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TEXT OF PRIME MINISTER'S "MEET THE PRESS"
INTERVIEW

Following is the full text of the interview given by the Prime Minister, Senator John Gorton, in the "MEET THE PRESS" programme telecast by BTQ Channel 7 in Brisbane tonight.

The Prime Minister recorded the programme while in Brisbane a few days ago.

Introduction by the Chairman, Mr Reg Leonard:

From this studio, exactly nine weeks ago, I was privileged to introduce to you the Prime Minister of Australia. That, of course, was Harold Holt. Now I don't want to dramatise what has happened between and brought sorrow to this station, except to say that five weeks ago today, Harold Holt, as you all know, was swept to his death. And I want to add this. That tonight it is my great privilege to introduce to you his successor, to present in the second week of his high office, the new Prime Minister of Australia, Senator John Gorton. Good evening to you, Sir.

PRIME MINISTER : Good evening.

MR LEONARD : The panel are John Wakefield, Elgin Reid and John Atherton.

We are going to talk to the new Prime Minister for 45 minutes.

If I may say so, with great respect, before the questions start, I have never known an Australian who has become so well known in a few days as our guest tonight. But let me say this: The Prime Minister is no novice to politics. He has been around for quite a few years in Canberra, and he has been the Leader of the Government in the Senate. He is, if I may put it in a nutshell, a very rugged Australian, with a great war record and a distinguished academic record - Master of Arts, Oxford University.

Now, with those few words, please start the questions.

Q. Prime Minister, what is the biggest problem that you face as Prime Minister in your view. Put another way: What do you see as this country's major difficulties over the next few years?

PM: I would have to give a general answer, and I will give it in these general terms. Our great difficulty is to try to see that the competing demands that are made upon Australia can be met without putting burdens on the Australian people which might destroy their incentive to meet those demands. We have requirements here which have grown really enormously over the last few years. We have requirements for development which must take place if we are to grow into the nation that we can grow into. We have requirements

PM. (Contd.) for looking after our less fortunate citizens, and so on through education and health. Now there is also a limit to the amount of taxation that can be put upon Australians in order to meet these, and the real problem is the apportionment of resources amongst these conflicting demands, not only in our Government but in State Governments and Commonwealth Government.

MR LEONARD: Forgive me for intervening very briefly, Sir, you were asked about challenges to your Administration, which is very new; would you regard the current troubles with our postal workers and mail deliveries as a great challenge? I presume you would. I know there are great difficulties about commenting on this in any detail because the situation could change dramatically between the time we are recording and Sunday night when we go on the air. But would it be fair to ask you, as a general principle in industrial troubles of this kind which hold up the nation's business, would it be fair to say that the Government would not retreat?

PM: I think that in this case - not as a general principle - but answering you in this case, the Government could not retreat. At least, the Government could not allow Australian mails to pile up and not to be delivered. I think our attitude on this I can summarise in a few words. We hope that the striking drivers will go back to work as soon as possible and then use all the processes of Arbitration which are available to put their case. We hope that this will happen, but we can't wait indefinitely for it to happen while mail is piling up because Australia's life blood could be clogged if we did. We have no choice but to move the mail. We hope the strikers will go back.

MR LEONARD: I think, like you, most Australians will hope that by the time this goes on the air it will all be over. John Atherton.....

Q. Prime Minister, getting away from that, is there one particular achievement you would like to pull off during your term as Prime Minister?

PM: It may surprise you to hear this: There are achievements in the field of social welfare which I would like to see brought to fruition during my time as Prime Minister. This I think will involve some rethinking of the methods by which such things as pensions are paid, the methods by which such things as Repatriation benefits are paid, the approach to health problems where at the moment somebody who has a long, continuing illness can, in fact, be ruined and face ruin because he cannot be covered. Now, what I would want to see, and it would not be easy to work this out and I don't pretend it is worked out in my mind now, but what I would like to see is a situation where somebody who was genuinely indigent as a result of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune - not his own fault - and had the fear of that and the burden of that lifted from him. I am not to be taken as saying I believe in a complete welfare state and handouts all down the line, but I would like to see real misfortune overcome.

Q. Would you be interpreted incorrectly if we said you were favouring some kind of national insurance?

PM: It might turn out that that could be a correct interpretation but that is not the one which I give it at the moment. I will try to make it clear: I haven't plans but plans can be worked out. They may or may not involve national insurance.

Q. Prime Minister, how do you propose to overcome your relative inexperience in foreign affairs and your lack of contact with international leaders?

PM: Well, let me remind you of a few facts. I was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee for a long time. After that time, I have acted as Minister for External Affairs on a number of occasions, and when the former Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, took over the portfolio, I acted on all except policy matters. I have been in charge of the running of the Colombo Plan, for example, for a couple of years. I have met, and I know well, Harry Lee of Singapore. I know Tunku Abdul Rahman, I know Tun Razak, I know Malik from Indonesia. I don't claim great experience or great knowledge, but there is some experience there.

Q. Prime Minister, can you tell us please, - we are assuming or we know that you will be elected to the House of Representatives next month - can you tell us how soon after that you hope to be able to go to Viet Nam?

PM: I think I must answer that, as much as I would like to, I see little prospect of going there until after this Session of the Parliament is concluded which might be April or May, as far away as that. You see, there are meetings to be held before the House reassembles, there is some preparation to be done. I see little prospect of getting away until the Session is over.

Q. Mr Prime Minister, it has been claimed in some circles, particularly overseas, that on Viet Nam you are a hawk. Are you, and how far ^{only} are you willing to go to support peace initiatives, not necessarily from America, on Viet Nam?

PM: Well, bird-like labels always need a little bit of explanation before you can really know what they mean. On the whole, I think I would regard myself as neither a hawk nor a dove, but as an owl in this matter - I don't mean you can't see very well, but you've got the reputation, I hope, for wisdom in it. All we want there is that there should be a cessation of fighting. Well, we could get that by withdrawing, of course. But a cessation of fighting which would leave the South Vietnamese people able to work out their own destiny, and we hope with our and other people's assistance, build up their own economy. You have asked me, I think, about bombing. I have pointed out recently with this question that the Americans could, if they wished, completely destroy North Viet Nam, but that that would be a wrong and a stupid thing to do. The bombing is trying to stop the flow of men and materials from the North Vietnamese to the South. It is hampering it; it is not stopping it, but it is hampering it. If there were an undertaking, a package deal that talks would start when bombing stopped, and that the sending of men and materials from North to South would stop when bombing stopped, then that is a goal which I think we would all like to see achieved.

Q. Do you think there is any chance of peace talks with Hanoi before the next American Presidential election?

PM: I am afraid I must say I am doubtful because I think that the North Vietnamese are waiting and hoping that there may be a change in the United States at the next election, and may be quite intransigent until then. I hope not, but I fear so.

Q. Do you imagine there would be any dramatic changes if the Republicans won the Presidential elections? Last time it was being said it would be unthinkable they would step things up.

PM: Well, I don't like to comment on affairs in a foreign country. It depends. Some people in the Republicans have some views, some others.

Q. I shouldn't have asked that question, Prime Minister.

Q. Does Australia under your leadership, Prime Minister, stand as firmly and as fully committed to the Viet Nam war as it has done up until this point, and are you willing, if it is considered a military advantage, not necessarily a necessity, to increase our troop commitment there, including more conscripts?

PM: The answer to the first part of that question is yes, we are committed for all the reasons we first went into it. We think aggression must be stopped and must be seen not to pay. The answer to the second part of the question is, at this moment, no. You asked me if it wasn't a military necessity. . . . I believe we are now extending all the effort that we can extend as a nation of twelve million people with her other requirements in this kind of field.

Q. This means, does it, Sir, that we have gone as far as we can go in Viet Nam?

PM: Well, subject to some complete kind of change. You know we have recently decided to send the tank support and the engineer support. I am assuming you are meaning that?

Q. Yes

Q.: President Johnson has wished you well, Prime Minister. Like your predecessor, are you all the way with him, or will you be putting some new thoughts to Washington?

PM: Well, I think my predecessor had a tag hung around his neck which was not really justified. He did say at the end of a rather jocular speech, I think at the White House, "I'm all the way with LBJ" which at that time was an election slogan they were using, and this has been taken to mean that he was saying that Australia would slavishly follow the United States policy. Well it didn't mean that then, and it doesn't mean that now. I can assure you it doesn't mean that now.

Q. Will you be putting any new thoughts to Washington?

PM: If we have new thoughts, we would not be inhibited in putting them to Washington.

Q. Prime Minister, many people find it difficult to follow Labor's policy on Viet Nam, mainly because so many people for the party seem to speak on it. Now could you tell us what is your interpretation of official ALP policy on Viet Nam?

PM: I don't think anybody could you tell you that for reasons that you have spelt out yourself, but I believe that the...well, I know that the official policy of the governing Labor body is that we should say to the United States : "Cease bombing North Viet Nam at once; put your troops into a holding operation" In other words, make them stand where they are and allow them to be attacked but don't allow them to attack....."and if you, the United States won't do that, then we will withdraw our troops from Viet Nam immediately." On the other hand, I did seem to remember during the Senate campaign some claim from Mr Whitlam that he was El Supremo and it didn't matter what the Federal Labor Conference said. I doubt that, and I think his comrades don't believe him.

Q. Mr Prime Minister, during Mr Holt's two short years in office he made several trips to Washington for personal talks with the President. Do you expect to keep up this personal liaison with whoever will be President of the United States? Do you hope to?

PM: I do hope to keep up a personal liaison but whether the number of trips would be as many as Mr Holt took in those two years I doubt very much. Some of those trips Mr Holt took were in fact going over to a Prime Ministers' Conference in London or something of that kind and he called in on the way. But I think I probably would not make a large number of special trips.

Q. Do you indicate by that answer that you think Commonwealth Conferences are falling on their face or.....

PM: I was only really indicating that a number of the visits that Mr Holt made to President Johnson were not specially for that purpose.

Q. You might be going to Commonwealth Conferences then, I take it?

PM: Well we'll wait and see.

Q. Mr Holt also made quite a number of trips to South-East Asia, do you propose to follow this pattern and visit Asia reasonably frequently and keep in contact, personal contact, with the leaders there?

PM: Definitely. I think this was one of the great things Mr Holt did was to get a personal contact with the leaders of the countries nearest to us with whom for years to come we will be most closely bound, and for the first time really, show that kind of interest of an Australian Prime Minister and get the benefits of the personal knowledge that flows from it. I would certainly hope to do this.

Q. Conversely, too, Prime Minister, lately we have been asking more leaders to our own country. Do you hope to keep that policy going?

PM: Yes. I do. I hope that before very long the Prime Minister of India will be visiting us.

Q. How deeply are you worried, Sir, about Britain's early withdrawal from South-East Asia as it had been originally planned?

PM: Quite deeply. Not from the point of view of the Australian Continent's own security. I am not worried about that. I haven't regarded the force there, which is a small force, as something directed towards the defence of the Australian continent itself. But I am worried about the removal of what, in effect, has been a police force, able to stop small insurrections, able to stop small attacks by one country in the area on another. You will remember the parachute raids that took place on Malaya itself at one stage from Indonesia, the landing of troops. This kind of thing they were able to stop, nip in the bud before it grew and I am worried that this security is removed from that area.

Q. Sir, just for my personal information, and probably for some of the others too, Mr Holt told us once in this programme - I think it was when Mr Healey, the British Defence Minister was out that there was some examination going on regarding the prospect of a shared base by Britain and Australia in this country. Can you tell us what the situation is about that, now?

PM: Only that military discussions have been taking place between the staffs in Australia and the staffs in Great Britain, but they have been confined to planning discussions which have not yet come up to either Government for consideration as to whether those plans should be put into operation or what the cost of them would be or whether the cost could be borne.

Q. Would the announcement by Mr Wilson in the past few days affect that plan work, do you think?

PM: Well, Mr Wilson has stated that the main purposes of the United Kingdom's moves and decisions are to save foreign exchange and for economic purposes, so it may be that this thinking could be affected.

Q. With the British withdrawal, Prime Minister, from our near North, would you consider, if asked - and I think indirectly the country has been - providing Australian troops to fill up the gap in Malaysia and Singapore, and in the light of what you have told us now about our commitment in Viet Nam, could we ever really afford to do this?

PM: Well, I wouldn't consider putting in Australian troops to fill up the gap the British had left because I don't believe we can afford to do this.

- Q. Isn't it a fact that Australians must face up to it that we are going to drift in all fields further apart?
- PM: There will always, I think, be special ties between the United Kingdom and Australia, ties of family relationships, but I believe that just as the relationship between Australia and the United Kingdom now is really quite different from what it was fifty years ago, so the future too will see changes compared with what the relationship is now, but I think it must continue to be ties of sentiment, sentiment must continue for many years ahead.
- Q. Taken strictly, I know it isn't your Department, but can you see an appreciable weakening of our trade ties with Britain, in a way which may damage our rural economy particularly?
- PM: Well you are quite right. This is the Minister for Trade's Department more than mine. But if Great Britain were to enter the Common Market, and no-one knows if this might at some future time be allowed to take place, then I think it could affect quite seriously some of our industries.
- Q. Sir, how do you see the future of the Commonwealth, having in mind Britain's attempt to get into the Common Market, and if it doesn't it won't be its fault, and the withdrawal from East of Suez - do you think the Commonwealth will endure, and in fact, that Britain really wants it to?
- PM: Again I wouldn't want to comment on what Britain might or might not want to happen. This would be quite inappropriate for me, and besides it would be silly. I think we can only wait and see what the future brings and to provide in the future the answer to the first part of your question - will it endure, and if so, in what way, in what form.
- Q. Now in our limited time, I think overseas matters and foreign policy have had a fair go. Could we get on to something perhaps nearer home.....
- Q : Prime Minister, soon you will have to face a review of the composition of your Cabinet. Now, we don't expect you to go into details here. But do you undertake, if any changes are necessary, that you will go ahead with them, no matter which personalities are involved?
- PM: I undertake that I will do all that is possible but one can't ignore completely the representation from the States and things of that kind. But I don't think one needs to pay slavish adherence to them either. You can't ignore them completely, though.
- Q: What we are getting at, Sir, is that if you have got a dud, no matter where he is, will you root him out?
- PM: Well, I wouldn't say we had any duds!
- Q. Again not going into details, Sir, could you just say are you planning great changes in the Ministry?

PM: I wouldn't say great changes, no.

Q. You did talk at your press conference the other day of changes or a reallocation of administrative duties. What did that mean? It was rather a broad statement you made.

PM: Oh yes. It means - and I am a little inhibited in answering this because I don't want to go into too much detail - but it does mean that some Department which at the moment has a number of functions to fulfil under what is called an Administrative Order could perhaps have one of those functions taken away, and that function could be provided to a Minister in another Department. I am not talking of really significant, important Departments, but there is, I think, a good deal of tidying up which could be done to regroup the functions of Departments. For example, just to give you a more concrete example of something which might happen... We did pass a Referendum giving the Commonwealth authority to look after aboriginals. Now at the moment there is within the Prime Minister's Department a Secretariat in charge of that with the Minister for Territories having some connection with it. Well, an Administrative Order change might put that under the more direct control of a particular Minister whose particular responsibility it would be. This is the sort of thing I see.

Q. It wouldn't go as far as amalgamating - if that is the word - the Army, Navy and Air Force?

PM: No, it wouldn't

Q. Do you think, Sir, that 26 Ministers might be too many?

PM: Mm... I don't know how to answer that. On the whole, I think they all have a great deal of work to do, and also it does no great harm, in fact I think it does good for a Parliament to have in it somebody who is responsible to it for some part of public administration and for the expenditure of public money, and who can be cross-questioned on it. Let us suppose, for example, you wiped out, as people have suggested we should - although I don't believe we should - Army, Navy and Air and just had Defence. I don't believe any Minister for Defence, even if he was a genius, could answer to Parliament for the expenditure in Army, in Navy, in Air and in Defence and would have to rely very, very much more than at present on the Public Service Heads of those Departments to provide him with information and he could indeed in those circumstances, I think, claim with reasonable fairness that he couldn't be expected to know all the details Parliament might want him to know. There are arguments both ways.

Q. Prime Minister, are you completely happy - I don't imagine you are - how unhappy are you, I should say, that Mr McEwen, the leader of a minority party should dictate who will not be Leader of the Liberal Party?

- PM: I don't think Mr McEwen did dictate who would not be the Leader of the Liberal Party. What Mr McEwen did say was that he wouldn't serve underneath one particular man. But that is not to say either that was a decisive factor in what happened to that particular man, and certainly Mr McEwen had nothing to do with the choice of any of the other candidates who stood for the leadership.
- Q. We don't want to embarrass you, Sir.....but assuming that the particular gentleman had been elected Leader and Mr McEwen had carried out his threat, what then would have been the future of the present Government?
- PM: Oh, I think it would have been extremely precarious.
- Q. Mr Prime Minister, are you confident, the way it has worked out, that the coalition can work smoothly, and tell us frankly - I don't know why we shouldn't mention his name - how are you going to get round the relationship between Mr McEwen and Mr McMahan?
- PM: Well, again, something of this kind was asked me only a day or two ago, and the answer I gave then, I give to you now. This is a new Government. We want to rule the book off and to start afresh. Given goodwill - and I believe there is goodwill - and given knowledge that we must work together for the good of Australia, I believe that the tensions which previously existed might not exist in the future, I hope so.
- Q. Will you forgive me while I am on that point. I think you will agree there is one part of the book you can't rule off, and nobody knows better than you that you have got a hostile Senate...
- PM: Oh, that is a different part of the book. On the other hand, I have had quite a lot of experience of the Senate when we haven't had a majority. We haven't had a majority for years and years and years. The DLP and Independents have held the balance of power for the last two years, and now it is a switch to the DLP holding the balance of power. Well, one just does one's best and we do seem not to have done too badly in the Senate, and from a Parliament's point of view as opposed to an executive's. The Senate has made some improvements in bills. If they were stupid enough, and silly enough to reject the Budget or something of that kind, this would be quite wrong. They haven't done that.
- Q. Also apropos of ruling off the book, Sir, Labor probably won't want to, and wouldn't you think that the fact that the Deputy Prime Minister has said that he does not trust the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party will be fully exploited by your political opponents at election time?
- PM: I have no doubt whatever that they will seek to make the greatest use they can of this...
- Q. Do you think they will get much mileage out of it, Sir?

- PM: Well, it depends I suppose partly on how much it is overshadowed by what Mr Calwell has to say about the present Leader of the Opposition.
- Q. Touche!
- Q. Can we clear up a point, Sir? In your candidacy for the Prime Ministership, did you enter into any agreements with any groups of supporters on mutual support for some other candidate for some other position or did you offer any promotions or anything?
- PM: Absolutely none. I am happy to say that there is not one single person who can say that they were promised anything as an inducement to support me, which is a great benefit and a great help. There is not one. What I did do was to advise Mr McMahon personally that I thought he would be wise not to stand for leadership but for stand for Deputy Leadership. If he did that, I thought he would consolidate his position. But that is not an indication of any promise or any deal or anything of that kind.
- Q. As you made no arrangements or gave no guarantees and you don't expect many changes in the Ministry, I take it we won't see many new faces around the place at the Administrative level in Canberra?
- PM: Well, I was asked did I contemplate great changes, and I think that was the question I answered.
- Q. I was talking about personnel changes.
- Q. Sir, no doubt you have been appraising your opponent, Mr Whitlam for some time, just how serious a political rival do you regard him, having in mind the elections?
- PM: I think he has got a very good TV appeal, particularly if they don't make him up too much, and I think he presents a case very well indeed, and has an appeal, and I would regard him as quite a competent Leader of the Opposition, a very competent Leader of the Opposition.
- Q. Prime Minister, perhaps you will concede, at this stage anyhow, more Australians know him than know you. Now, how are you going to pick up the leeway before the next general election?
- PM: If you ask me to come and talk to you again, I'll do that and that will help what has been happening now and I will be making up the leeway.
- Q. The House of Representatives, Sir, is/a rather more turbulent Chamber than the Senate to which you have been used to. How do you think you will go in the House, and how do you think particularly you will approach Mr Whitlam, an experienced Representatives man, over the centre table?
- PM: Well I can tell you that I am not filled with any apprehension about this, and this is partly, of course, because I am not only facing Mr Whitlam, I am facing Mr Whitlam and the Labor Party, and I have behind me the Liberal Party and the Country Party, and I am happy in my support, so I have no apprehension.

Q. Mr Prime Minister, would you concede that Mr Whitlam has welded the Labor Party into a greater force to be reckoned with than your side of the House has had to face in elections for some time?

PM: On the surface it certainly appears that way, particularly when one doesn't look too hard at Victoria.

Q. Tell me this. I think you will agree that one of the weapons in politics, particularly in the House of Representatives as long as I have known it anyway, is this needling technique. Are you satisfied that you won't fall into traps caused by that?

PM: You mean, will I be able to dodge water quickly enough....!

Q. Do you feel that you won't be ruffled by this kind of technique?

PM: I can only say that I hope I won't be.

Q. Prime Minister, how do you propose to acquaint yourself with the particular problems of the various States?

PM: I haven't the slightest doubt, from experience and foreknowledge, that the particular problems of the various States will be presented with great force and clarity, and over and over again by the people speaking for the various States. I don't think there will be any chance that I will not be fully aware of the particular problems.

Q. Would it be a fair thing to ask if you think they are getting as fair a deal as it is possible at the present time?

PM: It is a question that could be looked at but I couldn't answer at the present moment. I think we must remember this that neither the State Governments nor the Commonwealth Government are able to do all the things they want to do and should do. What I mean by "should do" is could do with advantage. There is a general feeling around that the Commonwealth can do anything, that the Commonwealth can do this or that. It can't. It is inhibited too.

Q. Prime Minister, will you give us a quick run-down, please, on your attitude to the contentious question of northern development.

PM: Why is it contentious?

Q. Because a lot of people think up here there is too much talk and not enough action

PM: I see. I was wondering whether you were thinking of the theory put forward by some social agronomists that you get greater return from investment in the higher rainfall South than you do from investment in the North. Well, my approach would, I am sure, follow the indications which, before I assumed this office, I gave. I was responsible for telling the CSIRO to put the Tropical Pastures Laboratory in at Townsville. I took part in the decision made by the Cabinet not to build an Army camp in the South where, for military reasons and administrative reasons and economic reasons it would have been better, but to remove it to Townsville. I have played, as I think they will tell you, quite a considerable part in helping to expand the university college at Townsville, and the teachers' college.

PM This is perhaps not the kind of development you are thinking of.
(Contd.) You may be thinking of roads, water conservation and things of that kind, but it is a very real kind of development.

Q. Sir, we are not talking only about Queensland. We are talking about the North, too, and Western Australia where there have been problems, too.

PM: I see, I thought you were mainly referring to Queensland.

Q. No, we are trying to approach this on a national basis.

PM: I see. Well, then what I was trying to do was to give some indication which, quite fortuitously happened to be in Queensland. I think the development of the North is one of the real problems we have got. I am inclined to think, although at this moment without being dogmatic, that the conservation of water in that area is one of the great developmental projects which can take place. But I don't ever see a situation where the North will be as closely populated as the South. I don't see this happening because of some natural disabilities, but that doesn't stop it being developed to the top of its bent.

Q. What is your attitude, Sir, to migration from Asia? In the last couple of years there has been some further liberalisation. Do you want this to continue, this continuing liberalisation of migration from Asia.

PM: Well, I think so. What you are talking of is the length of time people have to stay here before they become naturalised and that kind of thing. Yes, certainly, I agree with that. My general attitude to this problem is this. We have in Australia at the moment, I think, almost no racial consciousness, almost no colour consciousness. There is, I am afraid - I must say this - in some areas this kind of feeling against aboriginals, but against Asians, I believe it doesn't exist. Now I don't ever want it to exist. It is a matter of judgment at what point, how big a percentage of the population you have before this kind of thing begins. As long as you can avoid that kind of development, as long as you can get people in short supply who can help us - nurses and doctors and dentists and people of that kind - then subject to those two provisos, I am quite glad to see the path the Government has been following.

Q. Prime Minister, what are your thoughts on conscription? Do you like our system at present of being able to call up young men for active service abroad under the lottery system?

PM: I can't think of any other way of doing it which could not be attacked on the grounds of complete unfairness. You would, I am quite sure, have suggestions of undue influence, suggestions of well, corruption is a word, if it couldn't be seen, and it couldn't publicly be seen that that was the way in which people were chosen. I think myself that it is the fairest way.

Q. When we were kids - this was long before your time, Sir - we all had to go into cadets. Everybody had to go in. Wouldn't that be a fairer way, assuming you could train them, of course?

PM: Oh, well, of course if you put every twenty-year-old youth in the Army, then, clearly, there would be no need to select particular people, but in our day, all we needed was a tent and a .303 and, I think, a clip of five rounds of ammunition. This wouldn't do nowadays. I think you would find the cost would be quite crippling, not only of equipping and housing the youths but of taking them out of the development of Australia.

Q. Prime Minister, we just didn't clear up one little point - "by lottery for overseas service".

PM: Yes, well, you are suggesting they should be chosen by lottery for overseas service?

Q. Oh, no. I am saying is it fair, or do you think it is fair? You said there is no alternative, or it is the best way to call up men for military training because there could be no rigging, but these lads have to go overseas, some of them.

PM: Yes. What decides whether they go overseas or not is the unit they happened to have joined. The initial choice is, as you say, by taking a marble out of a barrel. They then join a unit of one kind or another and are trained as a part of that unit. If that unit goes abroad, I think it would be quite impossible to start taking component parts or individuals out and send it away.

Q. Prime Minister, you mentioned as one of your aims, or hopes on becoming Prime Minister earlier in this session, of helping the unfortunate. Now the Opposition claims that ten per cent. of Australians live below poverty level. Have you got any thoughts on what you feel about that?

PM: Well, I don't believe that ten per cent. of Australians do live below poverty level, but I do believe that there are numbers, quite significant numbers of people, living in great hardship or in poverty, and those are the people that one wants to help, particularly if it is not due to their own fault.

Q. Very early in the programme you said that and expanded on it a little. Do you include in that a desire, if it is possible, to increase the pensions for the unfortunate people?

PM: Well, whatever means can be taken ^{to achieve} the end I have tried to set out will be taken

Q. What about the thrifty, Sir, who are hit by the means test? Do you think abolition of the means test is ultimately practical?

PM: I don't see it happening.....you say "ultimately". Ultimately is a long time. I see great difficulties in its way, although as an objective it is part of the Liberal philosophy, of course. You remember in England there was a pension payable without regard to the recipient, and after a while it turned out that it was a small addition to people who had enough money but it wasn't enough to live on for those who had no money at all, so there had to be a supplementary pension introduced which was subject to a means test, and this is the sort of problem you get into, particularly as prices do and will rise gradually year by year.

Q. Prime Minister, it has been said that the security authorities of this country, following the death of Mr Holt, and perhaps influenced by the incident with Mr Calwell, want the Prime Minister of this country to have more consistent and constant security. Is this so, and what are your views on the question of guarding the country's leader?

PM: I am not quite sure what the view of the Security authorities is. I think it is fair enough to attempt to guard a leader when he is walking through crowds or in an election campaign in which he may be attacked, as on occasions Mr Holt was, but I can tell you that my own ideas are that if I couldn't get into my own car and go for a drive where I wanted to and visit some friends when I wanted to without someone following me, I would tell the Security people what they had to do.

Q. No matter how discreet the surveillance?

PM: Yes, I don't like it.

Q. Well, gentlemen, that is a good point to close on, I think. You want to be free. You don't want to be watched?

PM: Yes.

Q. That's the freedom you seek and which no doubt you will demand if you can get past the the Security boys, and I daresay the Prime Minister can do lots of things that ordinary people can't do. If you will forgive me now, I will close on that one and come back in a moment to thank you.

Well, Mr Prime Minister, in the last week and a bit you have certainly had your share of television and press interviews and I think it can be fairly said by people who don't share your political philosophy as well as those who do, that you have not attempted to dodge questions but have been frank when you didn't know the precise answers, and who can blame you for that after only a few days in office. And I want to say, from this station's own point of view, that we are immensely proud to have had you here within the first fortnight of your office, and we do want to thank you very, very sincerely for having come, and believe me, when you said half way through this programme that you would come here again, we are going to take you up on it.
