

QUESTION: Since I last interviewed you, your title has changed, you haven't - you're still tall and gorgeous. What's so great about being Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER: It's the opportunity to do things or try to do the things that you were dreaming about doing before you got the job.

QUESTION: But some of the things have been more or less trial and error haven't they?

PRIME MINISTER: There's a hell of a lot of things you can't do because circumstances change. It's more difficult to do them - but on the other hand there has been an immense number of things that you can get the satisfaction of at last having seen done, or got done in your country.

QUESTION: Mrs Whitlam - any political decisions of the Prime Minister that you've disagreed with?

MRS WHITLAM: Inevitably.

QUESTION: Do you tell him?

MRS WHITLAM: Sometimes.

QUESTION: Who has last say?

MRS WHITLAM: Naturally he does. He is the Prime Minister. He's the political person. I'm not, as I hasten to tell you and everybody else.

QUESTION: Why do you think you're so good for each other?

PRIME MINISTER: Well we've had to make do with each other for over 32 years now. (Mrs Whitlam: Thanks very much.)

QUESTION: What attracted you to each other at first?

MR WHITLAM: It would be indelicate of me to say.

PRIME MINISTER: I suppose it was reassuring for me all those years ago to find somebody who was much the same height and also who had plenty of confidence and go and so on.

QUESTION: Still got plenty of confidence and go?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, yes, yes.

QUESTION: What do you like doing together?

MRS WHITLAM: We don't get much opportunity to do anything together.

QUESTION: When do you have the opportunity?

MRS WHITLAM: We like going to concerts, listening to music.

PRIME MINISTER: Getting away to places like Hervey Bay.

MRS WHITLAM: Sitting in the sun.

QUESTION: What don't you like doing together?

PRIME MINISTER: You don't take time off to think. There is a very great number of things that you're doing because you should be doing them and some of them you like and some of them I suppose you wouldn't bother to do - that goes with the job. But you don't really stop to say 'Do I like this or not?' You're involved, it's part of the job and you obviously like the job. If you set out in this life, this is the best job in it.

QUESTION: There seems to be so many problems in the press like 'Whitlam: Problems Mount'....

PRIME MINISTER: I saw that in yesterday afternoon's Brisbane paper.

QUESTION: I'm wondering if battling with the Premier is a breeze compared to the problems in Canberra. Is it?

PRIME MINISTER: That heading I noticed in the Brisbane paper yesterday. It's just a beat-up of something that was in one of the papers that morning. I mean it's just a beat-up - there's nothing to it.

QUESTION: But is it better being up here battling with the Premier?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh I don't know. There are a number of things that can only be done in Australia since we have a Federal system in the Federal Government and the State Governments co-operate. I frankly think we aren't, here, but in every other State we are.

QUESTION: We've had a few political handouts in the last few months here from the Federal Government?

PRIME MINISTER: And you would have had many more, as every other State has, if you had taken them.

QUESTION: But a lot of these political handouts come at election time.

PRIME MINISTER: No, no.

QUESTION: Not just your party....

PRIME MINISTER: For instance, we were elected two years ago on Monday and at that time nobody expected that there would be an election for three years after that. Now in fact there was one six months ago. Now any handouts, as you call them, which are taking place this year would have been done long before the start of an election because you ordinarily expect to be in power for 3 years and we have a good majority in the House of Representatives and of course, we still have. One would not expect there to be another election for another 2½ years in the House of Representatives, so what you say are handouts are part of a continuing program and the program is in acts of Parliament or in reports which we've sought and which we've published. They've not just been in anticipation of an election and we shouldn't be having one for another 2½ years.

QUESTION: We are having one here.

PRIME MINISTER: Oh a State one.

QUESTION: I feel Mr Perc Tucker has been slightly overshadowed because all the big guns and the big stars have been coming up from Canberra. Do you think he's going to be lost in the glitter of it all?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I don't know how much attention is being given to various people - things often get mesmerised or concentrated in this way. But what you're talking about, you know, handouts which are part of programs are being run in other States too, and they're not having elections. There are a lot of things that should be being handed out here which are not being accepted.

QUESTION: I'm sure you would be grossly disappointed if I didn't mention your relationship with Mr Hawke?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes.

QUESTION: What have you disagreed about most strongly?

PRIME MINISTER: There was, I suppose, the Prices/Incomes Referendum a year ago. That was actually the only one I can think of where there was a substantial difference of opinion.

QUESTION: What have you agreed on?

PRIME MINISTER: Naturally enough I am very often in contact with Mr Hawke. I suppose usually a week wouldn't go past, certainly not a fortnight, where we didn't have a conversation face to face or on the telephone, but this is to be expected. Now there is always a lot of publicity given to any conversation I have with Mr Hawke but I'm regularly conversing, correspondingly with a very great number of people in Australia as you would expect.

QUESTION: You're so vocal about your meetings, we hear that he is going to see you at the weekend?...

PRIME MINISTER: Yes.

QUESTION: Exactly how is it when you do get together? Does he come in roaring like a bull or do you sit down and have a chat?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh no, we know each other very well. It is true there's always a great deal of publicity if he calls on me. No other people would call on me on the same day and not get the same publicity at all. Now I don't publicise the meetings I have with anybody - not that it is secret because anybody can watch anybody calling at my office in Parliament House or at the Lodge in Canberra or Kirribilli - anybody can watch - but they don't notice. Recently in Sydney there was a group of people calling in the morning to discuss the uranium developments in the Northern Territory; the TV people who were out at the gate to film when they arrived and went didn't identify who these people were. It would have been the biggest story imaginable if they'd identified them. That day these people didn't announce

that they'd come; I didn't announce that they'd come but the Ministers concerned were all present and nobody dropped what it was. And the next time, in fact, was quite a late session at the Lodge in Canberra and the following day we announced it to everybody's surprise. So it is true that you hear a great deal about meetings or conversations I have with Mr Hawke, because they're well publicised. But my job inevitably means that I'm talking to a lot of people all the time, pretty well every day of the week.

QUESTION: Also well publicised are your tours and in two weeks you'll be off on another overseas tour and there's been criticism about the fact that you are overseas when you should be at home - say your visit to the U.S. when the economy was falling apart - say when you visited Indonesia and we had the floods in Queensland. When do you consider you were in the wrong place at the wrong time?

PRIME MINISTER: The fact is there are some things that can only be done on behalf of a country by the Head of Government of that country and there's not a single visit I've made overseas that people would say was not justified. You see, obviously, I should visit the U.S. or the U.N. or Britain or Japan or Europe or Indonesia or New Zealand or get together with the heads of other countries in the British Commonwealth. Now, that is my job to do it. I should do it. It's very easy to criticise some Head of Government for not being in a particular place at a particular time. If one accepted all those criticisms you'd never budge - you'd be saying 'Well what's he doing up in Queensland in a State election?'

QUESTION: I feel sure they are.

PRIME MINISTER: At the same time, my Government's objects are quite central to this campaign. This is the only Government in Australia which hasn't co-operated with my Government and this is a very material theme to the campaign.

QUESTION: In this area I don't think we're really terribly worried about what Party it is. It's going to be the man as far as we're concerned and we know the local candidates. So I can't see that you're going to affect our decision because in a country area it is so important that the man is right.

PRIME MINISTER: That may be, but nevertheless in politics 90 per cent of people - certainly 80 per cent - would vote according to political party. I don't think there's much doubt about that. I think it's quite an appropriate thing if people want to know how the member they elect will vote or speak. None of us would be independent if we were not members of political parties. None of us. Only one member of the Queensland Parliament is in without being a member of a Party. In the House of Representatives it is years and years since there was a member who didn't belong to a political party. So it's true that the membership of a political party would make all the difference - perhaps 20 per cent of their vote could be personal and 80 per cent would be dependent on their being members of a political party.

QUESTION: What do you think of independents?

MRS WHITLAM: You are not independent if you are connected with a political party at all. That is a deceit that is often practised.

PRIME MINISTER: There are some issues on which our Party and in fact all Parties allow members to vote as they wish - on some social issues - but in general what makes the parliamentary system work is the party system. This is the way it works in U.S., U.K., N.Z. - there's nothing to be apologetic about or ashamed about. Nobody can afford to stand for Parliament unless he is a member of a political party - even a very rich man couldn't afford it, would not get elected to Parliament, unless he also had the support of a political party. A very good man or a very rich man might make the difference where things were close.

QUESTION: Mr Nixon said "I've always thought that politics was much harder for the wives than it is for men. They can fight the battles while the wives suffer on the sidelines." Have you ever had to suffer, Mrs Whitlam?

MRS WHITLAM: Quite often.

QUESTION: When? How?

MRS WHITLAM: I'm not going to say, or give instances. There are many occasions on which I and other wives have been hurt by the actions - well, not so much by the actions as the reactions to actions of our husbands or our Parties.

QUESTION: What do you think the perfect politicians wife should be?

MRS WHITLAM: I think she should just be a wife. I don't think she should be any different than other wives. If she has a goal in life she should be left to pursue that goal. If she has not, she should be left alone also. She shouldn't be plagued because she doesn't want to do anything. She shouldn't be plagued because she does want to do something.

QUESTION: I think you said in your diary that you were sick of people talking about how much money you got and I don't know whether it was really that or the fact that they were criticizing the fact that you have jobs, positions and they would have liked to see you doing "goody goody" work.

MRS WHITLAM: I do what you call 'goody goody work' as well. But you can't do that all the time.

PRIME MINISTER: You see the thing is that a politicians wife does an immense amount of work for which she's not paid - can't be paid. For instance, my wife goes to an immense number of functions in my electorate which I can't go to now because of I'm more tied up than ever and if Margaret goes to some functions elsewhere in Australia, she doesn't get paid. Sure, she gets her fare paid, but if she stays overnight she has to pay her accommodation. She gets no allowance for that. A politicians wife is a full time job for which he alone is paid.

QUESTION: Getting back to your electorate, do you think its a disadvantage to have a Prime Minister as a representative?

PRIME MINISTER: I think it's compensated for by the fact that having a Prime Minister for your local member is likely to bring about more weight for what he says. You can't say that a thing should be done just because a Prime Minister asks for it to be done.

It ought to be done because it should be done, whoever asks. Nevertheless, I suppose it is a fact that if the Prime Minister asks a Department to look into a particular matter, the Department is more likely to jump to it than if a private member asks about it. So its compensated for. The matters you take up are likely to have more punch behind them. You were worrying about the lot of a politician's wife. The thing that worries me more, probably, is that the kids cop it. Now you quoted that heading there in an afternoon paper. Well, afternoon papers are not terribly serious publications but nevertheless you're likely to have some hoarding on the streets. Now if your children are young - and we still have a daughter who's only 20 - if she sees some of these things, she's likely to have a clutch at the heart and say "Oh, what's this." They cop it much more.

QUESTION: What qualities have you tried to instill in your children?

MRS WHITLAM: I think the qualities I admire most in children are obedience and politeness.

QUESTION: Have they ever let you down?

PRIME MINISTER: On both scores. No, they're good kids. They've been very satisfactory. But they're independent persons.

MRS WHITLAM: But they were well disciplined weren't they?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, we were tough.

QUESTION: Do you believe in the occasional smack?

MRS WHITLAM: Oh certainly. I was always the one who had to do the smacking, though, because he wasn't there.

PRIME MINISTER: When I was home I took the brunt of that. I'd run to you as a court of appeal, sort of thing.

QUESTION: Mrs Whitlam is your television program "With Margaret Whitlam" finished yet?

MRS WHITLAM: Yes for this season it has.

QUESTION: Is it a sore point with you?

MRS WHITLAM: What do you mean? I enjoyed it; it was fun.

QUESTION: Were you very disappointed about the ratings and the fact that they removed you from a prime time?

MRS WHITLAM: The ratings situation was very unfair. That was unfair. I was disappointed in the attitude. I was very pleased with the way the program went.

PRIME MINISTER: Did they show it up here?

QUESTION: No.

PRIME MINISTER: You should have.

QUESTION: Why?

MRS WHITLAM: Why not?

PRIME MINISTER: It was great.

QUESTION: Did you watch it?

PRIME MINISTER: It was easier after 10 I think, but I wouldn't have been home to see it more than once. No, I've seen it a couple of times. I think it turned out very well.

QUESTION: What would you rather see her as: an interviewer or an interviewee?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, both, both. I mean, she's got a lot of experience now. She's a human person, so either way.

QUESTION: You mentioned in the press that you'd learnt a lot during the program?

MRS WHITLAM: Certainly, because I knew nothing about the workings of a program like that and I like to know how its done and I'd know how to approach it another time. And, also, I'd know what to be wary of on your side of the clipboard.

QUESTION: Are you passing hints on to Mr Whitlam?

MRS WHITLAM: No, no, he's my mentor.

QUESTION: What would you really like to be good at?

MRS WHITLAM: Oh, I don't know, do you mean I or we?

QUESTION: Both.

MRS WHITLAM: Something new or something old?

PRIME MINISTER: I think we're all right at what we're doing.

QUESTION: You wouldn't like to be a champion knitter?

MRS WHITLAM: I am.

QUESTION: Nothing else like that?

PRIME MINISTER: She's an excellent knitter. She really is.

QUESTION: I think you mentioned that last time you were here.

MR WHITLAM: Well, you must have asked me.

QUESTION: I was asking about who chooses clothes and who had the greatest say. With your whole lives, is there anything you'd like to change?

MRS WHITLAM: Past or present?

QUESTION: Past.

MRS WHITLAM: I suppose you wish there were things you hadn't done and things that you wish you'd had time to do. Overall I think I'd really wish for more to do it all in.

*time*

QUESTION: Politicians are a cartoonist's delight. Have you ever kept any of their masterpieces?

MRS WHITLAM: I wouldn't say they were always masterpieces.

QUESTION: Which ones appeal to your sense of humour?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh there are dozens. But the funniest are always those about other people.

MRS WHITLAM: The thing about cartoons is that they date so. You know, you keep them for a couple of years thinking they're absolutely marvellous and then you wonder what it was all about.

QUESTION: Have you heard any good jokes about yourself lately? People do use your name for a joke. Do they tell it to your face?

MRS WHITLAM: It depends what jokes you're talking about. Tell us one now.

QUESTION: No, I'm not good with jokes, I can't remember them.

PRIME MINISTER: A lot of jokes, I now find, people attach my name to a terrific number of jokes I can remember being used about Billy McMahon and Bob Menzies. I can't say they fit to me the jokes they told about John Gorton. But particularly the ones about Menzies and McMahon. When you're been in politics for a fair time they crop up again. Whether you like it or not it happens, so there's no use complaining. It doesn't really worry me.

QUESTION: What never ceases to amaze you about Mr Whitlam?

MRS WHITLAM (unclear)

QUESTION: What never ceases to amaze you about Mrs Whitlam?

PRIME MINISTER: "Custom never stales her infinite variety".

MRS WHITLAM: I say!

QUESTION: What do you think Mrs Whitlam looks good in?

PRIME MINISTER: I'm not particularly good at describing these things.

QUESTION: Haven't you ever said - 'That's the best thing I've ever seen you in. Wear that dress again.'

PRIME MINISTER: I'm not very good at describing materials or colours. I remember for instance, about 10 years ago - I'd brought her back some Thai silk - maybe blue Thai silk - and it made up superbly. On a formal occasion she would stand out very elegantly. Well I suppose you've caught me. I just don't think very often of this sort of thing.

MRS WHITLAM: He mentions it at the time and then forgets. He's generally more impressed by women in evening dress than in any other dress.



PRIME MINISTER: Yes that would be so. If I've chosen something, naturally enough I'd notice it because I've sometimes brought back things.

QUESTION: Is there anything he's brought back you thought was absolutely ghastly.

PRIME MINISTER: I don't overdo it. If she doesn't like it, then that's alright as far as I'm concerned.

MRS WHITLAM: They just go to the bottom of the pile of things to be made up, that's all.

QUESTION: After elections these days, they usually play a song appropriate to the occasion. Mrs Whitlam what song title would you choose for your husband?

MRS WHITLAM: I'm not anticipating him going out, anyway, and requiring a song.

QUESTION: I don't mean it to be a swan song. Just something like, "You're just too good to be true" or "Baby face" or something.

PRIME MINISTER: Oh no, forget that!

MRS WHITLAM: Actually the titles of pop songs these days don't always indicate the contents.

QUESTION: Have you got a song that means something to both of you. Advance Australia Fair?

MRS WHITLAM: No, I'm afraid we don't. Perhaps the love theme from "Tristan and Isolde" - the love duet....

PRIME MINISTER: Or at our age, "Never on Sunday"!

QUESTION: What are your Christmas plans? You will be overseas won't you?

PRIME MINISTER: We'll be in London for Christmas.

QUESTION: What would be your best Christmas present?

MRS WHITLAM: Actually the best Christmas present would be to have everyone together, which is just about the most impossible thing for our family because there are four children who are not all over the world now, but who always seem to be - and they are here.

PRIME MINISTER: The first time they were all together for 10 years was at Easter last year in England. We went over to see Mr Heath and the Queen about some Constitutional things and they all happened to be there at the one time. The first time for 10 years. Not that they're so old. The eldest is only 30.

MRS WHITLAM: Only!

QUESTION: What would be a beaut Christmas present for you then.

PRIME MINISTER: I don't know. You throw me so much with these questions you ask.

QUESTION: You don't need a new razor or something like that?

MRS WHITLAM: He always needs a new razor.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, yes.

QUESTION: I do hope it is a most enjoyable and happy time for you for the festive season, and that politics are not too much of a problem during that time for you and my very sincere thanks to you, Mrs Whitlam and Mr Whitlam for appearing on the program.

\*\*\*\*\*