



PRIME MINISTER

INTERVIEW WITH JEREMY CORDEAUX, MACQUARIE RADIO 5DN, ADELAIDE
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Cordeaux: You must be happy with the Bulletin popularity polls 75%?

PM: Obviously you would be quite dishonest if you didn't say that you were happy .. every politician wants to be liked, and not only politicians, we all like to be liked. It is satisfying, it does seem to indicate that people like your style of government, your approach to government.

Cordeaux: I have read that it is particularly important to you, to be liked. Would you say that is true?

PM: I don't think it is any more important to me than it is to anyone else. Of course I like to be liked, I haven't met anyone who doesn't. There might be the odd masochist in the world who gets some perverse pleasure out of being disliked. But I think it's not an unusual characteristic for me to be liked.

Cordeaux: Does it make making the hard decisions more difficult. Because you can't be popular all the time.

PM: I dislike that insinuation. I've always in my life, been prepared to take the tough decisions, if I believe they've been right. In politics if you're going to be effective, in leading a government, in leading a country like this, it's obviously sensible to try and get the greatest degree of acceptance and understanding because it's not just the making of the decisions that is important, it's the carrying through of the decision, and the decision is going to be carried through more effectively if you've got a greater degree of understanding as you possibly can, and that for example, was my reasoning in regard to the Assets Test, I decided there that we weren't going to walk away from the principle but it was quite clear that there was a degree of misunderstanding about what we were seeking to do, and there was also within the proposals that we had the possibility for some confusion and inequity. So I decided we would refer that to a committee of people in good standing and experience in the community so that we would be able in giving effect to that decision later on, to have a greater degree of understanding. Now that's not to me a sign of weakness, it's a sign of, if I may say so, good sense, because in the end it will mean that a genuinely necessary decision, which incidentally I noticed in this morning's paper was endorsed by major employer organisation, will operate more effectively.

Cordeaux: Has that been the toughest decision? What has been the toughest?

PM: No. Well, my mate Mick .. Young, last year, having to accept his resignation at that time. Now that was very tough at the time, but Mick has come back magnificently, he's strong in the House, he's strong in the Cabinet, he's doing a tremendous job, but at the time because of the closeness of our association, it was very hard.

Cordeaux: If there is one thing that marks your Prime Ministership, I think is style. It pleases me, but I think there are probably people in the community, in your party, who don't like you style, your presidential style of leadership, what would you say of that. You've got the figures, the 75% popularity to prove ...

PM: Let me say about ... there maybe some who say they don't like the style but if they are members of parliament, they'll be very, very happy to get the residual benefit at any time of an election. They won't be asking me not to come to their electorate.

Cordeaux: What about the people who do resent your style, and maybe even resent your success, within your own party I mean.

PM: We're becoming a much more united and cohesive party, it may have something to do with perceptions about approaching election times in some people's minds, but, no seriously, in a social democratic party like ours is, all over the world, you have people, it's an umbrella type organisation, conservative party's are too to some extent, or marked perhaps in social democratic party, people who want to do things perhaps a bit more quickly than others, or who have particular issue which obsesses them almost, and if you're not doing exactly what they want on a particular issue, they get a bit annoyed. But it's quite clear, you've referred to the poll this morning, I guess, in one sense that the very satisfying part of that is that it shows 94% of Labor voters, support the way I am going about things, so I guess you've got to put these things in perspective, and if there's a few who don't there is a hell of a lot more who do.

Cordeaux: About security problems, that obviously existed yesterday, I saw you arrive by car at the side entrance and being whisked away with great drama ... it must cause concern to everybody in Canberra .. that that parcel with the potential to be real, managed to get inside Parliament House. There's great security around you today, can you still function happily with people ...

PM: Let's get this into perspective. One of the great features about Australia is that I as Prime Minister, can move around amongst 100s, 1000s of people. The other day in Newcastle where the estimate was 5,000 people in the mall, I moved around amongst them. Hardly anyother democracy in the world where that happens with a minimum ... people around me and protection. One of the great strengths of Australia that we have the capacity for real freedom like that, and I don't have any sense of inhibition by security. We have a small group of dedicated and very efficient people attached to me, who are unobstrusive. But going to the point of Parliament House, I have to confess there is some concern, for instance, we've had the occasion earlier last year where people in the gallery were able to throw stuff down, harmless what they throw down

Cordeaux: You were assulted here in Adelaide, somebody managed to get close enough to throw a projectile at you.

PM: And hit me with it, yeah sure. Well frankly in that respect I think there was a little inefficiency was involved here, that there had been some warning that there were going to be some people there, it was either inefficiency or it was the normal quota of police, watching against what they had warning of.

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Cordeaux: At night, do you think about your own safety.

PM: No, I can honestly say it is not a matter that occupies my mind.

Cordeaux: Let me ask you about anti-uranium march, the size of that demonstration throughout Australia, did it surprise you?

PM: No not really. When you describe it as an anti uranium march, the emphasis was much more on disarmament and the threat and the problems of nuclear war. And I understand those concerns, I share them. It doesn't surprise me those sorts of numbers. There was certainly an element of anti-uranium but of course a lack of logic in identifying the question of mining or not mining uranium with the question of disarmament. Not only a lack of logic but there is an internal contradiction. The only relevant instrument in the international relations between countries which is effectively directed towards preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and providing more safeguards in the use of ... the non proliferation treaty, and that is central to the policy the Labor Party adherence to the non proliferation treaty. Now Article 4 of that treaty, which the supporters of disarmament embrace, article 4 of that treaty imposes an obligation to make available to all developing countries the capacity for the peaceful use of nuclear power.

Cordeaux: Dr Helen Caldicote says it doesn't work, it will find its way into bombs ...

PM: With respect to Dr Caldicote she has not assisted rational debate in this country. Anyone who watched her, and I am not attacking her personally, she has a an emotional feeling about this, I respect that, it is simply irrational to equate the mining of uranium, I simply repeat my point. If you had the non-proliferation treaty as a central instrument in preventing this threat of nuclear weapons and under that treaty, article 4 there is an obligation imposed upon countries to supply the capacity for peaceful use of nuclear power. Then you see logical contradiction of identifying the mining of uranium with the question of weaponry, and of course there is other misinformation, saying we supply uranium to the Phillipines, we don't.

Cordeaux: She has also said you are a dangerous man.

PM: Yes, she got here and said that, and seemed to get some advice that that wasn't very sensible thing to say, and - at the rally she had me as a possible saviour of the world. Now, she was a bit exaggerated on both accounts.

Cordeaux: In tandem with that uranium debate, the sensitive issue of American bases on Australian soil. It has been said that Pine Gap could be a nuclear target, you're Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Hayden seems to have broken some new ground this morning, by admitting that one of the three key US installations is a high priority

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PM: Bill hasn't broken any new ground there. This sort of thing has been conceded before. But let's be quite clear about it. We are an aligned nation, and have been since the last war. It was a Labor Government that forged the alliance with the United States, and Labor and non-Labor Governments without interruption since the Second World War have maintained that alliance relationship. Now obviously it is true that if you're in an alliance relationship and provide facilities to the major partner in that alliance, United States, then that carries risks, of course it does, and it would be dishonest to say otherwise. But in this world there is nothing that doesn't carry risks, and the judgement has been made by successive governments, Labor and non Labor alike, that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. The most simplistic approach to this issue is to assume that if Australia and the rest of the non Soviet block were to disarm, that that brings world peace. There is no evidence to sustain that at all, we would be running greater risks.

Cordeaux: Are you embarrassed that Bill Hayden has ... obviously pointed to the north-west ...

PM: Of course I am not embarrassed. He has not said anything new in that respect. Anyone who knows anything about world strategic balance, has known that in respect of these bases .. it has been said before, Bill was just in the context of an important speech that he was making, and re-emphasising that point, nothing new about it.

Cordeaux: So the bases will stay, and we will live up to our side of the alliance.

PM: We certainly will. We are not going to indulge in the stupidity of assuming that unilateral neutrality and disarmament is going to add to world peace, it is likely to add to instability. If I could see in the Soviet Union marches of millions of people, demonstrating disarmament, then this whole thing would have more impact. What we've got to do, and what we have done, we've done more in our year in office than any government in the history of this country, is to work sensibly for disarmament. Not unilaterally but across the board. I'm proud of the fact that in November of last year, in the United Nations first committee, which is the committee dealing with disarmament, an Australian resolution which New Zealand sponsored with us, was carried. We were able to persuade the United States which veto, the previous year vetoed that, by voting against it. They abstained. Now that means there will be a year's work done there sensibly, addressing both sides of the super power conflict, and try in that way, to get a reduction in the level of nuclear and conventional armament. Now that's the way, if you're sensible, you go about things.

Cordeaux: Can you ever see a time when you would order the construction or the development of nuclear weapons?

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PM: No, I can't see that. That's as I see the world. Neither Bob Hawke nor anyone else, for ever, into every conceivable circumstance, whether you're talking about this issue or anything else, exactly what you would do. All I can say is, that as far as I'm concerned, it wouldn't happen, I can't see that it would add to Australia's capacity to try and add to the possibility of a more peaceful world, it's not on our agenda.

Cordeaux: Have you heard anything about the sub base that South Australia has been trying to get and ... sub construction, .. it would be a target though

PM: If you're building them ... in this world if you take on, whether it's in politics or anything else, if you say you won't do anything because there's a possible risk in doing it, then we would still be in the caves. We as a government, are looking at the question of the building of submarines, in Australia, replacement submarines. A number of States are interested in having this facility ordered to them to do that work. John Bannon I must say to his credit, has been extraordinary vigorous in pushing the case of South Australia. Now, I can't commit my government at this stage, who will get the contract, all of this will be examined, but South Australia could certainly not have had a more vigorous advocate than John Bannon in pushing of the case.

Cordeaux: Seems to be a choice between Newcastle and South Australia.

PM: Robin Grey also put in a bid from Tasmania. The Western Australians could be interested, and certainly Queensland is interested, so just about every state.

Cordeaux: Could it be suggested that we need it more?

PM: I'm sure if you're in South Australia you would see the case as being overwhelming for South Australia. But I understand it's particular position because you've had a falling off of employment in the vehicle industry and it would be very useful to be able to, to the extent that there is some continuing reduction of the motor vehicle industry in South Australia, if that was to occur, then you've got people with the training, experience and qualifications. So I understand that argument, and that's one of the facts that will be taken into account.

Caller: The bomb threat to you in Parliament House, I was just wondering how did they feel after leaving Parliament House under that sort of threat.

PM: I don't know how the others felt but I am not affected by these things, I not trying to sound brave or anything, it is just a fact of life. I think if you get worried about these sorts of issues, you're just not going to do you job effectively. I have basic confidence in the security forces and police, that they will do their job to the best of the ability. As I said before, compared with many other countries in the world, we are fortunate. I think there are some people in the community who perceive advantage in playing these things up. I think it is best that they be given as little publicity as possible, I think they tend to perhaps excite some people to action.

PM: In regard to Parliament House, there perhaps needs to be a review to see whether security there can be tightened up somewhat, because you've got the basic problem that parliament is the house of the people, it's where their affairs are being discussed, and you really want to have a situation where people can as freely as possible go into, see that parliament. Particularly when it is operating. Against that desire which I think is very important. You do also have to be sensible and try ensure that lives are not going to be unnecessarily endangered. I think there will be a review of the security situation, but I hope that it is not going to result in a situation where there is going to be any significant demanution in the possibility of ordinary Australians to go into their Parliament.

Caller: I think the potential bomber was feeling like a lot of Australians do, in that he is threatened with nuclear war. Especially those people in Alice Springs where they're very close to Pine Gap.

PM: I don't want to appear rude, but that is the most unadulterated nonsense I have every heard in my life. If you have got the position where you say a person is concerned about a nuclear war and of death and destruction to people, and that you are going to express your concern about death and destruction and harm to others by threatening the lives yourself of other people, now that's a logic that escapes me absolutely.

Caller: A lot of people are threatened or feel threatened, and probably like your colleagues in Parliament House they felt threatened and had to get out of there. It is the wrong way, and I don't know why governments any where in the world should want nuclear weapons.

PM: I agree, that is why my government has done more in the international forums to press for the reduction of nuclear weaponry and to prevent its spread beyond the five powers that have that capacity at the moment. All I've been saying is that I wish people would exercise some logic in distinguishing between desire, which I have as strongly as anyone in this country, to secure nuclear disarmament, between that question and the question of mining and export of uranium for peaceful purposes. They are two entirely different matters as the central non-proliferation treaty recognises.

2nd Caller: As an ex-serviceman, your new song for Australia (anthem), when we swore ourselves in as soldiers, we swore allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, does this mean we are now going to swear allegiance to you?

PM: Certainly not. The anthem has nothing to do with the oath of loyalty and I noticed in this morning's paper, they are desperately discredited and hopeless opposition through the person of Mr Rosher in Perth, it was suggested that we are going to take the Royal out of our Royal Australian Navy and our Royal Australian Airforce

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PM: That is totally untrue and is a measure of the depths of despair that they have descended. They are going to disappear off the Australian political scene altogether if they keep telling lies like that. No it doesn't effect that at all. What it means is that Australia, now we are an independence of a nation, is going to have its own national anthem, as I have said recently when I announced the decision, I have been appalled in the past at the time of the Olympics, when you see a situation where an athlete from Britain gets up and wins a medal, the God Save the Queen is played, an Australian gets up later and wins a medal, the same national anthem is played. We are a different nation to the Brits, I love them and respect them, but we are a different independence of a nation. I want to see the position when Australians do something they identified as Australians. When you went to the war, you didn't go there thinking you weren't fighting for Australia, you were fighting for Australia. Our causes were also identified with the causes of Britain. Let me remind you, if you think back to that period, the great Australian Prime Minister John Curtin, had a fight with Churchill because Churchill wanted to say well we won't worry about Australia's war in the Pacific, we'll keep you here fighting in the middle-east, and when we've fixed that up if Australia hasn't been gobbled up then, you'll go back then. John Curtin said look my friend, the primary obligation of the Australian Defence Forces is the defence of Australia. Now don't lets get confused in these things, we as Australians, have a primary obligation to Australia, not to some other country. They are primarily responsible for Australia, and in having a national anthem for Australia, is in no way, implying directly or indirectly that the oath of loyalty to the Queen will not be made. She is remember this, the Queen of Australia, under the law of this country. She is the Queen of Australia.

Caller: If an Australian soldier was awarded a medal in the field of battle, would it be a British Order or is it going to be an Australian Order.

PM: Up until this time, you've had the situation where we have used those British Orders, and I must state quite directly to you, there is a bit of a problem at the moment, for instance, the Victoria Cross, that is a distinctly British Order and we've got to keep a situation where in my judgement, the opportunity for Australian servicemen in the hopefully unlikely event that they are going to be in another war that this sort of tradition and opportunity for them to participate in that is kept alive. But that is a matter we are looking at, because we ... we are not about to destroy traditions, that is a negative approach. What I and the government want to do within a ... where tradition is very important, but within that frame work we also want to make sure Australian tradition, and the capacity for Australian traditions, is enhanced, and we've got marry the two things together.

Cordeaux: Just on the subject of Waltzing Matilda, as a folk song, the Americans couldn't possibly have copyright over it.

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PM: As soon as this raised with me, I have had the Attorney General's Department working on it, a lot of work here and in the United States, as soon as it is clarified, the legal position, and if it emerges that there is some right outside this country and the United States, I can assure that I will initiate action to try and see that it comes back to where it belongs.

Cordeaux: Everyone will agree with that.

Caller: A question about Senator Ryan's proposal for affirmative action. Given the fact that 70% of registered unemployed are men, and we have men leaving the state because they can't get jobs, I find it to have a proposal whereby we are going to try and increase the amount of women in the work force. How can you justify that?

PM: What is involved in the concept of the affirmative action .. let me say what we are doing. We have prepared what is called a green paper, and the difference between a green paper and a white paper is that a white paper is a way in which government announces what it is going to do, a green paper is a basis for discussion. That green paper will now be circulated in the community and give everyone the opportunity of making submissions of points of views, and that will lead us into a decision. We are going to have a joint working party from employers, trade unions and other interested groups, helping to have a dissemination discussion under the green paper. Having said that is what going to happen, the concept behind it is not that you are going to force employers to have a quota, and increase quota that must be so many women, we are simply going to be saying it is the fact that about 37% of the work force is female. If women weren't in the work force, if they withdrew for some reason, this economy would collapse. They are an important part of the work force with rights. With equal rights. We can't in this society say yes we believe in equal rights for all human beings, then say we don't really believe in it. In particular something like 40% of the workforce is female, now what we are saying is that historically women have had lesser opportunities and rights within the workforce and we're saying in cooperation with larger firms, that will be confined to firms employing more than 100 people, that cooperatively they should seek to improve the opportunity for women to move through their employment so they are just not confined to particular menial categories, they have the opportunity to go for any position. That is an absolutely laudible correct and decent thing to do. It is not saying to employers here's a quota that you must have women, it is recognising that women are equal human-beings to men, they are entitled to the same rights.

Caller: I disagree

PM: If you think as a man you are superior to a women, you are entitled to that, I don't happen to believe it.

Caller: By equal I mean having the same function. Obviously the men and women are equal in status, but what I am saying biological differences ...

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PM: Of course there are biological differences, but that doesn't mean that because a woman, and what we are talking about is the woman who has the reproductive function of actually bearing the child, that doesn't mean that she is an inferior person with lesser rights.

Caller: That fact is often not recognised in these sorts of policies, the fact that women want easy access into the labor market and easy access out for that sort of reason. Therefore their aspirations to get to the top would not be same as men.

PM: How can you possibly from the comfort of your non-bearing situation make that ascertainment or assumption. What do you know. I don't want to be rude, but the blatant arrogance of your assumption that you know what women want to do, that women don't want to achieve satisfaction by becoming engineers or top executives, it is an arrogant assumption that I don't accept.

Caller: It is a matter of degree, obviously the woman who can do those positions quite well ...

PM: You say, 'the woman', your condescending attitude 'the woman' that can do those things quite well, you have no quarrel with. It is total arrogance on your part to assume that some women may be able to do it, but generally speaking women of course can't do it as well as men, there is no basis for it. Women in the history of this world in the areas of science, look in the area of politics, Mrs Gandhi and Prime Ministers in other areas, aviation, you can look at science, women have shown that they have the capacity to do things as well as, and in many cases better than men. It is a complete contradiction of what I think is fundamental to a democracy and the end of the 20th century that women have equal rights to men to put in these assumptions that you do, that we must regard them as inferior.

Let me make one final point. It is imperative that people in responsibility see those attitudes are not allowed to emerge in a way in which women are seen to be inferior, they are not. In saying all those things, the position of my government is one which clearly respects the wishes of women who see their total sense of fulfillment in the home and being wives and mothers. That is going to continue for very many women to represent their total sense of fulfillment and in nothing that I have said, is there implication that they are any less deserving of the concern of the community. The role that they fulfill is an irreplaceable one, and is for very many of them, still totally what they want in terms of satisfying their aspirations and ensuring that we do provide for women who want to go into the workforce an equality of opportunity. That carries no implication or denegration of those women who don't want to go into the workforce.

Cordeaux: That could be worth a few more points on the popularity poll.

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PM: I don't if it is worth it or not. I am simply saying that is what the truth is.

Caller: Talking about equality for women, my question is when are you going to be fair to the men and give them a pension at 60 or stop the women until 65. I worked on until 68 before I get a part pension. We worked hard to get our home. Another thing, look after the old age pensioners.

PM: Let me say this madam, it is recognised by pensioner organisations of this country that the Labor Party which is the one political organisation in this country which has moved towards fairness to pensioners. In the 1970s we were the ones which set the target of 25% of average earnings to move up the pension and in government between 72 and 75 we moved to do that against the opposition of our political opponents. Now that we are back in office we have started again. We have lifted pensions, and we will be doing all that we can to lift them again.

Caller: We've got to keep our homes and land. I get a part pension of \$60 a week. My husband gets nothing because where he was working at 50, he had to leave. He is strong and healthy, he can't get any money at all. We are living out of that \$60 a week, we are having to live on our savings that we saved all our lives. We have never had a holiday, we put that money aside, we are living on our savings now. Quick to the point, look after the older people.

PM: All I can say is that is precisely what we are doing, and I am glad to say that has been recognised by welfare and community organisations, that is what we have been doing. I am not avoiding the fact that there is recognition and very glad to see in today's press a major employer agreed with us. We have got to make sure that we don't pay pensions to people who absolutely don't need them, we must avoid double dipping, we should avoid the situation for instance, a person like myself who has one form of superannuation, a very generous one, isn't allowed to dip in again to the public purse because there are those of us in the community who don't need a public assistance and others who very do need it. We are going to make sure that we bring about a fairer community so that those elderly people in the community or have retired and have made their contribution to our society, are going to get the assistance they deserve.

Thank you.