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EMBARGO: MIDNIGHT, SUNDAY 1ST DECEMBER 1974

Radio 2SM Interview with Prime Minister,
Mr Gough Whitlam

Interviewer: Stephen Brouwer

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- B.: " Mr. Prime Minister now that two years have gone by, the obvious question is have they been completely satisfying for you.
- M.: Not completely, but overwhelmingly.
- B.: If you had the time over again what things would you do differently.
- M.: Oh, I am not sure. I could not identify what I would do differently. I would have liked many things to have been done more quickly, or completely.
- B.: Would you like to name a few?
- M.: What immediately occurs to me, of course, those things where we have been held up in the Parliament; or those things where we have been held up by State Governments not co-operating with us. There were many things, of course, which were held up by the Senate; some which are still being held up by the Senate. There are also a great number of things where the State Governments were slow to co-operate and where time was lost, but in general, everywhere really, except Queensland - that's now been overcome.
- B.: If you lose Office, or when you retire from Parliament, what would you personally like to be remembered for?
- M.: There have been two main things at least that we have been able to do. One is that we have been able to ensure that people have a better opportunity in life right from the outset; we have done that through the Schools Commission. The other is that we will have done things to ensure that people have better opportunities in life wherever they are living, and we are doing that through our programmes for cities, capital cities, provincial cities. I suppose the principle instrument of this is the Grants Commission. So the Schools Commission and the Grants Commission are the two big things which we'll be remembered for, but there is a whole host of other matters too, of course, but you asked me, I think, for the two big ones.
- B.: What about you personally?
- M.: I had quite a bit to do with both those, of course, but I had also the general impression that our country has abroad and what we are doing in the World, and there, there has been a transformation during the two years we have been in Office. You asked me personally, I have been very much involved in all that.
- B.: If you lost Office, what would Gough Whitlam do?
- M.: He would relax and enjoy it.
- B.: As.
- M.: Oh, doing nothing. I had worked a long time and very hard. I have been in Parliament 22 years this month. I have been Prime Minister two years this month, and they've been very active years.
- B.: You'd retire to the Back Bench, or leave politics.

- P.M.: I am not really making any plans. I am 58, and I suppose I have a few years as Prime Minister yet.
- S.B.: Well you have reached the highest position in Australia. Have you got any further personal ambition?
- P.M.: None whatever. Australia has been good to me. I have worked hard according to my 'lights' for Australia. Nothing else I should want or expect.
- S.B.: So for you the Prime Ministership is it.
- P.M.: Well, of course.
- S.B.: Well, can I ask you if you felt much personal distress about the sacking of Mr. Crean.
- P.M.: Well, let me make it plain. I don't accept the word sacking. Mr. Crean and Doctor Cairns exchanged port folios. There can be no shame for Mr. Crean to take a department of which Dr. Cairns had been the minister for two years, including six months as Deputy Prime Minister. There is no shame for a minister to take over a department from the Deputy Prime Minister.
- S.B.: Well can I ask you if you felt much personal distress about the reshuffle. Mr. Crean liked being Treasurer.
- P.M.: Yes, he did, but as I say there can be 'no skin off his nose'. If the Deputy Prime Minister is willing to be Treasurer then it is the Deputy Prime Minister's duty to take the position of Treasurer. The Deputy Prime Minister for nine years after Menzies was restored was Sir Arthur Fadden, and he was Treasurer throughout that time. Then for the following 11 years under Menzies and the leader of the Country Party, the deputy Prime Minister Mr. McEwen didn't want the job. So the deputy leader of the Liberal Party had to do it, and that was Mr. Holt. Then when Mr. Holt died the next day Mr. McMahon was the new deputy leader of the Liberal Party, Mr. McMahon. I beg your pardon - Mr. McMahon, the new deputy leader of the Liberal Party took over as Treasurer when Mr. Holt became Prime Minister. So for 20 years under predecessors you had the deputy prime minister or the deputy leaders of the Liberal Party holding the position of Treasurer. Dr. Cairns wasn't anxious to take the job when he became deputy prime minister because of the prominence that everybody knew that he was accepting in economic matters I asked him to reconsider and he accepted. Now it is quite wrong, I don't like the description of sacking of Mr. Crean. The fact was a senior man was willing to take that port folio, and Mr. Crean took the port folio which previously had been held by his Secretary that is a perfectly proper and normal procedure.
- S.B.: So for you it was a political move and there wasn't any personal distress about the changes.
- P.M.: I didn't like the way - all the speculation, and a lot of it of course was completely false. You know there were things said which were quite untrue, which the least checking would have revealed to be untrue. There was a story in the paper

that Mrs. Crean and I had some disagreement - no basis for it whatsoever. There was also a flash on one television chain that Mr. Crean's son had said something. Mr. Crean's son had never been contacted by any television station. Now these were very reckless, and cruel, and I said obscene things to go on. They were fabrications - no attempt whatever was made to check them, and of course some people in the Media, and I hope you don't mind me saying, make these stories up with confidence, knowing that the people concerned are not going to refute them. I am going to dignify this sought of speculation.

S.B.: And this was the aspect that did distress you throughout the whole issue.

P.M.: Yes I was of course not at all pleased that a leak came out, what was likely to happen, and it occurred when Dr. Cairns was overseas from the First to the Fifteenth of November, and in those circumstances nothing could be done about it. When Dr. Cairns returned the propriety was to inform the Governor General of what I had in mind, and he was not in Canberra - he was interstate for two or three days. When he returned I saw him that afternoon, and I made the announcement with his approval.

S.B.: Was making the change a hard decision to make?

P.M.: Yes, but I think it was a necessary decision.

S.B.: Are there any other changes you would like to see in your industry?

P.M.: Well there again I am bound to adhere to the policies I have always followed. If there are any changes a year or so over a year since there were the men concerned are in a position to hear. Now I will not respond to questions whether there are any changes.

S.B.: Will you personally be doing more on the economic front now?

P.M.: Yes, I will be more regularly and fully briefed, and more so. I have taken steps to see that Government departments and agencies collect more relevant statistics, and that they analyse them more quickly. The unfortunate thing is that many quite important statistics which have not been comprehensively collected or promptly analysed.

S.B.: Prime Minister I have asked you what you consider to be your greatest achievement - what do you consider to be the greatest mistake.

P.M.: Well naturally I am not going to readily respond to a question like that. I haven't thought about it. The great difficulty we have had of course is that we have come to office at a time of very great economic difficulty - unemployment and inflation in all the countries of our type throughout the World

all the western countries; all the industrialised trading countries in the world are beset by those two problems, and we infect each other, we just can't live to ourselves.

.B.: Well I interviewed Dr. Cairns the other day and he said because of the economic conditions in the pipe line Labor could not have won at a worst time. Do you agree?

.M: Yes I think that's right. Although I also accept the fact that if you are in the business of politics you must try to win whenever there is an election. It was certainly an unfortunate time to come to Office. It would have been very much better if we had won three years before in 1969. The Liberals at that time still had a new lease of life because Mr. Gorton had only had about less than two years in Office, and there was still the feeling that he was entitled to have a fair go.

.B.: Well, probably appropriate on the second anniversary and your second anniversary as Prime Minister of asking you - what do you consider to be your greatest asset.

.M: In what Way?

.B.: Your greatest personal asset.

.M: I suppose I have had an exceptionally long opportunity to study issues affecting the federal government in Australia, or affecting Australia in the World; and I was very diligent throughout those 20 years I was in opposition to equip myself to understand those domestic and international issues. Probably you could say that I have been better prepared for the job than any Prime Minister has been.

.B.: It wouldn't be fair if I didn't ask you what do you consider to be your greatest fault.

.M: There again you don't expect me readily to answer questions like that. My greatest disadvantage I suppose is that I came to this post rather older than would be ideal but that is unfortunately something which besets all heads of Government in the Western World. We become Prime Minister or President - and I am not saying I want to be President. I will have to make that qualification at this stage, but there are systems where the head of govt is called President. People in general become prime minister or president at the greater age than they would for instance be appointed as head of a government department or as head of a business enterprise.

.B.: At what stage in your life do you think would have been an appropriate time for you to come to the prime ministership.

P.M.: 10 years I suppose.

S.B.: Can I ask you, who would you prefer as Leader of the Opposition?

P.M.: I am very happy with the present leader of the Opposition.

S.B.: Prime Minister I am not asking you to justify your overseas trip, but with the criticism did you ever consider cancelling it?

P.M.: No I never considered cancelling it. It is always easy to criticise or even ridicule overseas trips. The fact is every overseas trip I have made has been necessary and has been successful, and there is no trip that I have made that people have criticised as having been unnecessary once it took place - they have, in fact, been beneficial, but there has been no visit by a senior minister to Europe since the change of government two years ago. I visited Westminster, Windsor, and the Vatican, but that was a very brief visit for various constitutional reasons concerning the British government and the monarchy. There has been no visit to the Common Market; there has been no visit to the Soviet Union; there has been no visit to any of the migrant countries; and this has been a very great omission up until now - I was to go in the middle of the year, but of course the double dissolution occurred at that time and delayed it all. There are pressing issues to be discussed. After all people shouldn't in Europe or in Australia get any impression that Australias cultural links, historical links, economic links, with Europe are less important than they were or being obscured, and if a Head of government visits a country there is no doubt the way the whole administration of that country is galvanized into action - the way attention is given to the country from which the visitor comes. We have only have done that on the occasion of the visits by heads of government or heads of state to this country. You only have to look and everybody can see how much the government directed attention to relevant issues when the prime minister of Japan or the Shah of Iran visited here, and there have been other countries. There have never been so many top visits to Australia. There have been as many in the last two years as there have been in the previous twenty. We are now important in the World, but there has not been an official visit by a prime minister to Europe since 1959. The three immediate predecessors never visited there, and there have been some countries which have never had a prime minister visit them, for instance Italy. They have never had an official visit by an Australian prime minister, despite the fact that the president of Italy was prepared to visit here. Many people ridicule these things, but the fact is that there are many things which can only be determined on the top level, and I have some experience in this; more in fact than any head of government that this country has had. My duty takes me there. Of course I'll enjoy it, but there are very many things which can only be determined at my level or instituted at my level, particularly in the Common Market.

S.B.: The ridicule and the criticism must annoy you.

P.M: No I expect it. After all I have been in politics for 22 years. 12 years ago it would have annoyed me. It would have driven me around the bend. Now I know it goes with the job. In this job you take the good with the bad. Now this is the criticism, I accept it, but I am not going to be deterred from doing what I think has to be done and what only can be done by the head of the Australian government because there can be some criticism. These are very strenuous visits which I make.

S.B.: Prime Minister, thank you very much. "

S.B.: " What do you think of your international image in relation to the aboriginal situation?

P.M.: I think everywhere around the World now realises that Australia that Australia has a government which is determined to give better opportunities for aborigines in their own country. Almost you can say a Government which is prepared to emancipate the aborigine..

S.B.: Well I think it was yesterday a book was launched by a black British sociologist, Chris Mullard, who described Australia as the second most racist country in the World.

P.M.: I cannot condone Australias record in this matter, but at least the present Australian Government, my Government, is trying to do something about it. The opening was made when the Referendum was carried in 1967 which removed the barriers in the Australian constitution to action by the Australian government on behalf of the Australian aborigines, but unfortunately until we came in there had been no administrative or legislative action taken by the Holt, or Gorton, or McMahon Governments which couldn't have been taken before that Referendum was carried. Now we are taking that administrative action and since, particularly in Queensland, the administrative action has been frustrated by the State government we will be taking the legislative action. See every other state has made arrangements with my government concerning aboriginal affairs. Every other state - Labor, Liberal, but in Queensland that's not proved possible; so now there will be legislative action and the result in the 1967 Referendum entitles us to take that action. In fact, we would say obliges us to take that action. "