

TRANSCRIPT OF TELEVISION INTERVIEW GIVEN BY
THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES ON CHANNEL 7, PERTH
ON 30TH JULY, 1962.

Question : Mr. Menzies, why did you find it necessary to sack Mr. Bury?

Mr. Menzies: Well, the reasons were indicated in my letter to him and acknowledged by him and those have been published. Mr. Bury is a man of ability, character and I value him very much and it wasn't an easy thing to find myself reaching the inevitable decision that I must ask him to resign but, after all, he had stated once, twice, and reaffirmed it, views about the Common Market, about the effect of British entry on the Australian economy which were materially different from those which had been expressed on behalf of the Government by myself and Mr. McEwen, and that was not a position that I could accept because these negotiations are in midstream, so to speak, at the present time, reaching perhaps very critical stages and, to have what would be treated as a Government view which ran across the views that had been put by Mr. McEwen and myself, was not acceptable. And, therefore, unhappily, Mr. Bury had to go.

Q. Do you think that Mr. Bury's statement has already been damaging to Australia's case abroad?

A. Well, it could be used against Australia's case, but the action that has been taken would demonstrate that it is not the Australian Government's view and, therefore, I don't myself expect that our position will, as from now, be weakened.

Q. Mr. Bury said the Common Market would have a limited and minor effect upon Australia. Is there any truth at all in these views?

A. I don't agree with them. I respect Mr. Bury's belief that they are true, but I think that if Great Britain, for example, were to go into the Common Market unconditionally, that is to say, on the terms of the Treaty of Rome like the other European countries, the impact on our economy would be very substantial.

Q. Generally, do you consider the Bury affair a little local difficulty or a major Party crisis?

A. Oh, there's no major Party crisis about it. There has been an attempt in the Eastern States in some newspapers to whip it up into a Party crisis. In fact, they have been, in some sections of the Sydney press, industriously trying to create the idea that I was pushed into asking for Mr. Bury's resignation by Mr. McEwen; the facts being, of course, that over the period of two days, I had two conversations with Mr. McEwen, both on the telephone, and both initiated by me. One was to have a word with him about issuing statements - he and I - and the other one was when I had considered the position of Mr. Bury, and I had had a long talk with him and with one or two of my other colleagues who were available. I then rang up Mr. McEwen to say, "Look, I'm terribly sorry, but I see no escape from asking Leslie Bury to resign. Can you think of any alternative?" I definitely was looking for one. And he said that he had been thinking about it; he was as worried as I was, and that he had not been able to find an alternative. Well, I hadn't either

- Q. Is this the first time that you have had to sack a Minister?
- A. Oh, no. But let the dead past bury its dead.
- Q. Who will replace Mr. Bury?
- A. I don't know. I will begin to think about that problem when I get back home.
- Q. Do you think Fred Chaney has got a chance of selection?
- A. No, lock, I am not going to discuss names, thank you.
- Q. In Wollongong recently, when referring to Britain's proposed entry into the Market, you were quoted as saying and I quote, "We stress the need to meet the new era of trade as a challenge and it must not be exaggerated into a disaster." Is this a softening down of your own statements made earlier and more in line with Mr. Bury's?
- A. None whatever. If you were to read the full text of my speech at Wollongong, you would see that it stands exactly on the same footing as the first statement I made on this matter and all the ones I have made since.
- Q. Was it true that you had to paint a grim picture abroad to obtain the best terms for Australia and paint a rosy picture here to retain confidence in industry and business and boost development?
- A. I hope I haven't sunk to that political level. When I do, people ought to throw me out.
- Q. Is it true, Mr. Menzies, that Australia's position has improved recently as the result of the £127M GATT negotiations between Australia and the Six?
- A. Oh, well, there are some improvements there, but they are not connected with the Common Market discussions. There is a process that goes on in GATT quite regularly in which concessions are made here or there in exchange for other concessions. There is a lot of tariff negotiation that goes on in GATT, but that's not the problem that arises in the Common Market discussions. The Common Market discussions will determine whether our preferences inside the Commonwealth, the preferential pattern of Commonwealth trade is to continue, or if it continues, for how long, or on what terms. There is a great misunderstanding about the position of Australia on this thing. We have not been overpainting our picture. We have in fact, from the very beginning, approached the problem constructively. We have had our officials in discussion with the officials in Great Britain over the period of a year now. Mr. McEwen has been there, I've been there. On each possible level, we have presented our views, and all the time, we've been looking for some process, some agreement that will maintain to a reasonable extent our trading position; though it may not involve the maintenance in all their original qualities of our preferences. We have been looking for a middle course of a helpful kind, and I think that anybody in the United Kingdom

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⌘ This is not a direct quotation from the Prime Minister's Wollongong speech.

team would agree that no country has been so constructive, though we have, I admit, been persistent in the sense that we haven't taken our teeth out of this matter. Day by day, week by week, we have been pressing certain views that we hold. And the effect of this has yet to be seen. The Six may modify some of their rules in order to accommodate Commonwealth trade. We don't know.

Q. Are you hopeful that Britain will or won't join the Common Market?

A. That depends entirely on the terms. You see, the political advantages that Great Britain sees in joining the Common Market, well, they are matters for the British Government to determine. We are not deciding that problem. They are. The economic considerations about joining the Common Market stand in a different category, and it is on those that we have been presenting our views not, once more, to prevent Great Britain from making her own decision - that's not our idea at all - but to secure, through her, as good a deal from the countries of the Six as we can in the interests of our own export trade. Of course, if we did not do that, we would be failing in our duty to the people of Australia.

Q. How do you interpret the weekend news of a deadlock between the negotiators?

A. I never make any comment on something that I read in a weekend paper, honestly; I'll wait until I hear officially as to what has gone on. I would not readily accept the idea that there is a deadlock. I think you will find that they will be talking again in the course of the next few days. And they are bound to. Both sides are going to exhaust the possibilities before they acknowledge that they can't get anywhere.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, are you worried about Australia's unemployment situation?

A. No, there is more than I would like, but if you mean by that do I regard this as being a massive, continuing problem - no, I don't think that. Our idea is that you must get the present number of people applying, registered for employment, substantially down. Everybody would agree about that. And we have some hopes, considerable hopes, that as a result of the general economic improvement, these numbers will fall, and fall during the course of this year.

Q. There is a noticeable drop since December's record.

A. Oh, yes. Quite noticeable and that is all the more remarkable because we had a record intake - school-leavers and so on - in November, December, January. The problem, in other words, of finding employment was much bigger than it had been on any previous occasion, and yet the improvement as you know during the last few months has been quite remarkable.

Q. There were still 93,000 unemployed in June - does this mean the economic recovery measures you took earlier are not working quite as well as you would like?

A. It may be that we have yet to see their full result. We had discussions with a number of business and other people to see what their impressions were. I think we all agreed that the measures are working, that the state of the economy is improving, but that everybody would like to see it improve more rapidly. In other words, it is going in the right direction, but we have yet to see the full effect of some of the measures that were taken. You want to remember that measures taken in February have not had a very long time to produce their results. Already they have produced some very interesting ones.

Q. What bearing will the unemployment situation have on the new Budget?

A. I don't know that I follow that question. The new Budget will state the economic policy of the Government so far as it relates to financial measures and in framing a Budget, you take into account a series of problems affecting the national economy including the necessity to improve the employment situation. It is one of the factors that is taken into account.

Q. The Federal Government did ask the W.A. Government for details of the development programmes in the North-West. Is this significant? Does it mean that there will be help for the North-West?

A. Look, I beg to be excused from saying anything myself, officially, about this matter. The fact is that one of the West Australian Ministers, Mr. Court, has just been in Canberra having discussions with our people about some of these developmental ideas and I believe they have been making very satisfactory progress. I had a talk this morning with your distinguished Premier here, Mr. Brand, and Mr. Brand himself seemed quite optimistic about the way these discussions were going. I have not been conducting them myself.

Q. Why isn't your Party contesting the Batman seat in Victoria, Mr. Menzies?

A. Well, now, I wonder if you would tell me why you think we should? It costs money, you know, to contest a by-election. My Party always has less money to spend than the Labor Party. That is not very well known, but it is true. To run a candidate for a seat that you are not going to win and which is going to be materially altered against you in the forthcoming redistribution and with no Senate vote to concern yourself with - all those things didn't add up in my mind to a good case for putting up a candidate, going through this form. Nor did it commend itself to the Executive of the Party organisation in Victoria, whose opinion I, in fact, confirm, and they decided not to run a candidate.

Q. How do you think your Party would go if there is a new election?

A. I haven't a clue.

Q. Sir, would you tell me what is going to become of either Mr. Hasluck or Mr. Chaney now that the Perth and Curtin seats have been merged?

- A. I don't know. I will be very unhappy if I don't have both of them still with me after the redistributed seats have been through an election. I would be very disappointed. But, look, don't ask me about those things. I am not familiar with the boundaries here. I don't know what is going to happen. Nor does anybody else at the present time, I would think.
- Q. The United Nations Mission to Australian New Guinea was high in its praise for Australia's administration, but what are you going to do about their suggestion for an enlarged and more representative Parliament?
- A. Well, I think you are putting their recommendation in a pretty moderate way, when you say that. I thought they were saying that there ought to be full Parliamentary Government established almost instantly, within a year or two. Now, that just doesn't make sense, quite frankly. We have been developing, under the administration of Mr. Hasluck himself, who has done a wonderful job in relation to New Guinea; we have been developing Local Government. There are quite a number of local authorities now in which the indigenous inhabitants are members and conduct their operations. We now have them on the Legislative Council. But anybody who knows anything about New Guinea with its hundreds of different languages and its area and its population, many of them remote and living in a very primitive state - anybody who supposes that you can hand over self-government to that community out of hand has not learned the lessons of the Congo, that is all I can say. We have a great responsibility for New Guinea, and our responsibility is to bring up the standard of living and the capacity for self-government of the people there, and we propose to discharge that responsibility. It would be a criminal act on our part to abandon it.
- Q. Do you think there is a discrepancy between the U.N. Mission's pressure on behalf of the Papuans' political advancement in Australian New Guinea in view of what is going on in West New Guinea?
- A. Oh, well, I am not going to discuss that.
- Q. Well, finally Mr. Menzies, I would like to ask you this. There have been for many years people often asking the question - "When will Mr. Menzies retire?" Have you got any plans for retirement?
- A. Dear me, I have frequently had plans for retirement and then something happens that makes it impossible. So here I am, chained to the wheel. I can throw no more light on my future than that.
- Q. Well, I'd like to thank you for coming along tonight, Mr. Prime Minister. Thank you and good night.
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