

80/75

PRIME MINISTER INTERVIEWED BY GEOFF MEDWELL, 5DN, ADELAIDE
PHONE INTERVIEW, CANBERRA

QUESTIONS NOT AUDIBLE

Question

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Prime Minister

Yes, it has. It is quite a while.

Question

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Prime Minister

Stopped, in an arbitrary sense, is the wrong word, because we have said we will not withdraw passports. But I hope the Australian Olympic Federation and the Olympic Federations of many countries will heed the views of governments when we say that getting the message through the Soviet Government and people is important, and if teams are absent and flags are absent and countries are absent from the Moscow Olympics, that will do more to express the general abhorrence with what has been happening in Afghanistan than almost any other single act. If we want to make the world a slightly safer place we need to get that message through.

Question

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Prime Minister

I do not think they would be allowed to attend.

Question

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Prime Minister

Oh, the officials would stop it, yes. There was an incident of that kind once before I think, involving some black American athletes - do you remember?

Question

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Prime Minister

I have forgotten what Games they were at.

Question

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Prime Minister

Yes. If all Australian athletes wore - quite apart from the fact that a black "A" could be taken for Australian - there could be some misconstruction about that. But, a sign of mourning for those who have died and been killed and gassed in Afghanistan, obviously that would be one thing. But there is no way the Soviet officials, I believe, or Government, would allow that to occur.

Question

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Prime Minister

I would like it to be a year of industrial peace. But if trade unions and powerful companies are together agreed that a small independent operator is to be denied the means of livelihood, is to be denied fuel, can we be accused of engineering the Transport Workers' Union and AMOCO into that position? Once they have taken that position, are we to do nothing about it? If anyone it is confronting, it is the Transport Workers' Union and also, in a sense, AMOCO, confronting Mr. Laidely and the people of Australia; if you like, the little people of Australia. So far as we are concerned, that just is not good enough. Whenever the Federal Government stands up against the union movement, Mr. Hawke or other people in the union movement say that we are seeking confrontation. Well in fact they are trying to ride roughshod over the people of Australia. If Governments, State or Federal, do not stand up to protect the rights of the average citizen, nobody else will.

Question

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Prime Minister

I do not know that that is right. I think that when we do not take action in a serious matter, the average person does get concerned. The average Australian is concerned about the excess and the excess use of union power. But when we do take action what you find is that some trade union leaders, or Mr. Hawke, condemn us, or some members of the Australian Labor Party condemn us. I do not think you find the condemnation comes from the average person in the street, because I think they want to see Governments stand up to the great and brutal use of union power that so often occurs.

Question

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Prime Minister

Absolutely. There is no way that that judgement, I do not think there is any way that judgement will be altered, for quite some time, for quite some years into the future.

Question

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Prime Minister

If we are I would like to know about it, because I announced an intention to substantially expand the army reserve. Now, if there a particular unit or a particular area where people are being rejected I would like to know about it and I will look into the reasons for it.

Question

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Prime Minister

You are counting people who are in the army reserve but are also unemployed. You are referring quite specifically to that category?

Question

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Prime Minister

Well, I will look at that quite directly. That has not been put to me before, and you might well have a point that needs looking at. But if I could just make the point: the Minister for Defence has been conducting a programmes with the great support of employers over the last year or two, which are designed to encourage employers to release army reserve people for the proper and full periods of training, and to do so in a way in which they are encouraged. We do want to encourage people.

Question

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Prime Minister

I have said we will look at that situation. That has not been put to me before. We will look at it.