



PRIME MINISTER

E. & O.E. - Prof Only

TRANSCRIPT FROM DERRYN HINCH PROGRAM, 3AW, MONDAY 9 MAY 1983

HINCH: I am very pleased, because this is the first morning my program is going live to Sydney, in the 3AW studios my first guest this morning will be the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Bob Hawke. It is 2 months since he came to office and during that time, some would say unusually for him, he has been keeping a fairly low media profile and there are some important issues around this morning....

HINCH: Mr. Hawke, Good Morning. I said in my opening comments on 3AW this morning, I thought it would be unusual I would sit here and use the name Bob Hawke and Richard Nixon in the same breath, but Nixon many times used the words "national security". He used it as an excuse to prevent publication of material in the New York Times, Washington Post. You are invoking the same sort of thing, of "national security". Isn't there a big danger in that?

PM: I think there is a big danger in what you are doing - of guilt by association, Derryn. I have the responsibility of making a judgement, whether the national security of the country is an issue. I guess you agree that there is such a thing as national security.

HINCH: Yes, I do. There's a thing called "D" Notices.

PM: Which are voluntary and which are not operative in this case. So, I just assure you that there is no doubt that the national security of the country is an issue and I realize that in these sorts of things the people of Australia and indeed the media I guess in particular have to be prepared to exercise some degree of trust in the judgement of the Prime Minister and the Government. I believe that manifestly the people will in this case. I would like to be able in some sense to discuss the issue more with you Derryn and your listeners, but there is just the question of very grave issues of national security being involved. Also, most importantly, the case comes before the High Court tomorrow and you will appreciate that we have got an interim injunction and it would be quite improper to go into any detail when the matter is going to be considered by the High Court tomorrow.

HINCH: I can understand that and that does limit the conversation somewhat, but issues like..border issues. If say ten years ASIO was in fact breaking into Billy McMahon's house. If, in fact, smear and innuendo being disseminated in Washington to the CIA by ASIO agents, surely now, ten years later, surely don't people have the right to know that. Doesn't the newspaper have the right to try and publish that?

PM: Derryn, I guess you read the whole of the article in The National Times, did you?

HINCH: Yes, I did.

PM: Well, you will appreciate that the questions that you are directing to me go to only one part of the article - about something that is alleged to have been done by ASIO quite some time ago, before the Hope Report. You will remember from your reading the article that that is not all it says, by any means. It refers to current matters involving our international relations. Let me make this point, without, I believe, transgressing. The earlier restraints which I imposed upon myself, which must properly exist, let me say this, that if the allegations in the article had gone only to something alleged to have been done by ASIO many years ago, there is simply no question that we would have gone to the High Court. I wouldn't have been going to the High Court for an injunction on those circumstances.

HINCH: Are you saying that there is much more and much worse than the so-called tens of thousands of papers that we haven't seen, and presumably you have, that there is much worse in that than what The National Times has already published?

PM: No, I am simply saying if you read the whole of the article that has already been published.

HINCH: Well, one of the allegations, of course, was about that in Papua New Guinea and in Indonesia we had a room that could tap local conversations in New Guinea and Indonesia. There is a denial this morning saying that Australia was not doing and didn't have the facilities to do that. If that were true then the information The National Times has, is fallacious.

PM: I go back to what I said in the beginning of the program, Derryn. I am not going to talk in any detail on those matters.

HINCH: Alright, let's talk in a general area. If it weren't for newspapers like the New York Times and the Washington Post, we would never have found out about the Pentagon Papers, America's illegal activities in Cambodia. The Washington Post this morning has a story about Ronald Reagan giving money in Nicaragua. Those things would not have come out and national security could have hidden those things, couldn't they.

PM: Look, your line of questioning, Derryn, which I appreciate, seems to be premised upon the proposition that there can never be a situation in which the freedom of the media can in any way be inhibited. That there is no consideration of national security which will ever over-ride the right of the media to publish what they will. Now, I simply don't accept that. I don't accept - let's take it to an extreme if you like so that we can make this point. Do you believe that if Derryn Hinch, or Toohey, or someone else, were to publish something which would guarantee that the next day the Soviet Union would drop an atomic bomb on Australia, that your right to exploratory journalism should enable you to do that and that there is no consideration of national security which would operate to stop you doing that?

HINCH: No, I do not.

PM: Well then, of course you don't. Now, that means, as soon as you give me that answer, it means, necessarily, that there is such a thing as national security which at some point must be invoked against the necessary rights and freedoms of the media.

HINCH: Yes, but....

PM: Now, I listened to you at great length. I didn't interrupt you in any way. I am simply saying to you, Derryn, that if, in fact, we do, as you honestly do, concede the point I am making, then someone is to exercise a judgement. Now, initially, in this case, I, as the elected Prime Minister of the Government, in consultation with some of my colleagues, exercised that judgement. We went to the Chief Justice of the High Court, put our view and asked for an interim injunction. Now, he has granted that. The High Court will then hear further argument on the case tomorrow. Now, those are the appropriate processes. You have got to understand that your rights, which I cherish, aren't absolute. There are processes in the community in which the Government and the judiciary have got to be involved, where there is a counterbalance of interest. If we don't initiate those counterbalancing considerations which involve the security of the community and just say to you, you do what you will, then that's an absurdity.

HINCH: One which sticks in my mind, though. John Kennedy, when the New York Times got word of The Bay of Pigs invasion, the New York Times was asked not to publish it. It did not. After the event and after the fiasco, Kennedy said he wished the New York Times had published it, had blown it and he wouldn't have gone ahead with it.

PM: I don't know what logical conclusion you can draw from that, other than this. I will tell you the logical conclusion, the only thing that follows from that and that is that a Government or a leader of a Government may make a mistake of judgement. Now, of course you may make a mistake of judgement. I have said to you, during the election campaign I said throughout, that in my time in Government I will make mistakes. I can assure you that I haven't made a mistake on this one.

HINCH: Because you are accusing virtually The National Times of being unpatriotic or not being in Australia's interest, irresponsible, being - these are my words..

PM: They are your words and you will have to answer for them, not me.

HINCH: Mr. Prime Minister, when Gough Whitlam was running the country, one of the things that people thought might have helped bring him down was that he had a recalcitrant public service who did things to embarrass him - Liberals in the public service who tried to bring him down. Do you believe the same sort of thing could apply here, that this material has been leaked to The National Times with your overseas trip coming up to embarrass Bob Hawke, Prime Minister?

PM: No, I doubt it very much Derryn.

HINCH: Well, you are obviously attempting to find the leak. According to The Age on Saturday there was an attempt to sue the publisher for damages if they don't reveal who the leak is.

PM: If I wasn't attempting to find the leak the electors of Australia should do everything they could to throw me out. I would be grossly irresponsible if I didn't try and do that, but the fact that I am trying to find it doesn't mean, as the logic of your question seems to involve, the proposition that it was done to embarrass me. I think there may be more sinister considerations than that, but I am not going into those. The fact is that whatever the reason for it being done the process has got to be discovered as to what did happen, if it possibly can be.

H : Of course, the xerox machine has become the truth serum of the 1980s and it is very hard to plug leaks - harder than it would have been in the past and even Nixon setting up his plumbers unit could not plug leaks. It is a huge job, isn't it.

PM: In the press statement I released on Friday I emphasised at the beginning that this wasn't a question of my Government being embarrassed by the fact that a document was leaked. I think, throughout the history of democratic government leaks occur. I don't get upset about a leak as such. My concern is the question of the national security and that is very much involved in what has been leaked here. What you must understand is that here there have been references to documents, of which there were, as it has said, there were only a couple of copies. This sort of thing is going to very fundamental issues. Now without accepting, as I said in my statement on Friday, the proposition that any specific allegation is true, because some of what there is in the paper is true, some of it is not and I am not going to confirm or deny any specific parts, but there is specific there that anyone, whether it was Derryn Hinch, Bob Hawke, Andrew Peacock, can let me say. I briefed Andrew on the occasion of the information. I briefed him at length and he completely endorses the action that I have taken, so, anyone I suggest, whether it was Derryn Hinch, Bob Hawke, Andrew Peacock, or anyone who had a concern for this country, would have acted as I did.

HINCH: Is it true that some of the material not published was in fact critical of your predecessor Malcolm Fraser and therefore could have been to your political advantage if you had let some of it run?

PM: Well, I don't know what was not published.

HINCH: Don't you know what is in the other tens of thousands of pages?

PM: Well, how could I. How could I know what is in the other tens of thousands of pages?

HINCH: Well, I just assumed....

PM: That Brian Toohey had got in touch with me and said, look Bob, here is a list, a dossier. Come on, come on, come on.

HINCH: Has he been in touch with you?

PM: No. Of course not.

HINCH: The National Times did not get a comment from you at any time.

PM: No.

HINCH: Toohey, of course, has been a thorn to the past Government. Jim Killen, of course, at one stage I think banished him from the Defence Department, so, do you have any personal thoughts about Toohey?

PM: I would think it better that I didn't express them.

HINCH: Alright. Well, if we move on from that I suppose, because, as you say, there are restrictions on you for the High Court tomorrow and, of course, the American Government lost theirs when they tried against the New York Times.