

PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW ON CHANNEL 10's
"IN SESSION" PROGRAM

21 April, 1975

Interviewer: Prime Minister, your visit to Peru will be the first by an Australian Prime Minister to South America. Do you think that this is an area that perhaps we have neglected for far too long?

Mr. Whitlam: I think so. I don't say that South America is central to Australia's economic or political concern but it is important and Peru is the country in South America from which the discoverers of Australia set out. It will be quite a symbolic thing for the first visit by an Australian Prime Minister to South America to take place in Peru.

Interviewer: In terms of Peru, Sir, are there any bi-lateral issues that you will be raising with the Heads of Government there?

Mr. Whitlam: I think the things where we find ourselves most in association are in matters concerning the law of the sea. Peru is possibly the biggest fishing country in the world and it has been in the fore-front in asserting the right of a coastal State to exercise jurisdiction and control over the neighbouring sea and sea-bed.

Interviewer: After Peru, you go to Kingston for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference. What issues will Australia be raising at that Conference?

Mr. Whitlam: It's not so much what we will be raising. There are agenda items in which we will all be participating. I'm to follow the President of Zambia in discussing African matters which are mainly political matters. We will be there together for a full week. - The Heads of Government and in some cases, Heads of State from the 34 Commonwealth countries and most of them are in the South Pacific or around or in the Indian Ocean. So this is a body which is very important indeed to Australia's concerns - political or economic.

Interviewer: The Commonwealth has often been questioned as far as its role is concerned. Do you think it can play a meaningful role in terms of the 1970's?

Mr. Whitlam: Oh yes. I have never doubted the usefulness of the Commonwealth. After all, if you get 34 countries regularly, every 1½ or 2 years, conferring, large or small, European, African, Asian, Carribean, developing, Christian, Moslem, Animist, all freely and equally discussing things, then this will have an

affect in all those bodies where each of us has to vote. The great virtue of the Commonwealth is everybody is free, equally to express his views. There is no other body in the world which has that advantage. Now this means that at least we understand each other very much better when we go to the United Nations General Assembly or the various specialised agencies at the United Nations and have to move motions or vote on motions.

Interviewer: Do you think that the Commonwealth does have any issue, for example, that really does pull them together other than the fact that they are all members of the Commonwealth? Is there any common ground that can be struck between the members?

Mr. Whitlam: They are very diverse. Historically there is the common ground that they were all, at one stage or another, recently or sometimes quite a long distance back, ruled by Britain; so there is a certain respect for the institutions which Britain established around the world. Even if countries depart from the standards, there is still a hankering to return to them. The fact that there should be elected law-makers, the fact that there should be responsible rulers, the fact that there should be impartial judges, the fact that there should be an honest Public Service - all these things are British traditions and all the members of the Commonwealth respect them and try with various degrees of success, to carry them out.

Interviewer: But can it really achieve anything considering that it only meets every two years - the Commonwealth Heads of State?

Mr. Whitlam: The fact that all these people - 34 countries - the Leaders of them, take a full week off, to discuss these things, even if it is every 1½ or two years, demonstrates the importance that each of them attaches to this association. There is really no body, no organisation in the world which is better calculated to promote understanding and tolerance and in fact, practical initiatives. It doesn't take votes on any proposals but there is a very useful discussion of issues. Another great virtue of it is that while there are about five developed countries - Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore - there is a very great range, political, economic, geographic range of developing countries and this is very valuable an interchange of views. In so many organs of the United Nations and elsewhere, people line up as developed or developing countries. There is a tussle, there is a confrontation and there is frustration. Here, you can at least make some progress to getting an understanding. Of course there are some matters - disarmament, development, trade and in fact a great number of social and cultural matters which concern them all.

Interviewer: After Kingston you fly to Washington. This will be the second time you have met President Ford within a period of six months. What are the bi-lateral issues that are likely to be raised in your meeting with the President?

Mr. Whitlam: There might be any number of matters, but I imagine that the immediate ones will be questions such as South East Asia and resources.

Interviewer: One of the points that may be raised, would it be ANZUS?

Mr. Whitlam; The ANZUS Treaty Meeting is taking place while we are in Jamaica. The Foreign Ministers will be attending that.

Interviewer: Are there any other issues that are likely to come up in terms of defence pacts between Australia and the United States?

Mr. Whitlam: No, I think ANZUS is one of the very few defence pacts in the world which is still current and still regularly discussed by its members.

Interviewer: No doubt you will be putting forward Australia's views on recent events in South East Asia, especially in Cambodia ...

Mr. Whitlam: Oh yes, but I'll also of course be wanting to hear the views of the Administration and Congress.

Interviewer: You feel that perhaps the meeting with President Ford will be able to clear up a number of points in terms of....

Mr. Whitlam: Obviously it will be useful for me to hear from the President directly what he feels is the present situation or likely developments and he may be interested in hearing what our assessments are. Of course, also I'm meeting the Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S. Senate and the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives.

Interviewer: On your European trip, you made the point that middle countries, like Australia, had the right to make their opinions known to the big powers. Is this a continuation of that point?

Mr. Whitlam: Yes. Very obviously Australia is as important as any other country in the Southern Hemisphere and we are very important in our location, particularly in regard to South East Asia and the developing world. There are very

many diplomatic and economic matters, where Australia's view, Australia's attitude is very important.

Interviewer: Are there any differences between Australia and the United States which you may be attempting to clear up in your talks with President Ford?

Mr. Whitlam: I don't think there are any questions where there are any misunderstandings and so on. Very clearly there are different emphases in Australia itself and also in the United States herself on a considerable number of diplomatic and resources matters. It is absurd to think that there is a single United States view or a single Australian view. It is impossible to expect this. As you know there are differences in the Australian Parliament, there are differences in the U.S. Congress and between the Administration and the Congress. These things, in our context and in their's, can be discussed in quite a rational and useful manner.

Interviewer: I'm looking forward to accompanying you Sir.

Mr. Whitlam: Well I'm looking forward to see how you behave.
