



PRIME MINISTER

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW ON 2HD - NEWCASTLE
12 APRIL 1984

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

QUESTION: What's your comment on something like 'Nationwide'?

P.M.: Well I have to be careful that I'm not misrepresented in what I say. There has been a misrepresentation of things I was reported to have said in Caucus. I have made no threat and would not make any threat to the independence of the ABC. But I insist that people must understand that independence in the ABC does not mean immunity from criticism. There is no doubt in my judgement that there is ground for concern about bias in the ABC over recent periods. I am concerned about that. If the ABC wishes to talk to me about it as I understand they may do at their initiative I would talk to them. I am not seeking to impose any threat or any censorship upon them. But it does seem to me that if you have an organisation which is publicly funded and is independent, as it must be, then they have to be very careful that they meet the expectations of the public that they are independent. This doesn't mean in any sense that there cannot be programs criticising government. Of course there can be and must be. But there is a pattern of bias towards a particular view that has been apparent in parts of the ABC.

QUESTION: Would you probably debate that on the ABC with say their management and one of their Board.

P.M.: You don't handle these things by a public debate. But as I say there is some indication that management and the Board may like to talk with me and if it's their wish that talks take place then I would be prepared to explain objectively to them the basis for the view, not merely that I have but very many people have on that point, and then would hope that they would look at that evidence and try to work it through themselves. But I insist, the point I am making, is that there is no way that this Government will try to exercise financial pressure of any threatening kind on the ABC. That is not the way I operate.