

WILLESEE COMMENTS ON FRASER INTERVIEW.

FROM WILLESEE

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WILLESEE: On Monday night in the program we showed a special interview with the Prime Minister Mr. Fraser. Last night Mr. Fraser's press secretary announced that the interview had been cut and accused us of unfair editing.

Now this man's job is to say things on behalf of Mr. Fraser so we have to presume that Mr. Fraser really believed we have been unfair and wished to say so publicly.

Now that's very hurtful. Interviewing Mr. Fraser is never a joyous occasion. You wake up in the morning of an interview with our present Prime Minister, remember what you have to do on that day and you pull the blankets over your head and pretend the day doesn't exist. You snap at your wife, you don't feel like breakfast and you consider a set of excuses ranging from doctor's orders to let's give a younger interviewer his big opportunity.

But, there is no way out. You know you have to do it because he is the Prime Minister and it's the responsible thing to do. You know equally that you can't win. You ask a personal question and he clubs it to death. You ask a political question and he stares balefully at you as if you are the enemy from some distinctly lesser tribe. You confront him on a matter of fact and he doesn't accept that it's a fact. You pursue it manfully, whereas the Prime Minister himself is fond of telling you - you're wasting your time.

MR. FRASER: We said we would introduce new tax scales, we said we would introduce lower tax scales and reduce taxes, and we have.

WILLESEE: You said you wouldn't increase taxes, but you did.

MR. FRASER: . We made it perfectly plain with the introduction of tax indexation, we said that if governments want more money they

MR. FRASER:

will have to legislate for it and so we did.

WILLESEE: But don't you think the people might look at you now and think, look, he is behaving like a politician, he wants to get the best out of each answer, which is his right, but he is not facing up to those basic ...

MR. FRASER: I think you want to get the best out of each question and not recognising the fact that taxes are very much lower than they have been. And, you know, you're running the risk of doing what so often seems to happen when you and I get on an interview, you want me to say something and you stick on that point, or try to and, you know, you generally fail to get me to say what you want me to say, and why should I?

WILLESEE: Yes I do generally fail, but I just feel that in the public interest, if I put a question that is important I should get the answer.

WILLESEE: So having gone through the painful exercise of the interview, you then edit it into the best shape you can, that's your job, you edit it fairly and honestly, that's not just your job, that's necessary for survival. You have done maybe 30 interviews with Prime Ministers in your time, edited about 28 of the 30, and you're still surviving, but now you find yourself accused of being unfair, your credibility is questioned, even though you have never broken an election promise in your whole life.

Let me say this seriously. We were not unfair to Mr. Fraser and he knows it. None of the radio or newspaper reports on this matter today bothered to use the ten minutes we edited out. You see, it was boring, repetitive, it would have been unprofessional to use it, and more than that, you would have had to watch it or turn off. I'll give Mr. Fraser a bit of free advice - stop being so bloody aloof, stop treating journalists as the natural enemy, talk to the people, not down at them, face facts, be man enough to admit when you are wrong, and stop kidding yourself that one beer in a pub with a flock of photographers on hand makes you one of the boys. It doesn't. And if you want to come back for another interview,