

TRANSCRIPT  
PRESS CONFERENCE

HARVEY, CHANNEL NINE NETWORK

12 NOVEMBER '75.

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THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER, MR WHITLAM AND A NUMBER OF HIS MINISTERS ARE SUGGESTING THAT BACK DOOR DEALS WERE DONE BETWEEN YOURSELF AND THE GOVERNOR GENERAL AND OTHERS TO BRING ABOUT THIS SITUATION

FRASER

THIS IS ABSOLUTE NONSENSE. I UNDERSTAND ITS BEEN OFFICIALLY DENIED BY GOVERNMENT HOUSE. I CERTAINLY DENY IT. THE SITUATION HAS COME ABOUT BECAUSE MR WHITLAM HAS BEHAVED AS NOBODY HAS FOR TWO OR THREE HUNDRED YEARS HAS BEHAVED- TRIED TO GOVERN WITHOUT FUNDS AND IF HE HAD TAKEN THE NORMAL COURSE WHEN FUNDS STARTED TO RUN OUT THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN AN ELECTION LONG BEFORE THIS

MR FRASER MR WHITLAM ALSO SAID YOUR CAR WAS AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE YESTERDAY SOME MINUTES BEFORE HE GOT TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE TO BE ADVISED THAT HIS COMMISSION HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN AND THAT YOU IN FACT WERE IN ANOTHER ROOM IN GOVERNMENT HOUSE AT THE SAME TIME HE WAS.

FRASER

AS YOU KNOW THERE WAS WIDE SPECULATION THAT MR WHITLAM WAS GOING TO RECOMMEND A SENATE ELECTION AND I HAD A MESSAGE THAT CAME FROM MY OFFICE THAT MR WHITLAM WAS GOING TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE IMMEDIATELY TO STOP SPEAKING IN <sup>THE</sup> PARLIAMENT. I WENT WITH HIM TO STOP SPEAKING. HE DIDN'T LEAVE FOR GOVERNMENT HOUSE THEN. I'D BEEN ADVISED THAT I WAS REQUIRED TO GO TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE ABOUT 10 MINUTES AFTER MR WHITLAM WOULD HAVE LEFT. I ASSUMED THE INSTRUCTIONS I HAD BEEN GIVEN WERE ACCURATE. MR WHITLAM IN FACT DID NOT GO FOR CONSIDERABLE TIME AFTER THAT

WHEN WERE YOU ADVISED TO GO TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE?

FRASER

I WAS IN THE HOUSE. I WAS ADVISED THAT MR WHITLAM WAS GOING IMMEDIATELY HE STOPPED SPEAKING.

MR FRASER THE RUMOURS PERSIST THAT YOU IN FACT KNEW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THE PRIME MINISTER WELL BEFORE HE DID

FRASER

WELL ITS JUST NOT TRUE. THE GOVERNOR GENERAL SAID IT WAS NOT TRUE. MR WHITLAM IS TRYING TO SAY THAT IT IS TRUE. NOW WE CAN'T DO MORE THAN THAT.

IN THIS CONTEXT, WHEN DID YOU FIND OUT YOU WERE GOING TO BE THE PRIME MINISTER

FRASER

AFTER THE GOVERNOR GENERAL HAD HAD HIS INTERVIEW WITH THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER.

THE SUGGESTIONS THAT MEMBERS OF YOUR STAFF KNEW AT 11 A.M. YESTERDAY IS WHAT?

FRASER

COMPLETE NONSENSE. THIS IS TYPICAL OF THE TACTICS THAT THIS PAST GOVERNMENT HAS TRIED TO PURSUE FOR A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD OF TIME. THEY ARE NOT CONCERNED WITH THE FACTS, THEY ARE CONCERNED ONLY TO GET THE PARTICULAR STORY OR THE PARTICULAR SLANT ACROSS AND I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THE WORDS THAT MR WHITLAM USED YESTERDAY IN SOME OF THE THINGS HE SAID TODAY DEMONSTRATE QUITE CLEARLY THE DEPTHS TO WHICH HE HAS TAKEN POLITICAL DEBATE IN AUSTRALIA. WE'RE NOT GOING TO ANSWER IN KIND. IF HE WANTS TO PLAY THAT SORT OF GAME LET HIM DO IT. THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE WILL BE BETTER JUDGES THAN TO BE PERSUADED BY THAT SORT OF ACTIVITY.

MR FRASER WAS IT A FACT THAT YOUR DRIVER HID YOUR CAR AROUND A TREE OR AROUND A CORNER AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE?

FRASER

I WOUND'NT HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT HE DID WITH IT AFTER I GOT OUT OF IT.

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE GOVERNOR GENERAL WAS SEEING THE  
PRIME MINISTER?

FRASER

IN GOVERNMENT HOUSE

DID YOU SEE THE GOVERNOR GENERAL AT ALL BEFORE THE PRIME  
MINISTER SAW HIM ?

FRASER

NO I DID NOT

SO YOU WERE RECEIVED AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE AND YOU JUST WAITED  
UNTIL AFTER THE PRIME MINISTER HAD LEFT.

FRASER

I WAS PUT INTO A SIDE ROOM

WEREN'T YOU EMBARRASSED BY THIS MR FRASER?

FRASER

THERE ARE MANY ROOMS IN GOVERNMENT HOUSE

DID YOU FEEL UNEASY CALLING AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE KNOWING THAT  
THE PRIME MINISTER WASN'T AWARE OF WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN?

FRASER

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN EITHER

MR FRASER IN A RADIO INTERVIEW WITH US ON THURSDAY AFTERNOON  
LAST YOU SAID THAT YOU WOULDN'T BACK DOWN AND YOU THOUGHT  
MR WHITLAM WOULDN'T BACK DOWN BUT YOU SAID THERE IS ANOTHER  
ALTERNATIVE BUT YOU WOULDN'T EXPLAIN. WOULD YOU SAY THAT WHAT  
HAS HAPPENED IS THE ALTERNATIVE THAT YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT?

FRASER

WHAT I POINTED OUT GOING BACK OVER THREE OR FOUR WEEKS THAT THE PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA IS COMPOSED OF THE QUEEN AND HER REPRESENTATIVES THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE PRIME MINISTER ALL ALONG WAS TRYING TO SAY IT IS COMPOSED ONLY OF MR WHITLAM AND I WAS POINTING OUT THAT WASN'T TRUE THAT WAS A FACT OF LIFE THAT MR WHITLAM HAD IGNORED THROUGHOUT.

SO THE ALTERNATIVE YOU WERE REFERRING TO ON THURSDAY IS THE COURSE OF EVENTS

FRASER

I'M NOT ADDING TO OR DETRACTING FROM THE ANSWER I HAVE ALREADY GIVEN

MR FRASER CAN I ASK YOU SIR WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PERSONAL STAFF OF FORMER MINISTERS, THEIR ENTITLEMENTS TO COMMONWEALTH CARS AND ANY ENTITLEMENTS MINISTERS HAD TO VIP AIRCRAFT

FRASER

WELL MR WHITLAM WILL HAVE THE ENTITLEMENTS TO A VIP AIRCRAFT THAT THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION HAS. FORMER STAFFS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE WILL BE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE. OTHER MEMBERS OF STAFF WOULD BE GIVEN UNTIL THE END OF DECEMBER BY WHICH TIME AN ELECTION WOULD BE CLEAR AND THEREFORE THEIR FUTURES WOULD BE CLEAR

MR FRASER I WONDER IF I COULD ASK YOU DID YOU HAVE AT ANY STAGE BEFORE YESTERDAY ANY CONSULTATION ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS WITH THE CHIEF JUSTICE SIR GARFIELD BARWICK.

FRASER

NO I DID NOT

PRIME MINISTER YOU MENTIONED A FEW MINUTES AGO THAT THE CABINET CONSIDERED THE RUN DOWN OF THE ECONOMY. WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY AS REPORTED IN CABINET TODAY?

MR FRASER

A GOOD DEAL .MORE SERIOUS THAN WE HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE. I WILL BE MAKING A CONSIDERED STATEMENT ABOUT THIS IN A DAY OR TWO BECAUSE THE BRIEFINGS LED TO FURTHER QUESTIONS BEING ASKED BUT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF INVESTMENT AND CREATION OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF BEING ABLE TO CONTAIN INFLATION, MUCH MUCH MORE SERIOUS THAN WE HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE

DO YOU SEE IT TAKING MORE THAN THREE YEARS FOR THE ECONOMY TO RECOVER UPON YOUR PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT

FRASER

UNDER ~~NO~~ OUR GOVERNMENT NO BECAUSE WE ~~XXXX~~ HAD ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT IT WAS MORE SERIOUS THAN THE FORMER GOVERNMENT HAD INDICATED.

WERE YOU SUGGESTING THAT THIS SPECIFIC INFORMATION THAT THE LABOR GOVERNMENT HAS CONCEALED ABOUT THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY?

FRASER

YES . I'LL BE MAKING A CONSIDERED STATEMENT ABOUT THIS IN A DAY OR TWO.

COULD YOU INDICATE THE AREAS

FRASER

NO I'M GOING TO MAKE A CONSIDERED STATEMENT ABOUT THIS IN A DAY OR TWOS TIME

IN BRINGING THE ECONOMY TO HEEL MR FRASER WILL IT BE NECESSARY FOR YOU TO CUT BACK ON GOVERNMENT SERVICES OR LAY OFF ANY PRESENTLY EMPLOYED GOVERNMENT STAFF?

MR FRASER

THE FULL DETAILS OF OUR ECONOMIC POLICY WILL BE UNFOLDED IN A POLICY SPEECH AND SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENTS THAT COME OUT AFTER THAT. I MADE IT PLAIN AT AN EARLIER PRESS CONFERENCE THAT I WOULDN'T BE ANSWERING QUESTIONS ON FUTURE POLICY UNTIL THAT TIME. IT MIGHT BE DIFFERENT IF WE WERE FURTHER THAN A WEEK AWAY OR ABOUT A WEEK AWAY FROM A POLICY SPEECH BUT SINCE ITS AS CLOSE AS THAT WE'LL WAIT UNTIL THEN

MR FRASER COULD I ASK YOU IN YOUR PRESENT ROLE AS THE CARETAKER OF THE GOVERNMENT IS <sup>THE</sup> THERE ANYTHING YOU PROPOSE TO DO ABOUT TACKLING THE STATE OF ECONOMY GIVEN THAT YOU SAY THAT IT IS FAR MORE SERIOUS THAN...

MR FRASER

ONE OF THE CONDITIONS OF MY COMMISSION FROM THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IS THAT THE POLICIES OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT CONTINUE UNTIL AN ELECTION DETERMINE THE RESULT. NOW THAT CONDITION WILL BE FOLLOWED THROUGH SCRUPULOUSLY.

IN OTHER WORDS THERE IS NOTHING YOU COULD DO FOR THE ~~ECONOMY~~ ECONOMY IN THE TIME YOU ARE A CARETAKER

FRASER

UNTIL THE 13th OF DECEMBER

WHY DECEMBER 13 MR FRASER

FRASER

THATS THE DAY OF THE ELECTION

WHY DID YOU CHOSE DECEMBER 13

FRASER

FRASER

ITS HIGHLY DESIRABLE FOR THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA TO BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO JUDGE, AN OPPORTUNITY THAT MR WHITLAM WAS SEEKING TO DENY THEM ON THIS MATTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THAT IT CAN BE CLEANED UP THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA HAVING EXPRESSED THE PROPER AND DEMOCRATIC JUDGEMENT THAT OUGHT TO BE OPEN TO THEM BY PUTTING A PIECE OF PAPER IN THE BALLOT BOX AND THE 13th IS THE EARLIEST DATE THAT THAT COULD BE ORGANISED. BY THE 20TH IT STARTS TO GET INTO TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES FOR THE RETURNING OFFICERS.

COULD I ASK YOU ONE MORE QUESTION  
THE CABINET TEAM WHICH YOU HAVE CHOSEN TODAY, IS THAT LIKELY TO BE THE SAME TEAM SHOULD YOU BE SUCCESSFUL ON DECEMBER 13

FRASER

WELL THE GOVERNOR GENERAL HAS CALLED US A CARETAKER CABINET AND THATS THE TERMS OF THE COMMISSION. THATS PRECISELY WHAT IT IS AND NO ASSUMPTIONS SHOULD BE DRAWN UPON IT EXCEPT THE ANSWER TO QUESTIONS I GAVE EARLIER ABOUT THE TREASURER AND MR ANTHONY.