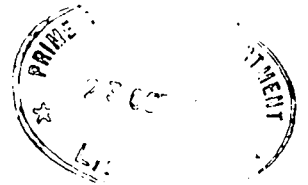


EMBARGO: 8.50 p. m. on 21 October 1969



PARTY TV INTERVIEW NO. 3

1969 FEDERAL ELECTION

TELEVISION INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE
PRIME MINISTER, MR. JOHN GORTON, FOR
ABC TELEVISION NETWORK

Interviewer: Mr. Patrick Tennison

Q. Prime Minister, the Labor Party says domestic issues are the main point in this election. Do you agree?

PM. The Labor Party would like Australians to think that because they don't want Australians to consider their complete lack of any foreign affairs or defence policy at all. The real issue at this election, the overriding issue at this election, is the policy of cut and run which the Labor Party has got. They will walk out on our alliances with the United States and with the South Vietnamese, and their attempt there to get democracy working - they will walk out on that, unilaterally, without consultation, without agreement. They will withdraw from Malaysia/Singapore, break our word there and show that we have a lack of interest in the region to our North and having alienated our alliance, having alienated the United States, having, I am quite sure, deterred Great Britain from ever coming back to the region to our North in time of need if we won't take any part in it - having done all that - they then propose to reduce our own efforts in defence. Perhaps I shouldn't say "cut and run" - perhaps I should say "run and cut" for they first run, then reduce our Army by a third and deny the Air Force the strike bomber which our military experts say we need. Of course they say domestic issues are the most important. Of course they run away from discussing defence. This is the overriding thing, because on this the future, really the future security of Australia depends. Indeed, the future capacity of Australia to be an independent nation may depend on these issues.

Q. Well, let us look at it from outside. We have commitments in Malaysia and Singapore. Do the people of these countries want us there?

PM. Indeed they do, and indeed they are very disturbed at any prospect of a change in policy such as the Labor Party proposes. Let me give you some quotations to indicate this. Tun Razak is the Minister in Malaysia who is in charge of these affairs, and this is a quote from him concerning whether our forces should be there or

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whether they shouldn't. He says: "If forces are in Australia (that's Australian forces) I don't think they would be much help in modern conditions. If we in Malaysia are attacked, it would be a matter of hours, not days". And Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore says, "Those who subscribe to the theory that Australian ground forces should not be in the Singapore/Malaysian area have no conception of what is required by the area itself". Now these are things that people in the area are saying.

Q. But does the Labor Party want to withdraw completely from Asia? Mr. Whitlam has said he would keep the RAAF at Butterworth in Malaysia for training purposes anyway.

PM. The Labor Party platform and policy must be carried out by Labor Party parliamentarians. And the Labor Party platform and policy is quite distinct. It says: "No plans for the stationing of Australian armed forces in other countries are now feasible or acceptable. No Australian troops may be stationed outside of Australia". It is all very well for Mr. Whitlam on one day to say well, perhaps, he would leave some Air Force in Malaysia, but we might note that on the same day Mr. Barnard said Labor would bring the Air Force back from Malaysia. But this sort of disagreement is not really important. What is important is that the outside body that runs Labor says there must be no Australian forces stationed in Malaysia and Singapore. That will prevail.

Q. Well let's come back home now. You have been criticised for not saying much about Commonwealth/State relations in this campaign.

PM. Well, I have said more than the Opposition has said concerning Commonwealth/State relations. Just have a look at that. In my policy speech I pointed out that there would be in the future a need not only for increased defence, not only for increased development, but a need for the increasing requirements of the States as the population grows and they have to provide the hospitals and the schools and the other services they provide. I made that clear. And we believe in doing this in a Federal way. Now we are quite happy to look at the Constitution. We think it is time it is looked at. But we believe basically in doing it in a Federal way. What is suggested from the Opposition is to bypass the States in education completely by setting up some commission to examine ten thousand schools, ignoring the State Education Departments, to bypass the States in the development of suburbs, to make the most massive attempt yet made to centralise in Canberra the running of things which up till now have been State functions. Not to help - but to centralise them.

Q. Isn't inflation one of our major problems domestically? What can your policies do about this?

PM. No, inflation isn't one of our major problems domestically. One of our major problems domestically is to make sure inflation doesn't get out of hand. And we have done that. In spite of the fact that our workforce is fully employed, in spite of the fact of the growth that everyone can see, we have still managed to contain inflation and keep it under control. But it will be one of our major problems. It will be if the Opposition injects hundreds of millions more into the economy. Look, the last figures published on employment showed that for the first time in Australia's history we had more jobs offering than there were applicants for jobs. Now with your workforce fully employed like that, with your resources utilised, any thinking person must know that throwing more money into the economy won't produce any more, but what it will produce is higher costs and inflation. That's an easy word to use - "inflation". Perhaps the connotations aren't fully known. What it means is that people on fixed incomes get badly hit. What it means is that the modest wage-earner gets badly hit. And of course what it means is that the primary producer has these extra costs and can't recoup them because he is selling on an overseas market and on the prices given by an overseas market. This is the danger posed by the Opposition. It is not a problem now because we have contained it. It will be an overriding problems if the Australian people are taken in by what is suggested by the ALP.

Q. There are obviously very vast differences on all or most of these policy points. Is there some overall philosophy you can see as distinguishing these differences between the two parties?

PM. What are these vast differences on policy points put before the people this time? I have had a close look at the Opposition's policies. There are no precise provisions, no precise suggestions for development at all. We do have. We propose to build two railways. We propose to take Australia into the atomic age. We propose to set \$100 million aside over the next five years for water conservation. Those are specific proposals. On the other side there are none at all. We do propose to spend more money increasing our own defences. The Opposition are completely silent except that they are going to reduce them by the steps they say they would take. Nowhere in the ALP policy is there any specific proposal except in the field of welfare and an already discredited and broken-back health plan. Now, we do have proposals. They have been spelt out. The establishment of a marine science institute to let us know more about the Barrier Reef so we can protect it. The establishment of a film industry. All these things are in our proposals. There are none - none - in the proposals of the Opposition. So it is a bit difficult to say there is a great difference between them. I think perhaps, though, the major difference is in the field of economic management. We are determined that we will maintain the employment we have, maintain the growth we have, the prosperity we have, and that we will not let inflation spoil these things.

Because if it does, not only are employment and growth in jeopardy, but overseas capital will not flow here in the way it has been flowing here, migrants will not be able to be brought in in the quantities in which they have been brought in. We are determined to avoid that. Now that is why this year we had to budget for a \$500 million internal surplus. What do you think the situation of Australia would be now - the employment situation, the cost situation, the price situation - if we hadn't done that; if there was another \$500 million. This would have got out of control, and it would have made it impossible for us to do what we are going to do and that is to reduce the income tax burden on the lower and middle income tax earner. After all, it is the taxpayer who pays for all these promises. You can't give them and at the same time allow the taxpayer not to pay them. We have given an earnest of our interest in social welfare, but we also want to pay attention to people who have children to bring up, houses to pay off, and who are themselves earning and need an incentive to earn more. Perhaps those are differences.

Q.

Thank you, Prime Minister.
