to the orthodox channels.

Prime Minister

We try and check to make sure they are proper refugees and do qualify. If it is found that they don't then different judgements are made about it. There is a very real refugee situation coming out of South East Asia and I think we have to recognize the facts of life of that.

Question

Sir, with the age of technology here to stay, wouldn't it be better to hand over the Government to IBM?

Prime Minister

No, I don't really think so. I think that computers are very inhuman things and there is much more to Government than technology.

Prime Minister (continued)

Technology is something that we've got to use for the benefit of people. It enables us to do some things better. It enables us to free resources that can be used in other ways. We've got to make sure that technology doesn't take over.

Question

Can you ever see a machine taking over the Prime Minister?

Prime Minister

Not in the sort of world I would want to live in.

Question

If we are to cope with our ever-expanding technology, how can you ever justify cuts in education. We've an excess of unemployed teachers, and we certainly have plenty of schools and children who need them. Is it all some sort of a plan to make people less educated so they will be forced to accept more (inaudible) jobs?

Prime Minister

No, I don't think so. I think people are better educated today than they have probably ever been. I think, hope, that that will go on being so. Cuts in education - it's really a question of talking about the rate of increase in expenditure more than talking positively about cuts, I think, because enormous additional sums have been spent on education. I think the increase in part started when I was Education Minister quite a large number of years ago. The facilities available, the classrooms today, the number of teachers, the class sizes, all are infinitely better than was the case even five or ten years ago. I think this process is going to go on.

Question

You have already said that there are children who aren't receiving the attention they need. Now, surely if we have these extra teachers, it's wicked not to use them to help these children.

Prime Minister

One of the problems with the numbers of teachers that are available I think is that when there was very high employment in Australia and very little unemployment, a lot of people entered the teaching profession and then went on to do something else because other jobs were available. Therefore to have enough teachers all the State Governments and the Commonwealth Government also, because we were involved, had teaching colleges and teacher training in universities and in fact were teaching, or had a capacity, to produce more teachers, than the system needed.

Question

You were saying before that there is better education and everything like that. Why is there so much unemployment, if everyone is better educated?

Prime Minister

There is unemployment for a number of different reasons. One of them is that wages went up too much; female rates went up 37 percent one year, and male rates went up 27 percent in the same year and Australian factories just couldn't sell what they were producing because the costs were too high. So Australians started to buy more from overseas. Australian manufacturers lost their markets overseas. If Australian manufacturers can't sell what they are trying to produce, they won't be able to employ people. Now we had to get all that right so that Australian industry can sell and compete again in Australia and in markets outside.

Question

I understand that the Colombo Plan still finances a large number of foreign students studying at our University. This is at a time when many of the Australian students are finding it difficult to obtain a tertiary allowance. Do you think that is a fair situation?

Prime Minister

Yes I do. The number of foreign students in Australian universities I think is roughly the same as it was in about 1960-61 and the numbers and places available at Australian universities and colleges of advanced education has grown enormously since then. The proportion is smaller than it used to be and I am not sure that I like that because I think Australia has got an obligation to South East Asian and Asian countries. I think we've got an obligation to developing countries. I also believe that if kids from these countries can come and study at Australian institutions and make friends in Australia that this is one of the best long-term things to guarantee a good relationship between Australia and countries of Asia to our north and other places. I am strongly in favour of the Colombo Plan and overseas students being able to come to our institutions.

Question

Do the Asians provide a money scheme for us, if we go to their universities?

Prime Minister

No, but they wouldn't have many universities and we would have a much higher proportion of our population going to universities and colleges than they would. In some Asian countries the average income might be \$200, \$300, \$400 a year, per head. Compare that with the position in Australia. The standard of life is so very different. I think it is hard for us sometimes to understand. The technical aid, the aid through higher education, I think is one of the obligations that Australia owes to other countries that aren't quite so well off as we are.

Question

...was Britain's protege, and now it looks like we are trying to lick the boots of the United States. Do you believe that Australians are a dependent people, that we need to forever to tag along in the shadow of some larger nation?

Prime Minister

I don't really think we are tagging along in the shadow of any nation. We are Australian, we are independent, we make our own decisions. Certainly we have an alliance with the United States and New Zealand but we gain out of that alliance and we play our part in relation to it. But on many international policy issues, Australia takes here own path completely, argues with the United States or argues with Britain, or countries in Europe and will continue to do that.

Question

With respect sir, could you say that when you make your decisions on international policy, especially trade, that those decisions are completely free of consideration with the alliances and the concessions that you give the United States, that they demand of you?

Prime Minister

If you'd heard some of the discussions that have gone on over trade matters between ourselves and the United States in particular, but also between ourselves and Europe or other countries, or Japan, you couldn't for one minute believe that what we were saying is modified or softened because of other considerations of a strategic kind or of an alliance kind.

Question

But isn't it true that the United States' companies, large ones, for example UTAH mining, pay much - receive tax concessions - they pay much less tax than all other countries?

Prime Minister

No, they get the same taxes as other countries - as other companies - and UTAH pays vast sums in taxes and royalties. Don't hold me to ransom -- it's something like \$160 m - \$200 m a year in taxes from UTAH going into either the Queensland Treasury or the Commonwealth Treasury. There are no concessions available that I am aware of, to foreign companies, that aren't available to Australian. We do try and treat all companies the same.

Question

How do you feel about being depicted like this?  
(Picture from Pickering's Calendar).

Prime Minister:

That's Pickering's - that's his old calendar, isn't it?

Question

Last year.

Prime Minister

I was a little bit hurt because he left me out of this last one.

Question

You haven't quite answered the question. How do you feel about being depicted like this?

Prime Minister

Well, it's just like being depicted any other way, isn't it? People draw cartoons of you - sometimes they put clothes on, sometimes they take clothes off. Larry Pickering can do it either way as far as I am concerned.

Question

Did Tamie and the kids see it?

Prime Minister

If they did they hid it from me. They probably thought I would have been embarrassed.

Question

I come from a family of three children and my father has a great influence on all of us. How does your job as Prime Minister affect your children and how do you find the time to guide and discipline them?

Prime Minister

I was a politician when I first got married and I've got to pay most of the credit for keeping the family, and I hope keeping everyone sane, to Tamie. It's really only since I have been Prime Minister that she has come around much with me and done some things in her own right as the Prime Minister's wife. She's been able to do it over the last three years because our eldest boy was leaving school and going out and starting to make his own way. The other kids were a bit older and they were at boarding school. But this is something that - it really has - it's worried me all my political life because I have seen kids, I think, get into trouble because parents haven't been at home enough -- maybe both parents working and politics just wouldn't be worth it if that happened to your own kids. It wouldn't be worth it so far as I was concerned. So I think what you try and do is those times when you can be together, you've got to try and make sure your own children know and understand that they are the most important thing to you. It might be only for a short while, for a weekend or whatever, but while you are there, they are the things that are important.

Prime Minister (continued)

I have always tried to do some things - we mentioned fishing earlier - that's something you can do as a very old man, so you can always do it with your kids. We took a camping trip up through the Northern Territory as a family. I pay most of the credit to Tamie. I think she's held all this together.

Question

...every year we hear of young people overseas imprisoned in some countries for things - they don't really know what they are doing, they are looking for different lifestyles and they break laws in countries which have in some cases, corrupt legal systems. What is your attitude towards these Australians. Do you try to help them and if they are in prison, does the Australian Consulate keep a continued check on their welfare when imprisoned?

Prime Minister

Yes. This is one of the jobs of the consulate service right around the world. But I would like to make one point and make -- it's a warning also that's been made by the Government on a number of occasions. If people do transgress the laws of other countries there isn't always a great deal that you can do about it. If people are going into other countries they do need to try and understand what the laws are. That applies especially if anything to do with drugs is involved. In a number of South East Asian countries where there has been a real drug problem, the laws are very severe, very strict, and they are upheld very vigorously indeed. I am afraid that in spite of warnings, a number of young Australians have got into trouble because of that in places like Bangkok.

Question

When they do get into trouble, does the Australian Government try to get them out of it?

Prime Minister

You try and help, but at the same time, if they've plainly transgressed the laws of the country and if there is clear evidence, for example, that they have been involved in drugs against the laws of the country, I don't think it is setting too good an example to say because they are Australians they should get off free. I really do feel very strongly about people who are involved in the drug trade in one form or another. Somebody who's sick and peddles...

Question

It isn't always drugs.

Prime Minister

No, not always, but quite a number have been caught involved with drugs in places like Thailand and that's what I'm saying. But the consular service is there in country's around the world, designed to protect Australians. It will use its resources as vigorously as it can. But people can't expect to go into other countries and break their laws and just because they are a foreigner get off scot-free. If people come from other places into Australia and break our laws, and their consular service comes down and says 'he's a foreigner, he didn't really know', we say well, he broke our laws, he will have to answer in the courts.

Question

Do you rely on your own judgement when making decisions or do you take the advice of your consultants and advisers?

Prime Minister

It depends a lot on what the particular issue is, but on important issues I think you don't want to make a judgement too quickly. You want to make sure you've got all the advice you can. That advice will come from the Public Service. It might come from your Party organisation, it might come from your Parliamentary colleagues. Certainly it comes from your Cabinet colleagues, and then having got all the information you can, all the advice you can, the Cabinet sits down to make up its mind. But you try and gather in all the information that's available, hopefully so that you make the best and wisest decision.

Question

Generally, how many advisers do you have?

Prime Minister

A lot of people would say too many because they say all the Public Service are technically advisers. That numbers tens and tens of thousands, but the numbers that you actually are in touch with would be relatively few.

John Hudson

You've certainly got enough.

Prime Minister

There are enough advisers, yes. But you can always go to people outside in the community if there is a particular thing, a technical matter, you need advice on. You can go to people in industry, you can go to people in universities, and really all the wisdom of a country is available to a Government is only a Government is prepared to try and tap it, find it, and use it.

Question

This is a question you have probably never been asked before and will probably never be asked again -- you are tall, dark and handsome, do you find this helps you to relate to women in politics ?

Prime Minister

I don't think I know.

Question

Would you find this helped you to relate to women in general?

Prime Minister

You just talk with people and whether it's men or whether it's women, you meet them as they are and try and treat people as they are. Hopefully, they will do the same with you. So whether you are long, whether you are short, whether you are fat or whether you are thin, I think how you react to people and how they react to you very often depends a lot on your own feelings and having respect for people. I think its the most important thing in any relationship and I think that's probably much more important than your shape or your size.

Question

This is the first time that you have had this sort of discussion with young people like us. Why haven't you talked to us before and how can you possible legislate about our problems if you don't have enough contact with us to find out what they are?

Prime Minister

I think the programmes a good idea. I haven't done this sort of programme before because I haven't been asked before. I do go on talk-back programmes. I have been on other interview programmes of different kinds, but I don't think with people under sort of university or senior college age before. I think it's a good idea and people are interested in politics I think much younger than they used to be, certainly much younger than-- when I was school people didn't talk about politics. We talked about football, who was going to win cricket on Saturday, and that was nearly the end of it. I think people's interests are much wider today and I think that is a good thing.

Question

Do you feel that you are in contact with the feelings of the youth of Australia?

Prime Minister

We try to be. We have established a Department of Employment and Youth Affairs and Ian Viner will be announcing fairly shortly a National Youth Council which is designed to try and help us keep in touch. As a member of Parliament I advertise still --

Prime Minister (continued)

even as Prime Minister I still regard my representative job in my own electorate as a very important one. I still advertise if I am going to be in a certain place in one of my country towns at a certain time for a few hours so that constituents of all sizes and shapes and ages can come and speak to me if they want to, and put whatever problems they want to. Quite often young people come and talk to me just as much as their parents do or other people might. I've always regarded it as important to try and keep in touch. You make yourself accessible, it's up to people to take the opportunity. People can write. You would, I think, be surprised, how many letters I get from kids who are at school - putting a point of view about one thing or another and when they write I try and answer.

Question

You've said in the past that you've been greatly influenced by the late Sir Robert Menzies. Would it be fair to say that you are into his philosophy of strong leadership and authoritarian command, right up to the Menzian eyebrows?

Prime Minister

I don't know. I think other people would have to judge that. But I do believe very very strongly that the collective wisdom of a group of people is going to be much better than the judgement of a single person. That's why you have Cabinet Government, collective responsibility and you discuss things and people go into that room with certain views. They come out of it with one view -- having discussed it fully. I think, again, that's the way it should be, because no one person's got certainly all wisdom or all the best of judgement.

Question

Will your kids ever receive a dole cheque?

Prime Minister

I hope not. I hope they will be able to get themselves a job. My eldest boy, Mark, is jackarooing - he did three years jackarooing, two years in the Riverina and once in the Snowy Mountains area one year. He is now at Glen Agriculture College and he wants to go on the land. I think he's learnt a good deal about that. Angela is at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology doing interior design. The other two kids are still at school. The boys have always seemed to be able to get a bit of work. Hugh is at boarding school in Canberra. But if he wants to make some pocket money he manages to get some weekend work around Canberra.

Question

Do you think this is due to you being the Prime Minister?

Prime Minister

No, I don't think so. I think the problem with employment at the moment is very often the problem - it's not a problem of the whole age groups - it's a problem of say ten or maybe 15 percent of an age group who mightn't have quite the same motivation, mightn't present themselves quite so well, mightn't have so much confidence in themselves, mightn't have been helped so much by their parents - not because it's their parent's fault-- and if kids are doubtful about their own capacity, their own ability, I think these days it can be difficult for them to get work. That's one of they reasons why we have a whole range of training programmes. I also think the schools ought to pay more attention than they do to this in the sense 10 or 15 percent of an age group who are the ones that might find it difficult to get work. So often some schools pay attention to the bright, the able, and they are the ones who are going to get scholarships or exhibitions and distinctions. But everyone is a person. I think it is often people at the other end of the capacity level who need most help. They haven't always got it from schools or from other institutions.

Question

My name is Allan Logan. The defence of the north coast of Australia, particular Western Australia, seems to have been neglected. What do you propose to do about this?

Prime Minister

I don't think it's neglected. We are slowing developing a Navy that can operate in two oceans. Major naval facilities have been built on the West Coast. We've also got Orion aircraft. We will have better patrol boats that are being built in Australia.

Question

What was your reaction to the book that was written about you "The Wit of Malcolm Fraser"?

Prime Minister

There really couldn't be much reaction because there was nothing on it, was there?

Question

My name is Melinda Riddle and I, like most people of my age, are very concerned with the current employment situation in Australia. I was wondering, what are you going to do about discrimination between teenagers and adults. I notice that a lot of women whose husbands are able to support their families, are getting jobs in preference of the teenagers who have just left school. What are you going to do about this?

Prime Minister

Two things I would like to say; I think a lot of teenagers get jobs because the rates of pay are less and so I think it would tend to even up a bit. Now, it would be very hard to say to a woman, because you are married, because your husband has a job, you can't get some work. A person is a person as an individual and you can't get away from that. What we have got to do is to get to a position where people who want to work can get a rewarding job. I think that's starting to happen.

John Hudson

Prime Minister, that is a pretty sharp area there. Youngsters do find it difficult. They can get a job if they are paid cheaper rates, but then adults can come along - get part-time labour - and the younger people are penalised so often.

Prime Minister

Maybe, but if the younger person can do the job I think very often the employer will go for the younger person because the award rates are less for the younger person. That gives the younger person a chance. Also, we talked about this earlier, for each age group it's not the total age group, it's the ten or fifteen percent who find it difficult, out of the age group. We do have special training programmes. I think schools need to give more attention to it and we have to keep the economy right so that industry can employ more.

Question

I realise most of the people here are wondering about most of Australia's -- what's going to happen to them in the future. I am wondering about Australia's amateur athletics and all the rest of the things. I know the Government puts some nominal amounts of money into different sorts of sporting fixtures - what does the Government plan to do with future programmes for amateur athletics, putting money into it like most other countries do and making us more of a powerful nation in this aspect.

Prime Minister

We've started, in recent times, different policies and I think policies that are much better. For the Olympic Games we are providing much more than every before and we have given the money in advance so that the various sporting associations can have pre-Games training and selection going on over a period of years, not just months before the Games; then of course support for the team during the Games. We hope, on this basis, to develop for the major international events, long-term programmes which the various sporting bodies can manage and operate. Hopefully Australians will then get back on top where they ought to be.

Question

Do you consider yourself a "giant".

Prime Minister

I just consider myself a person I suppose. I am a bit bigger than you are, but I am older and I am heavier than I ought to be.

John Hudson

Does your question mean "does the Prime Minister feel that he is very powerful", a big man in that sense?

Prime Minister

The job doesn't make me feel that at all. I just think there is a job to do. The decisions you make are important for people like yourselves, for people all around Australia and you try and make the best decisions you can.

Question

My name is Sally Lynch. I was just going to ask you why are the refugees channelled into the cities when they are more accustomed to a rural way of life?

Prime Minister

It's a question of where there can be work and most of the refugees have been able to get work without too much trouble, in factories and whatever. I don't know that it would be they have mostly been accustomed to a rural way of life in Vietnam. There are some large cities. I don't know that a majority of them have come from farms at all.

Question

Getting to a more personalised question. Why did you enter into Parliament?

Prime Minister

On one side I thought it would fit in well with running a farm and I soon found it didn't - that it was much more than a full time job. When I was at university I became interested and concerned with politics and I think interested and concerned about the future of Australia.

John Hudson

You've never thought about going into television?

Prime Minister

I've never thought about going into television, no.

Question

If a war broke out and our allies didn't come, would we really have a hope?

Prime Minister

It would depend on the war. Australia is going to be alright and Australia will survive long after me and long after you. I don't believe there is going to be a war.

Question

No, but taking for granted that there will be, we will have a hope, according to you?

Prime Minister

Of course we will, but the whole art of Government, the whole purpose of foreign policy and defence policy, is to look ahead to see what the dangers might be and then avoid those dangers to see that they don't occur.

Question

How close are you to Bob Hawke?

Prime Minister

We talk.

Question

I think it is very good if two people who are on opposite sides, if I may say that, can be friendly. Are you friendly with Bob Hawke?

Prime Minister

Yes, when we meet in private, certainly.

Question

And what have you discussed in these meetings?

Prime Minister

They wouldn't be private if I said, would they? It is important to have the capacity to be able to speak with people in positions such as Mr. Hawke's and to be able to do it plainly and to understand each other. Tony Street does this with them all the time. I do it occasionally when it is necessary. It won't work unless the confidences that take place then are kept.

Question

You are here to find out what the young people of Australia feel and I feel, I think I am speaking for about all of us,

Question (continued)

when I say quite simply that we don't want uranium in our country, we don't want huge sprawling foreign companies buying Australia out from under our feet and we want to know more about what is going on behind the closed oaken doors of your Government office.

Prime Minister

I think that is a statement and not a question. You don't want uranium and I can understand your concerns there, but I think they are wrong. You don't want foreign companies to buy out Australia, and we have foreign investment rules to make sure that investment opportunities for Australians are kept as wide and as open as possible. But there will be many less jobs for Australians if you don't have investment from countries overseas. There you might have to make a choice as to whether you want jobs to be available or whether you want overseas people to invest in Australia which will help to make more jobs available. There is a Freedom of Information legislation. It is being debated by a Senate Committee. I think something will come out of that. You asked me the questions that you want to know the answers to. This has been your opportunity, so what do you want to know that you don't know?

Question

This may be a depressing area for a politician to talk about, but when it eventually comes time for you to step down from politics, what is the greatest legacy which you could leave behind?

Prime Minister

I think a country that has been well governed but with a good succession. I think that might be more important. So often politicians leave and there isn't a quite succession, there isn't a smooth transition for Government to go on well after you have departed the scene; to let your successor govern and not stay about in his hair.

John Hudson

It's not an obituary programme, not yet, you've got plenty of time to do things Prime Minister. It strikes us, some of us, that it would be a good opportunity, if you like it, to ask questions of the panel, because this is such a rare occasion.

Prime Minister

One quick one -- because from the second last one -- is there any particular thing of Government that you want to know.

Question

I just feel -- I know you are Prime Minister and you have to guard your speech, but I don't really feel

Question (continued)

we've received direct answers to all the questions that we've asked you.

Prime Minister

What question haven't you received a direct answer to?

Question

You say that you feel that my views on uranium are wrong, but why are they wrong? We are really concerned. We think that...

Prime Minister

Well alright, why are they wrong? They are wrong because there are many countries that will not be able to heat their homes in the winter. There are many countries where they will not be able to keep the power going for their factories if they don't use nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes. It's as simple as that. Therefore, this trade is going to go on. We want it therefore to go on in the safest way possible and we can influence that if Australia is involved in it because then we can get the most secure non-proliferation regime if we've got a powerful voice in the trade and making sure that it is as safe as it can possibly be.

Question

I could quite simply accept that if you just tell me the answer to one question. What are you going to do with all the nuclear waste which is going to live on after your memory is completely gone?

Prime Minister

The nuclear waste at the moment is going into a glassified form, solidified and it is being buried underground.

Question

But it will still be there?

Prime Minister

It will be there. But I am told by people who have much more competence to judge than I have, because they have the technical expertise, that that is a safe manner of disposal.

John Hudson

Are you satisfied with your question which you have asked of the panel?

Prime Minister

It's so easy to say the Government is secret and doesn't tell. I like to know what the secrets are that we are meant to be telling so we can talk about it. Again, that is partly a challenge. David, is there something you want to know about government that you have felt I haven't spoken about.

David

No comment sir.

Prime Minister

There is one other thing that I do want to say. At the beginning I said "why haven't I come and spoken to you before" and I said I haven't been asked. So, am I going to be asked to come back in six months and do it again? Same panel, same audience.

Question

We accept the challenge.

Prime Minister

I have enjoyed it, have you?

Audience

Yes.

John Hudson

There's nothing really more for me to say except to thank you very much, because this is a history-making programme. It's not been done before, we are very grateful to you for making it possible.

Prime Minister

I think it's been a good programme and I have enjoyed it and I have enjoyed the questions. I think some of them have been well thought out and well put. But there is I think -- a lot of the questions are much better than I get from -- I was going to say more adult programmes but that is the wrong way of putting it -- when the questions have been put by older people because they sometimes stick on one point, they try to get some admission out of you that you are not going to make so they stay on that point for ten minutes, fifteen minutes and I think it gets plain dull. I have enjoyed it and I have enjoyed your questions.

John Hudson

Thank you very much. From the audience good night and from the panel good night.

Prime Minister

Good night till six months.