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PRIME MINISTER INTERVIEWED BY NEIL ADCOCK, 6PR, PERTH

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

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(QUESTIONS NOT AUDIBLE)

Question

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Prime Minister

(Inaudible) problem can be undertaken and pursued on a national basis. The arrangements that we are making for co-operation with the States, the arrangements that we are making in the crime area for intelligence centres and all the rest - it is setting this basic approach on a national level that really is the important thing. We are going to pursue that with all the vigour at our command. I would believe the State Governments will also.

Question

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Prime Minister

We have not got a costing on any of it yet. But, it is our intention to make it effective. It is too important. The problem of drugs is a threat to the kind of society we have and want to have. Governments, individuals, families, cannot be complacent about it. If there is a cost to combatting it properly, then Governments are going to have to meet that.

Question

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Prime Minister

I think much more so now than might have been 15 or 20 years ago. I believe there is better education in the schools of the dangers and drug education for kids. I think parents are aware of it, although there is often an attitude it can happen, but it will not happen in my family. I have known of tragic circumstances where parents have come to realise that their children are addicts, months or even years after the problem started. It is very tragic to see that happening. It needs to be treated as a very real danger. Parents need to stay as close as possible to their own kids to minimise the possibility of that sort of thing happening.

Question

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Prime Minister

When you are linking alcohol with road accidents and this sort of thing, governments are now generally taking a much tougher attitude to it. I am all for that. I think Australia has been behind some other countries in the toughness of its laws in relation to alcohol and driving. I am very glad to see that we are now catching up and that the penalties are very severe; and they ought to be.

Question

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Prime Minister

Well, the Government did take some decisions about that report that are going to be announced very shortly. I think describing Australia as an intoxicated society is really a bit hard. Most Australians are not intoxicated and go about their business and can take alcohol within proper limits and all the rest. So we need to understand that while it is a danger, it is a danger for young people, it is a very real danger for a minority that cannot handle maybe not so much the problems of alcohol as the problems and difficulties that sometimes beset individuals in a modern society. Therefore, they start by going to an escape. We have to address ourselves to these particular directions. I am just putting in a defence for an Australian society which by and large I think is a pretty good one and a pretty healthy one.

Question

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Prime Minister

We can pursue it, and if necessary we will. In addition to that of course there are other elements in this particular case in which it now appears, well, we now, that under the auspices of the Arbitration Commission the company and the union came to an agreement in the absence of the small firm, in the absence of Mr. Laidely, which disposed of Mr. Laidely; denied him any rights to live, to survive, to work. We are looking at that very seriously indeed. That could well lead to amendments of the Trade Practices Act itself because we need to understand that on the question of refusal to supply a product to an individual or a company, that can be done if the refusal to supply is the individual action of a particular company. But if two companies agree to refuse to supply a product to a third party that would be against the Act. Here we have a situation in which it seems that AMOCO and a trade union have refused to supply. The question is whether that ought not to be an offence against the Trade Practices Act. We are looking at that very closely. Discussions have been taking place last night and this morning. The Government is talking to oil company representatives this afternoon. While I do not see any quick solution to the totality of the problem I am hoping

Prime Minister (continued)

that shortly the Government will be in a position to announce some initiatives in relation to it.

Question

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Prime Minister

There has been no response yet. They use Cockburn Sound occasionally for ships - they have gone into harbours in Western Australia. This was a question of home porting, or base porting units that could be patrolling in the Indian Ocean over very, very long periods. If it is home porting, it would mean that families would also be going to live in the area. We said that if the United States wants to pursue this, as one of its options in upgrading its own military forces in the Indian Ocean area, then we will be very ready to listen to a proposition that they have put to us. It has not got any further than that yet. The United States has not yet come back to us in relation to it. Personally, I hope they do.

Question

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Prime Minister

Two-fold. If we have a defence alliance and if we believe in a common cause, we have to do something to defend it. It is not very good saying we are prepared to be defended but only by second-grade or outdated weapons. That would not make very much sense. I think people have to make up their minds in the widest sense what side they are on. There is no doubt about Australia in my view. There is certainly no doubt about the Government and the great majority of the Australian people. Therefore, if we believe in a cause, we have to support it. I think it is worth noting that nearly all the countries of Europe, the United Kingdom, have facilities within them. They are nuclear facilities. We have not had such facilities in Australia. Facilities of that kind are not proposed. What is proposed is that ships might be able, if the Americans want to respond to it, to use bases that we already have for home porting, or base porting as they call it - as the Americans call it. If they want that, in terms of general free-world co-operation, I believe we should assist them to if we can.

Question

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Prime Minister

I have not got a response to that yet. We have of course significantly upgraded general defences in Western Australia as a result of a statement made a month ago. That is going to mean

Prime Minister (continued)

considerable improvements to facilities. It is going to mean home porting of our own ships at Cockburn Sound before the end of the current defence period; the upgrading of Cockburn Sound and of Learmonth, and of other facilities in Western Australia. On a State-by-State basis, I think Western Australia might have come out of the new decisions of the Government with a greater upgrading of defence capacity than any other State.

Question

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Prime Minister

Well, that is better not done by helicopters. I think that is better done by the fixed-wing aircraft. Over the last 18 months we have established much better surveillance right around the Australian coastline for that very purpose. I think those arrangements are working quite well.

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