

John Menadue- Podcast ABC 'The Eleventh' February/March 2020

This is the transcript of an interview John conducted with ABC for a podcast series [The Eleventh](#).

Transcript

Alex Mann: John, thank you again.

John Menadue: Glad to be here. Thank you.

Alex Mann: Can you just take me back to the period before you actually started working for Gough Whitlam? What were you doing before you entered into the employ of Gough and the government?

John Menadue: That takes me back to my South Australian days. I was a boy from the country in South Australia. I was the son of a Methodist Minister. We were always on the move. I went to 12 schools in 11 years, so I had to adapt pretty quickly. After graduation from Adelaide University in economics I got employment with the Bureau of Stats. in Adelaide. I found it terribly boring coding retail census forms. So when the first opportunity came, I applied and then got an appointment in Canberra, with the Bureau of Stats. I was there for about 18 month and then joined Treasury briefly. I'd been active in the Labor Party at Adelaide University and active in opposition to White Australia. And I knew people in the ALP such as Don Dunstan and Clyde Cameron. I learnt through Clyde Cameron that Gough Whitlam the new deputy leader in 1960 was looking for a secretary. So I put up my hand immediately. I was interviewed very briefly by Gough .He didn't know me beforehand.

Alex Mann: Do you remember what kind of questions he asked you?

John Menadue: He asked me very few. It was a very casual interview selection process which suited me. I don't know of any other people that were interviewed or even applied. And I was appointed. And Gough was hopefully impressed.

Alex Mann: What do you think he saw in you, given he didn't really ask you any questions?

John Menadue: That was the nature of Gough. He wasn't all that good on personal relations and testing people. He had very strong ideas himself, but he wasn't particularly good at managing staff. That was my experience. He had a lot of other quite remarkable skills and abilities. Obviously being a member of the ALP and an economics graduate helped me. But one factor which did help me in the appointment was that I was a Protestant, then Methodist. Three of the parliamentary leaders were Catholic, Arthur Calwell, Senator McKenna and Senator Kennelly. Gough was being urged that he should provide some balance to this. So being a Methodist was a plus in my appointment. People like Clyde Cameron and others that I knew saw me as a some sort of balance to all the Catholics that

were seen to be running the ALP at that time. But anyhow that was how I was appointed by Gough in 1960. And it turned out to be an extraordinary, exhilarating and exciting period for me. It was like being chained to a powerhouse. He was brimming with ideas all the time. And with a young family, it was difficult, but it was exciting.

Alex Mann: What was it? I mean, you've sort of given some indication as to in broad terms what it was like to work with Gough. What were some of his strengths and weaknesses and how did that come across when you were working with him?

John Menadue: He was extraordinarily interested in policy and programs. He could see that the Labor Party was antiquated and needed revival and reform. As someone put it later, the party platform was the Old Testament for the Labor Party. But Gough was determined to write the New Testament and that's what he set about doing. And that was the exciting part of the work with him, developing a network of people in universities, in the media who could assist in the development of a whole range of policies. And that was the central work that I did with Gough for seven years. I dealt particularly with Professor Sol Encel in sociology at the University of Sydney. We developed a range of contacts across all policy areas from health, education, transport, cities and foreign affairs. We developed progressively a range of policies in all those areas. They became incorporated in the policy of the Labor Party.

Alex Mann: I've heard him described as not a very good team captain in the sense that managing of the relationships and the people and his ministers, but that sometimes might have been the genesis of some of the issues that he had. What's your kind of observation on those strengths and weaknesses that he had?

John Menadue: I think that's true. He was quite brilliant. He was way out in front of almost all of his colleagues in terms of intellectual ability and his determination to drive reform in the Labor Party. But I think he was not as careful as he perhaps could have been in obtaining the support and co-operation of his colleagues. It came later to a real crunch in sacking the Victorian branch of the ALP. Gough had come to the view that there never would be a federal Labor government until the Victorian branch of the ALP was cleaned up. On that he relied on Clyde Cameron initially, and then Mick Young. Both had superior political and personal skills to Gough. I also think that Margaret Whitlam had better personal skills than Gough. She would have been a good member of Parliament. But Gough had other skills and attributes, which I found admirable. I suppose we've all got shortcomings of one sort or another.

Alex Mann: That's right. I mean, these anecdotes that we've been reading about, you know, sitting down for a steak in the midst of this unfolding crisis, the kind of calm under pressure, a strength in one sense, but also the sense that he sort of floated above a lot of the controversy that ended up surrounding the government.

Alex Mann: I'll talk to you about Cyclone Tracey, because I think there's actually a really interesting sequence of events there that go to what you're speaking about. Where did Whitlam go at the end of 1974?

John Menadue: I was then secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Gough loved travel. He came to travel pretty late in his life in 1963, when he must have been well over 50. He'd never been overseas, but he had been a great scholar of the classics, Greek and Roman

history . Menzies gave an opportunity in 1963 to Gough and a few of his colleagues to go overseas to consider the British proposal to join the Common Market. Now the silly Brits are trying to get out of it. I learnt then how important and stimulating overseas travel was for Gough. He was determined as Prime Minister there'd be even more opportunities with support aircraft and staff. Europe was his favourite hunting ground for the classics and history. And although he loved Italy and Greece ,at the time of the cyclone , he was listening to the choir at Cambridge University. When word came through that Darwin had been badly damaged in Cyclone Tracy, he was reluctant to come back. But he was persuaded by colleagues that he should come back. In the Department we arranged his return and he flew from London to Perth on a commercial aircraft. He then caught a VIP aircraft from Perth to Alice Springs. I met him at the airport at Alice Springs. After normal courtesies we discussed getting up to Darwin in a VIP aircraft. What surprised and shook him was that he was booed and heckled at the Alice Springs Airport. It was big news in Australia what had happened in Darwin and of course, a lot of controversy about Gough being overseas at this time.

Alex Mann: Was the booing happening? I mean, was he in the plane or was it in the terminal? Where did that?

John Menadue: It was in the terminal. He had left the aircraft and came into the terminal where he had something to eat. He was clearly set back and surprised at the extent of the hostility that he encountered there.

Alex Mann: You were there?

John Menadue: Yes, I was there. It was just a spontaneous reaction in Alice Springs that the Prime Minister was overseas when he should have been in Australia. Australians ,myself included are pretty parochial people. At that stage in 1974, not many in Alice Springs would have travelled overseas. Perhaps if they had, they might have been a bit more international in their outlook .I had not travelled overseas until well into my career. But Gough found stimulus in travel, international travel, and good luck to him for that. But he was surprised by the angry response he got in the terminal in Alice Springs

Alex Mann: So you're approaching Darwin in the plane. What do you see as you're approaching?

John Menadue: I'd approached Darwin the day before with Jim Cairns. It might have been two days beforehand. Perhaps one day beforehand, late in the day.I accompanied Jim Cairns, who was the Acting Prime Minister with Gough overseas. I flew with him and government officials, including Treasury officials to Darwin.

Alex Mann: This was Christmas Day. Wasn't it?

John Menadue: By the time the news came through of the devastation in Darwin on Christmas Day, perhaps we were into Boxing Day. I'd never seen a cyclone site before. Houses and buildings were demolished. Telegraph wires, telegraph poles were just screwed up like pieces of string. Electricity wires were down everywhere. The only structures that looked to be standing were circular water towers. The wind had somehow circled around them and hadn't blown them over. But from the air I was frankly surprised that nature could be so destructive .

Alex Mann: There hasn't been a sort of natural disaster that's really had that kind of devastating effect on a capital city since in Australia, has there? I mean, I think that's right.

John Menadue: We've had several in Queensland since then. And I think they are clearly increasing with climate change. The frequency and the severity of them is certainly increasing. But at that time, it was a pretty rare experience for me as a young person seeing that sort of thing for the first time.

Alex Mann: And so what are you. How are you describing this and how are you relaying this to Gough?

John Menadue: I was in touch with him but I'd been there with Jim Cairns the day before. Earlier, I was on the phone to him in the UK and described it to him as best I could.

Alex Mann: So he's in London.

John Menadue: He was in Cambridge at the time. Or maybe he had come back to London by then. But certainly he was in the UK and one of my objects was to try and persuade him that he should return.

Alex Mann: And how are you? How are you managing that argument?

John Menadue: Not well. I think he was persuaded more by some of his senior cabinet colleagues that as well as me that he should return. But he did return in good grace. But he was surprised by the hostility he encountered at the terminal in Alice Springs when he flew in.

Alex Mann: I don't know how quickly news of the detail of the devastation in Darwin was travelling back to the UK at this time. How do you convey the sense of urgency that you felt to the Prime Minister? If he doesn't want to come through? Well, I respect that decision. However, I mean, how do you try to get the urgency across?

John Menadue: It was big news everywhere, of course, around the world. It was a very severe cyclone. And Gough would have appreciated that by the local media and reports in the UK and reports that he would've got from us in Prime Minister and Cabinet. All I could do was describe what I had seen and what I'd heard in Darwin. And it would be a smart thing in terms of his Prime Ministership and politically and personally to come back and see for himself.

Alex Mann: Did you get a sense at that time that it was uncomfortable or awkward that he wasn't there?

John Menadue: It was hard to judge that on the telephone.

Alex Mann: But for you, I mean, that's what I'm trying to talk to people.

John Menadue: I held a strong view that he shouldn't have gone on the trip in the first place and that he should come back immediately. I didn't give that point of view across very well, but he did come back.

Alex Mann: So tell me about the day that Whitlam arrives in detail. He actually arrives back in Australia. So you've talked about the Alice Springs terminal. What about him actually arriving in Darwin?

John Menadue: He was quite struck, also, obviously with what he saw in Darwin. And the number of people that no longer had housing in the makeshift arrangements that were being made. By that time a few ministers had arrived who had portfolio interests in Darwin and he met some of them. But he very quickly decided after discussion that he needed to appoint an administrator or a commissioner to oversight the emergency and the reconstruction of Darwin. And he appointed a military general.

Alex Mann: Brigadier Stretton?

John Menadue: Brigadier Stretton. Yes. The military in those sort of things do an extremely good job. And he swung into action very quickly.

Alex Mann: But Stretton complained to Whitlam, didn't he?

John Menadue: That came later. Stretton said that some of the ministers were wanting to interfere as he saw it in the overall organisation and administration of his rescue role. And Gough told Brigadier Stretton, that if he had problems with these ministers, he should get in touch with him, the Prime Minister. But in general, the reconstruction went well. Very well, indeed. Then later, when Stretton had finished, others took over the longer term job. But the reconstruction of Darwin did go well and credit to Gough for that. When he got there, he saw the problem and took action to put the right processes in place.

Alex Mann: I read some detail about Stretton in these conversations with them, with Whitlam and. I think he said, what did he say that day, that they annoyed him as well, something what was it like that that will bring it straight with saying these guys are a handful?

John Menadue: I think Gough often had throw away lines that he had to put up with these pricks from time to time and he could understand the difficulty. He wasn't patient with them. Perhaps, he should have been. But anyhow, he got the job done.

Alex Mann: Okay. So after you left Darwin, where did Whitlam go?

John Menadue: He went back to the Prime Minister's Lodge at Kirribilli. It was holiday time. Christmas, Boxing Day, early into the new year. And he called a cabinet meeting together very quickly to consider not just the emergency, looking after the people and getting them out of Darwin. And Qantas flew out on their 747's well over 500 people, including children on flights to Sydney. I don't know how that got them on-board the aircraft. I don't think that in these days that would be approved by the Department of Transport or Civil Aviation. But it was quite a remarkable exercise by Qantas to get thousands of people out to reasonably secure accommodation, particularly in Sydney. They came and that was well organised.

But Gough needed to ensure that the long term reconstruction of Darwin proceeded. A cabinet meeting was called. Arrangements were made for a new commissioner. Stretton would finish his role fairly soon, and arrangements were in hand for the appointment of a permanent commissioner. Subsequently, legislation was introduced setting up the

commission and resourcing it properly, and it turned out to be a very successful reconstruction of Darwin. Once the major decisions have been made about the reconstruction Gough was determined to resume his overseas trip ...and once again we had to go to work, my colleagues and I, to try and persuade him that really he should stay. And I remember I went to talk to him. He was lying on a lie low at Kirribilli.

Alex Mann: On a lie low?

John Menadue: Yes at the Prime Minister's residence. He always thought that Hansard staff were too slow in correcting and indexing Hansard. So he spent a lot of his time indexing and reading Hansards. And that was what he was doing. And I went in my grey flannel suit. It was perhaps my last attempt to persuade him to stay here in Sydney? Good weather. Everyone's on holiday. You have a holiday as well. On a lie low, but stay in Sydney. Please stay. And he said, comrade, comrade, if I'm going to put up with these fuckwits in the Labor Party, I've got to have my trips. And off he went. I thought at the time. How self-indulgent. But when I think back, I think of the people he had to deal with. I'm much more understanding and appreciative of his view that he needed a break from these sort of people that he was surrounded with. I became much more tolerant on those issues as the years passed, but not at the time.

Alex Mann: I think that's it. That's hilarious. But it's this idea that also, you know, you. Don't stand in the way between Gough Whitlam and a trip overseas.

John Menadue: He loved travel and he kept going. After he was dismissed by Kerr he and Margaret would lead tours to particularly Italy and Greece. He would have been a great tour guide as I had found when I worked for him. He knew the galleries of Europe better than local guides. I think Margaret would have been even better one. She was more patient. But Gough had the historical and classical knowledge and background. And, of course, being an ex Prime Minister that made their tours more successful.

Alex Mann: Can I take you to another topic area here? Looking at the Khemlani loans affair, there's a lot a lot to unpack in that. But just sort of quickly, I mean, what was the Khemlani loans affair? Do you mind just a quick sort of summary.

John Menadue: I think two or several factors or at least two. The first is that the government was embarked on a very ambitious social welfare program costing money—housing, education, Medicare, support for the states and a whole range of areas, improvement of pensions, equal pay. And they all had budgetary implications. Gough came to the view that the level of spending from the budget couldn't be sustained. On top of it were major projects, which Rex Connor, the resources minister had. Pipelines from north Western Australia where there was bountiful gas. Gas lines into eastern and southern Australia. Improvement of coal mining facilities and improvement of ports and rail. Access to ports. A scheme for the processing of spent nuclear fuels from around the world. It was a very expensive and ambitious program, but Rex Connor had in mind and was very clear that it couldn't be done through budgetary means. And he didn't want foreigners to do it. And that was why they were interested when this proposal came along from some of his colleagues that a chap called Khemlani could assist in raising some money. So stupidly, ministers and Gough somewhat reluctantly agreed that it should be pursued. There was another factor in the consideration of the loan was that Gough and ministers had lost all trust in Treasury.

From the time that they came into government Treasury, decided that the government should pursue Treasury policies. In retrospect the Treasury did not serve the government well. It was disloyal to the government, particularly over the 1973 budget. Treasury took the views conveyed to me by Gough later that if the government wouldn't do what they were told they'd take their bat home. They wouldn't participate and contribute and assist the government. And that dreadful atmosphere continued for a long time. Later the Hawke and Keating governments learnt that there needed to be a cooperative relationship between a Labor government and Treasury, the principle drivers of economic policy. I think the Labor Party learned something from that. And I think also Treasury learnt that they couldn't play the game that Fred Wheeler and John Stone played in those days at the time of the Labor government. But that was background to this decision to embark on a loan raising, which turned out to be a dreadful mistake. The money probably was never there, and the process by which it was pursued turned out to be highly embarrassing.

Alex Mann: Can I ask you, do you remember how you first heard about the plan?

John Menadue: Gough told me about it, it must have been fairly soon after I became secretary of the department. I joined in September 1974 and I learned very soon thereafter about the proposed loans affair and the loan raising through Khemlani. The first part of it was an attempt by Rex Connor and Lennox Hewitt who was on the board of the Atomic Energy Commission that the Atomic Energy Commission would raise the money, not the government directly. Then when that was no longer possible, there was a suggestion that the Commonwealth Bank would raise the money. Roland Wilson, who had been a former secretary of Treasury, was then the chair of the Commonwealth Bank. They would raise the money. But it turned out that that the Commonwealth Bank was not willing. But I must confess that as a new boy to the job, when a former secretary of the Treasury, then with the Commonwealth Bank entertained that idea, I was somewhat impressed. As it turned out, I shouldn't have been so impressed, but I was at the time. But anyhow, those two possibilities of loan raising by the Atomic Energy Commission, then the Commonwealth Bank fell over. The decision was then made that the Commonwealth would raise the money directly. And an Executive Council meeting composing Connor, Whitlam, Murphy and Cairns was held late in December 1974 to authorise Rex Connor to raise four billion dollars through Khemlani.

Alex Mann: Now, you mentioned Connor a few times there. I might just sort of break out of that Khemlani story for a moment to say what kind of a man was Rex Connor?

John Menadue: He was politically very important. Rex Connor was the minister for resources and he had a grand vision of the development of our resources and not rely on foreign multinationals. He was a real nationalist. Politically, he had also been very active in the big ALP split in New South Wales. The Lang split in the in the 30s following the Depression. He was active on the left in the Labor Party in New South Wales. He was a big man in every sense.. He was a big man physically. He was called the strangler

Alex Mann: What does that mean?

John Menadue: He was a big man. And I think many people decided they wouldn't tangle with Rex Connor in any way. I never heard they got into any physical difficulties, but he was a big, big imposing figure. And Gough was impressed with him and he was very supportive of Gough. He had this vision of the development of our resources. He thought that our coal

industry and iron ore industries were being screwed by the Japanese who were then developing their steel industry and saw Australia as a favourable and attractive place to buy iron ore and coal. Connor introduced measures to ensure that export licences would not be issued to our exporters of coal and iron ore unless Rex Connor and his department were satisfied about the price. He felt that we weren't getting an adequate return for the resources. It wasn't just a matter of digging them up and send them overseas. Australians should be getting a better deal. He came from the Wollongong area, which is a coal mining area, and he really believed in coal. If people today believe in coal for the future of power generation they had nothing on Rex Connor in terms of this enormous resource that could do wonderful things for Australia. This was back 40 years ago. He was a great believer in our resources, believing that we shouldn't be importing gas in the eastern states but that we should be building pipelines to bring that gas to eastern and southern Australia. He was a great nationalist and he had this vision, which I think is still pretty attractive for Australians. We have these natural resources and we've never attempted to properly get a good return from them. We export them in raw form rather than processing. We should do much more to process our raw materials in Australia. So Rex had this grand vision and that lay behind why he was so keen to raise money through difficult or unusual ways.

Alex Mann: Does a part of you sort of wish he'd succeeded?

John Menadue I wish he'd done it in a more conventional way.

Alex Mann: But the result

John Menadue: Rex was very popular in the caucus and in the cabinet. He had this vision for Australia that few people had then, and frankly No people have today the vision of our resources that he had. We've in my view wasted so many of the mining booms that we've had in this country. We've been exploited. The Norwegians, for example, are much smarter than we are. They set up a sovereign fund so that the money from their gas and energy boom was kept in the country. They got good prices for their exports. And they developed a sovereign fund, a future fund, if you like, the envy of almost every country in the world. They had a mineral boom. They just didn't blow it. As we've done time and time again with high exchange rates, which then put pressure on our manufacturing and other industries. The Norwegians showed what could be done. And that was the sort of vision that Rex Connor had. I'd never heard him talk about a sovereign fund like the Norwegians, but he believed that we should be getting a better return for our resources. And it's still true today.

Alex Mann: That's great. Thank you. You mentioned his executive council meeting. Why was this controversial?

John Menadue: It became controversial when it became public that Khemlani was involved in the loan raising. The name put a lot of people off. Maybe he was Muslim. I don't know whether he was it or not. But it is the sort of trigger that you'd get in Australia today. Oh, this chap from the Middle East? Khemlani, foreigner, this is all suspicious. And they had good reason to be suspicious of Khemlani, as it turned out,.

Alex Mann: But not because his name was khemlani.

John Menadue: That's right. But that was the trigger for a lot of things. Then the stories about Khemlani started leaking

Alex Mann: Before we sort of get to that. Can I just sort of take you into this Executive Council meeting? You mentioned some of the names of the people that were there. You were there, too. Do you remember? I mean, do you remember that scene?

John Menadue: Oh, yes, I remember. It was held at the Lodge in Canberra. It was a busy night because in one part of the lodge, the federal executive of the ALP was having a meeting and the Executive Council in another room. There was a meeting, the executive council and several members from the ALP executive at that stage had to attend the other meetings. So there was a coming to and fro. The executive council meeting consisted of the Prime Minister, Rex Connor. Jim Cairns and Lionel Murphy. Lionel Murphy was the Attorney-General and from the Senate. The Governor-General was not present. And that turned out to be a matter of major concern for the critics. And it was used to the detriment of the government. But it was not unusual for the Governor-General not to be present. The Executive Council often met without the Governor-General being present. However, any decisions that were made by the Executive Council would subsequently be presented to the Governor-General for his signature. Furthermore, when an Executive Council meeting was held without the Governor-General, the courtesy and the practice was to inform the Governor-General. Unfortunately, on this night, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam tried to ring the Governor-General who was in Sydney at the opera, I think Romeo and Juliet, of all things. The Prime Minister, couldn't get the Governor-General. So the meeting proceeded and decisions made. The minute of the meeting was taken up next morning to Kirribilli, where the Governor-General was, and he signed it for a four billion dollar loan raising. And Rex Conner had the authority to facilitate and arrange that loan raising. The Governor General never expressed to Gough Whitlam any objection to the raising or the process. I should add that later, when the pressure came on him by his legal, political and business colleagues about this last loan raising, he began trimming and changing his view that he wasn't there and wasn't consulted. It is true and he wasn't consulted. But that was not unusual. And he signed it next morning. And Gough told me he never raised any objection to it. And he, in fact, indicated to me months later how excited he was about this loan raising and the big things that Rex Conner could do in developing Australian resources. Subsequently that authority by Rex Connor was revoked. It was clear that the money wasn't there. Subsequently there was another loan raising proposed of two billion dollars. At that Executive Council meeting the Governor-General, Kerr was present and cabinet ministers. It was all done formally and in the usual way. But this two billion dollar raising produced no money at all. Kerr was present and had no objections. So I think it's phony when Kerr says that he had objections and wasn't treated properly and courteously. He was treated properly, but later when the political heat went on he changed his tune.

Alex Mann: So when did this proposal end up becoming public and what was the reaction?

John Menadue: It became public I guess about a fortnight after the Executive council meeting. There had been meetings that I had with Treasury and Jim Cairns who was then acting Prime Minister. It was very clear that Treasury had major concerns and reservations. And I've no doubt the Treasury started leaking profusely and on numerous occasions to the media about what was at stake in this four billion dollar loan raising. I hardly had time to get

to work before I read the leaks in the papers. I used to get in pretty early in the morning and read my cables and memos. But by then the leaks were in the newspapers. And I know they came from Treasury. I know, I know. I know they came from Treasury. I won't name the two senior people that were responsible, but I am absolutely certain of it. And they were leaking not just to the media. They were leaking directly to Phil Lynch, who was the shadow treasurer. And by implication it was going to Malcolm Fraser, who was then the leader of the opposition.

It's interesting that shortly after that Gough Whitlam rang me. I don't know where he was at the time and said that Sir William Gunn, who was the Chair of the Wool Corporation and a member of the Reserve Bank board could arrange a three billion dollar loan raising for the government. He said that there were these petro dollars flushing around in the Middle East and he William Gun could access that money for the government. Gough, reported that to me. I advised him that in light of the difficulties that we'd had previously with the Connor loan raisings that I needed to involve Treasury. Bill Hayden was then the Treasurer and Fred Wheeler was a Secretary of Treasury. I should inform them what was happening so that we could properly manage and avoid the controversy over the Conner / Khemlani raisings. Treasury took over the responsibility for the Gunn proposal. It's interesting that not a word of that loan raising was leaked to the press. William Gun, Bill Gun, as he was called, was part of the club. Wool cooperation, the Reserve Bank, Treasury. They were determined to leak and damage Whitlam. But when one of their own leaked like Gunn, they were as quiet as mice.

Alex Mann: You've sort of alluded to this, no doubt, and I know that later on this became very damaging, before Connor was sacked. There was this period where Treasury is leaking all these stories coming up. Just how damaging were these ongoing stories, how tough were they for you to manage?

John Menadue: It was obviously extremely damaging.

Alex Mann: So what was the media response to this proposal?

John Menadue: Basically the money wasn't there. And unfortunately, Rex Connor was so committed to this dream of his that he kept exploring loan raisings from the Middle East without the authority of the government, executive council or the cabinet.

Alex Mann: And before you get to that, can I can I take you back a little before? So when did Whitlam tell Connor to stop?

John Menadue: I think it was mid 1975 but Connor became more determined than ever that he wouldn't put up with this leaking, this disloyalty by Treasury and that he would like to see the projects in some form maintained and then proceeded with. But as the weeks and months passed, it became clear that that was not possible. And the political damage, continual with media leaks from Treasury. Khemlani came to Australia. He allegedly slept on a park bench or something similar. There was something quite extravagant about it all.. And the government was looking very bad. And of course, Malcolm Fraser was looking for an excuse to get rid of the government. He seized on all this together with his media friends and Murdoch in particular and others. And they really gave the government a hammering . And. Gough had a problem also with Jim Cairns. He had given authority by personal letter to a

friend , Harris at the Carlton Football Club to raise money. He had no authority to do that. And Gough sacked him. Rex Connor continued to try and raise money when he didn't have authority .

Alex Mann: When did Whitlam actually tell Connor that he no longer had authority to pursue the loans?

John Menadue: I wasn't present when they discussed that, but certainly that's what Gough Whitlam told me, that he had told Rex to desist from any further activities. But Rex didn't.

Alex Mann: Did you think that at the time, during the thinking, finally, we've put that to bed?

John Menadue: I thought we were getting out of it. A foolish thought on my part. But then we found that Rex was proceeding.

Alex Mann: And how did you learn about that?

John Menadue: I heard it from a staffer.

Alex Mann: What did they say?

John Menadue: I was told that Connor was sitting up ,not in his pyjamas, but at night next to the teleprompter, hoping and waiting that there would be some proposal coming through. Rex Connor was then a sad, sad person. He had this great vision and it was all crumbling. At that time we were concerned on other grounds. Clarrie Harders, who was Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department was concerned that with Rex Connor still pursuing loans, there might be legal and financial obligations on behalf of the Commonwealth. And we made checks as best we could . But we couldn't find any evidence of illegality. There were all the signs of political stupidity, but not illegality in the matter. And. Harders and I went and saw Gough and we told him that we understood that Rex was still trying to raise money despite what Whitlam told him to desist. And there were risks. We hadn't found any. But there were risks legally and financially for the Commonwealth government if this were allowed to continue, and action should be taken. Gough then decided on the basis of what we told him, that Rex should resign. And he told me to go down and see Rex and ask for his resignation. I was the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. And Rex was on the ground level almost immediately below the Prime Minister's office in old Parliament House. So with some trepidation, I went down to see the strangler but and he was then not as physically intimidating as he once had been. But I put the case to him that the Prime Minister wanted his resignation. And Rex, not surprisingly told me to piss off and I did. They were chaotic days, they really were. Gough then decided that he had to do it ,and he, persuaded Rex said he should resign, which he did. And of course, that set off another wave of opportunities for Malcolm Fraser to allege an incompetent government acting maybe illegally and so on. But in all of it, despite the political stupidity and I told Malcolm Fraser that later, I never found any evidence of illegality or secret commissions. They were the rumours and stories being circulated that some of the ministers were taking secret commissions of one sort or another. But we never found that. I'm satisfied there was no evidence of that at all. It was just political stupidity.

Alex Mann: At one point you alluded to this, but Khemlani comes to Australia and in some accounts that I've heard of this his visit was almost arranged by the opposition. I'm not sure if you were aware of this or whether you'd read those accounts either. But at some point, Khemlani sort of has had enough of this relationship that he had built with some of the Labor ministers, and he decides to flip it and starts giving information to both journalists and to the opposition. Why do you think, Khemlani would turn like that.

John Menadue: I really don't know. I've never met the person. I wasn't keen to. My impression is that it was the Melbourne Herald group that was the main media organisation that encouraged or funded Khemlani to come to Australia. I don't know if the coalition was involved in bringing him to Australia. I don't know. I really don't know.

Alex Mann: Do you remember that time when he came to Australia?

John Menadue: There were extraordinary headlines, particularly in the Melbourne Herald. I can't remember the journalist that led the campaign but he was well-known in Melbourne. He wasn't in the Canberra gallery. I think it was the Melbourne Herald that was the principle driver. And of course, all the other media picked it up. Every everyone was agog with the loan raisings and possible refusal of supply. It was a bad time for the government.

Alex Mann: So after it, how did Connor react to that news that, you know, after he's told you to piss off, Gough's come down and then told him what he wanted to happen. He's eventually accepted it. How did he react to that news?

John Menadue: I was not privy to that reaction. All I know is that he continued as a member of parliament and he was there on that fateful day when the parliament voted to reinstate Gough Whitlam as the Prime Minister after he had been dismissed, but Connor continued to support the government. And that's as much as I can recall.

Alex Mann: I mean, more sort of in a in a personal sense, you know, how is he affected by what was effectively the death knell of his vision?

John Menadue: I was not across that personally. I wasn't all that close to Rex. But I've got no doubt that after this grand vision that he had for resource development in Australia, he would have been crushed that it all turned to ashes. It would have been a major disappointment for him. And I think most people would feel the same way.

Alex Mann: After Connor was sacked and you've sort of tried to put an end to it by telling him to stop. That didn't quite work then. Connor is sacked. Was that the end of it?

John Menadue: It was as far as we could manage it. But the sacking of Rex Connor became the pretext for Malcolm Fraser to step up his activities and refuse supply. That story goes back, particularly the three months before November 11, 75, when Malcolm Fraser was courting Rupert Murdoch, Kerr and others for the dismissal of the Whitlam government. Which was I, in my view, one of the most disgraceful and shameful public acts in our history.

Alex Mann: Just for, you know, for those not familiar with this process. What does it mean to block supply?

John Menadue: The government had a majority in the lower house, a majority of 7. The appropriation bills, and there would usually two bills, one for current expenditure, one for capital expenditure. They also had to be presented and passed by the Senate. The practice had been that the Senate would pass money bills, but it did have the power to stop them. It had been one of the major constitutional struggles in the United Kingdom, where the House of Lords had over a long centuries attempted to block legislation by the House of Commons. But over a long period of centuries and decades, the power of the Lords, the Upper House to refuse money bills had ended, and they had only limited powers reduced to a number of months that they could defer legislation. But the Senate had the power here to defer or defeat money bills in fact any bills. And that was the problem. Money bills had to originate in the lower house, in the House of Representatives, but they had to pass the upper house as well. The Whitlam government's position in the Senate was always very fragile, but had been made more difficult by the failure of the New South Wales Liberal Party and the Queensland Country Party to appoint replacement Labor Senators who had died. The practice had been, and the convention was that the party from which they came would appoint the new senators. But breaching convention that had been developed in Australia, the governments of New South Wales and particularly Queensland, appointed people, knowing that those people would oppose the Whitlam government in the Senate. So that made the position of the Whitlam government much more difficult in the in the Senate. And Reg Withers, who was the leader of the Coalition in the Senate, knew that he would find difficulty in persuading enough members of the Senate to defeat a money bill. But that he thought that he was able and he was able for a period to persuade them that they might defer money bills. He succeeded in that for several weeks and if necessary more than that. Tactically, by only deferring supply money bills, those bills could then be quickly restored to the Notice Paper. And once the Whitlam government was dismissed, those deferred money bills could then be brought forward and voted on to achieve supply. So it was a very smart, devious method that I think obviously Fraser and Withers developed first to persuade people to support the deferment of supply and then ensure that supply was available when the government was dismissed.

Alex Mann: When were you actually due to run out of money?

John Menadue: Well if the government runs out of money, it can't pay its public servants, pensioners or health benefits. So theoretically that would have happened. I'm certain that it would not have happened. No government or opposition would care so much if public servants were not paid. But for pensioners and other people on benefits, that would have been politically untenable. But I'm certain it would never have occurred. We did consider proposals whereby in effect, the government could issue promissory notes on a bank so that when the supply crisis was over, people could redeem those promissory notes with their normal payments or normal pensions.

Alex Mann: That's sort of like an IOU.

John Menadue: That's right. It would never have happened. No government could allow that to happen.

Alex Mann: How panicked were you about this at the time? I mean, were you making backup plans just in case it did?

John Menadue: There was something of a backup plan there that I've mentioned. The IOU.. But we were confident right up till midday almost on November 11th, that Fraser would give way or be forced to give way. The opposition, having decided to refuse or defer supply was losing public support. The government's popularity improved quite considerably, despite the problems that Khemlani and others had presented. And the opinion polls suggested overwhelmingly that the public did not approve of the action which Malcolm Fraser had taken to defer or refuse supply. So I thought politically things were swinging the government's way and we were quite confident that the Governor-General would support his government. How naive we were to believe that a Governor-General could be trusted, that he would not deceive his Prime Minister. He would also deceive all those people around him. And that's exactly what he did. Until the crunch came, we believed that Kerr would hold that the government's position would be vindicated.

The cabinet did consider that perhaps the appropriation bills should be amended so that after they were passed in the Senate they would be returned to the House of Representatives before they went to the Governor-General for signature. The cabinet considered that and decided that that would be too provocative for the Senate. They were confident that the Senate would in the end support the passing of supply. Secondly, we suggested to the Prime Minister that he should contact our high commissioner in London, Jack Bunting, who had been previously secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet, to inform him that in the event of the Governor-General doing something unusual, that he would be fully briefed. It was suggested that I might even go to London in case the problem arose. But Gough Whitlam said, no, that we are not going to involve the Governor-General in that sort of political issue. He was quite adamant about it. He believed in the parliamentary process. Little did he know the Governor-General could not be trusted. But there were steps made or considered in anticipation of problems that might occur. But in the end, Gough Whitlam decided that it was a political issue. He wasn't going to involve the Queen or the Governor-General in an embarrassing situation. The issue would be resolved politically in Australia.

Alex Mann: Can you describe and you went to this a little earlier, but the pressure that the opposition was under and how that manifested itself. I mean, this is sort of ridiculous situation where you're going into the Senate everyday. They would sit and debate the same thing over and over again. Why was this so damaging for the opposition?

John Menadue: I think basically Australians believed in the parliamentary system -that you elect a government that has got a majority in the House of Representatives. It can and should govern. I think that Australians people figured this out well. We've elected a government and it can't do what we elected it to do. I think that was a fundamental issue. I think also the action of Fraser really galvanized the parliamentary Labor Party. It had been through a pretty awful period over the loans affair and the criticisms of the Whitlam government. But to a member, they felt that what Fraser and others were doing was outrageous. It was more than just a party political issue. Australian democracy and the way government proceeded was under challenge. So the Labor caucus was more united than ever. And Gough Whitlam was superb in the parliament. He kept nailing Fraser time and time and time again He could draw together with Graham Freudenberg, his speechwriter from the history of the struggles in the United Kingdom between the Crown and the Parliament. We inherited that tradition and those conventions. And he could draw heavily on that. He had a brilliant parliamentary style. He believed in the parliament above almost all

else. During the Vietnam debate crowds flocked to the moratoriums rallies. Gough was criticised that he wasn't participating in those public demonstrations like Jim Cairns. He always kept saying, comrade, comrade, the parliament is my forum. I believe in the parliament. He was superb in the parliament, arguing his case against the Senate for refusing supply.

Alex Mann: Did you get any sense at all that there were members of the opposition that were wavering under this pressure?

John Menadue: Yes. In both houses. I know that's in the reps from subsequent events that there were several who were uneasy with the course that Malcolm Fraser had taken. But more importantly, we were hearing but not confirmed, that there were some Liberal senators who are becoming increasingly uneasy about the continual refusal of supply.

Alex Mann: Did you think they were they could be about to break?

John Menadue: Yes. And in retrospect, we're much wiser after the event than we were at the time. Senator Withers who managed opposition senators acknowledged some years later that he felt that there were two senators ready to cross the floor and that if the impasse went on for several weeks, up to ten would cross the floor and support supply. We had certain inklings and there was gossip, if you like, around Parliament House that some senators were ready to break. But we didn't know that for certain. But we do now know that that was the case.

Alex Mann: I've heard a story as well about this, just an anecdote, if you will, about just how low people's spirits were at that time, particularly on the opposition side in the Country party. So that they'd organised something for November 11, some kind of event. Do you remember anything about this?

John Menadue: Yes, I do. It was about a couple of months later. I knew Doug Anthony who was the leader of the Country Party as it was called then. I liked him. And I knew his wife, Margo reasonably well. And about a couple of months after dismissal when they were in government she said to me that their spirits were so low coming into November 11th that the Country Party and she in particular had arranged a social get together to try and raise the spirits of the Country Party members who thought that defeat was imminent. As it turned out, the party and the social function she organised turned out to be a victory party which saved Malcolm Fraser from defeat and the end of his political career. But in the process, Gough Whitlam was destroyed.

Alex Mann: I'll ask you in much more detail about the events of 11 November and the specifics of that. But can I just sort of take you back for a moment? We've covered the Khemlani affair, but there was another affair happening at about the same time. Do you remember when you first heard the name Junie Morosi?

John Menadue: Yes. Well, I couldn't put a date on it, but her name was well known around Parliament House.

Alex Mann: Why.

John Menadue: She was clearly friendly with Jim Cairns and he said he had a sort of love for her. It was very indiscreet, very naive for a senior minister be talking in those terms. I think it was nothing more than that. But the media loved it.

Alex Mann: How did that come across?

John Menadue: Very damaging as something like that would be. It would be even worse today with the media focusing on personal indiscretions of one sort or another. In those days like Jack Kennedy, for example, the people knew close to the scene what his private life was like, but no one talked about it publicly. And so I think there was an inhibition in Australia about exposing those sorts of things. But at that stage, of course, the Labor Party was fair, fair game for anyone in the media, particularly the Murdoch press.

Alex Mann: You say, you know how this kind of story would be treated in today's media landscape and political coverage. I mean, there's actually a pretty succinct equivalent here, isn't it? Barnaby Joyce, you know, it would.

John Menadue: It was unusual in those days for that sort of private affair to become so public. It's not so unusual these days. The Morosi affair didn't damage the way the government performed. But it was certainly very politically damaging.

Alex Mann: How did you feel about the way that Jim and Junie handled the media at that time?

John Menadue: I don't. I must say I didn't really have much interest in it. I didn't really attempt any forensic approach to the matter. It was just a fact of life. Let's not get overworked over it. But he's a stupid, bloke. The damage is done. We've got to get on with life.

Alex Mann: You see stories where Jim Cairns describes a kind of love for Junie. Are you just sitting there going, ah Jim! Not again!. Because then I guess it's partly your job to then clean up the consequences.

John Menadue: I really kept away from it. I could see what was happening, but I. I didn't make a judgment or intervene in it.

Alex Mann: Okay, so the night before the dismissal, I wanted to sort of take you through this bit by bit. Do you remember where was Whitlam the night before the dismissal? He was a I think in Melbourne. I don't know if this is ringing the bells.

John Menadue: He was addressing the Lord Mayor's dinner in Melbourne. My recollection is that he was continuing his campaign against the Liberal Party and the refusal of supply. As generous as ever, Gough offered Malcolm Fraser and I think Philip Lynch, the shadow treasurer and maybe one or two others from the Liberal Party a lift in his VIP aircraft back to Canberra. Gee weren't we all naive, people. On the night before the dismissal Gough offered them a trip back in his VIP aircraft.

Alex Mann: Friends close, closer. Sorry, friends close, but enemies closer?

John Menadue: We didn't suspect them. How naive we were. But they got a ride back. I hadn't gone down to Melbourne because I'd had work to do in the department, but I was out at the airport pretty late at night when Gough got in. Gough was cordial. I heard Phillip Lynch say to Malcolm, do you think he knows? It's stuck in my mind today. At the time I did not think for a moment that he could be asking whether Gough knew that dismissal was imminent. But in retrospect, again, I think that's what it meant. Do you think he knows? And Gough didn't know and neither did I.

Alex Mann: So you ended up meeting Whitlam at the airport?

John Menadue: I was at the airport when they arrived. I gave Gough some papers. I might have given him another of Graham Freudenberg's speech for the next day. Although Graham didn't usually have his speeches ready till about 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., but always on time. But there were other papers. I can't recall what they were. Gough went off to the Lodge. I went home and we met again early next morning. There was a meeting between Gough Whitlam, Frank Crean, Fred Daily, Malcolm Fraser, Doug Anthony and Phillip Lynch. I was present.

Alex Mann: Before I get you into that meeting. I will ask you a couple of questions about that. Can I take you back? Because you've sort of gone from your catching up with Whitlam at the airport, going home and then suddenly were at the meeting. Can you even remember this, but do you remember the beginning of that day? Does it live large with any particular significance for you?

John Menadue: I was confident that day when I got up. You live these things almost 24 hours a day- that the political impasse would be resolved. Gough Whitlam determined that there would be a half Senate election and he was confident that the Governor-General would agree.

Alex Mann: What about the sort of mundane stuff of the day? You know, these big politically significant moments kind of are certainly in the background, but you've still got to get dressed and get to work. I mean, do you remember any of those details?

John Menadue: I think getting up, getting out of my pyjamas having breakfast was also routine and I can't remember anything that was particularly extraordinary.

Alex Mann: Do you remember what the day was like?

John Menadue: It was a pleasant day. It was good weather in November. I hadn't checked the weather on the day was, but as it was Remembrance Day. I knew the Governor-General would be going out to the War Memorial for Remembrance Day commemoration.

Alex Mann: And how did you get to work?

John Menadue: I drove to work and parked my car in a especially arranged parking lot for the Secretary of the Department. You don't often get that sort of favoured treatment, but I did. I suppose I was in the office by about eight o'clock that morning. But, as I mentioned I was confident that the political impasse would be resolved. It turned out to be not in the way I expected.

Alex Mann: Okay, so take me to this meeting. You've mentioned the people that were there, Whitlam Cream Daley and members of the opposition as well. What do you remember what the room looked like and where everybody was sitting.

John Menadue: It was in the old Parliament House in the corner where the Prime Minister's office was. There was a chair in the middle where the Prime Minister usually sat . His ministers were on his right. Opposite were the three opposition members. It was a small office. Things would be much larger now, of course, in the new Parliament House. But there was an intimate atmosphere about that old Parliament House, which I think many miss. We were all pretty close together for this meeting.

Alex Mann: What did Whitlam actually offer?

John Menadue: He opened the discussion that he hoped the matter could be resolved and that he was proposing a half Senate election. He hoped that would be the trigger for Malcolm Fraser and his colleagues to say, okay, well, we accept We will pass supply because there is a half Senate election and there's an opportunity for the public to make a decision about the composition of the Senate .What was also new for this election was that in addition to the state representatives, there would be senators from the ACT and the Northern Territory. Normally the ACT and NT voted for the Labor Party. Such an election might resolve the minority situation of the government in the Senate. It became very clear that Malcolm Fraser would not have a bar of that. He was demanding an election for the House of Representatives as well.

Alex Mann: A full election.

John Menadue: Yes a full election for the whole Parliament . It was very clear that there was to be no resolution short of a Double Dissolution. After that meeting Fred Daly, said how confident he thought Malcolm Fraser was. There was no suggestion of any compromise on Fraser's part. He was set on the course that he was pursuing and he would not be diverted from it. So the meeting concluded without any resolution. I went back to my West Block office, which was about five minutes walk away. I then got a call from Frank Ley who was the Chief Electoral Officer? He said to me, to me to pass on to the Prime Minister that Malcolm Fraser had rung him to ask what was the latest date possible for an election for the House of Reps and could it be held that year It was a logistical question. There were school holidays, Christmas coming that could effect the issue of the writs, returns of the writs and so on. And Frank Ley, as a good public servant told Malcolm Fraser some of the facts about the latest date possible for the election and left it at that. I rang Gough Whitlam, and told him that Frank Ley had got a call from Malcolm Fraser and Gough Whitlam accepted that. He probably felt it's not going to matter anyhow, because I'm going to go to see the Governor-General for a half Senate election. And don't worry, it'll be a half senate election and we'll be away.

Alex Mann: What did that phone call mean to you?

John Menadue: I should have been more suspicious. But we were so naive, we didn't think that people played a game like this. And they did. We now know from Jenny Hocking's research that Malcolm Fraser knew that Gough Whitlam was to be sacked.

Alex Mann Now, can I just take you back before that phone call as well? Because I understand you after that meeting, you ran into Eric Walsh somewhere. Do you remember this?

John Menadue: Yes. Eric's an old friend of mine, a long way back to the days when he was on the Daily Mirror in Canberra. He broke most of the stories about the Australian battalion's going to and returning from Vietnam. I'd known him for a long time. And I was just on the steps of Kings Hall going down to the front of the house I saw him there. I always had a chat to Eric. And he said to me, Jack, he always called me Jack rather than John. Jack? Are you sure Kerr's okay? I said, Eric, stop worrying. Stop worrying. He's okay. And he said, that's not what I'm hearing. He was right and I was wrong.

Alex Mann: What do you think he meant? Not okay.

John Menadue: That Kerr was going to fold. I'm sure that's what he meant. It turns out that there was the gossip around Parliament House and that something was brewing- that Kerr might act against the government. There was a lot of conjecture, speculation, gossip. There was a lot of it around.

Alex Mann: So you've had this phone call. Now you've you bumped into Eric Walsh. There's a lot of hints now that you are starting to get that momentum is building of some kind. Are you able to then just unfold what happened next at Government House? I know that you weren't actually there for this, but are you able to just sort of describe what actually happened next?

John Menadue: I was in the Department waiting for Gough Whitlam to come back from the Governor-General with agreement to a half Senate election and then we would put in motion necessary action to achieve that. So I was basically waiting for that to happen. I then got a call from Gough Whitlam's driver from the lodge and said that Gough Whitlam wanted to see me urgently. I thought he was the Prime Minister. I must get up there quickly. Then I got a call almost immediately from David Smith, who was the Official Secretary at Government House. He had been a key player as it turned out in engineering the dismissal and deceiving the Prime Minister. Smith told me 'this is David Smith' and that the Prime Minister had been dismissed. And that Malcolm Fraser had been sworn in as the new Prime Minister.

Alex Mann: Do you remember your response?

John Menadue: I just shook. I couldn't believe really what I was hearing and I said to David, you're joking, or words to that effect? He said, No, John, This is true. Smith had been in the department and was our recommendation that he take this job at Government House. What a fool I was again to recommend him. But it's very clear that what Smith was telling me was correct, that Gough Whitlam had been dismissed and that Malcolm Fraser had been sworn as the Prime Minister.

I was getting ready to get up to the lodge to see Gough Whitlam. But I decided to call Fred Wheeler, who was Secretary of Treasury, and Alan Cooley, who was Chairman of the Public Service Board and told them that the Prime Minister has been dismissed and that Malcolm Fraser is the new Prime Minister. I don't know if they fell on the floor almost like I had, but

anyhow it was a very brief conversation to tell them what had happened. So I drove to the lodge, which is only seven or eight minutes away.

Alex Mann: Before you get there? Can I take you back to this phone call? Because this is the news of the dismissal and you describe yourself as being shocked. But then just going about the next tasks as they were in front of you. From the way that you've been describing it, you just did not see this coming.

John Menadue: No. I was amazed. But I guess the best word I would use is I was stunned.

Alex Mann: How does that show?

John Menadue: It did not show. I just went about my work. In doubt, put your head down. Go about your tasks. In a sense from almost that time that day on I was on autopilot. There were jobs that had to be done. I didn't quite grasp until later the gravity of what had happened. So almost on autopilot I went up to see Gough at the Lodge .

Alex Mann: I know I'm being annoying here . But before you said that you went up to the Lodge by the car. Was it you driving?

John Menadue: Oh, yeah. It was a modest little car as far as I can remember. I drove it myself and parked in the park way in front of the lodge. I didn't take much time to get up there. It was fairly quick.

Alex Mann: And what does what does the house I mean, what does it look like from the outside?

John Menadue: Well, quite friendly and welcoming. The Lodge is quite a nice sort of family style building. Different to Kirribilli, which is more imposing. But the Lodge has a pleasant style of architecture and quite suitable for a Prime Minister. Subsequently before the election outcome was clear, Gough had indicated that if he won the election, he would move to Yarralumla, the Governor General's residence and the Governor-General would be moved to the Lodge. That would make it absolutely clear that the PM senior person.

But anyhow I'm speculating as that didn't happen. It's being wise after the event.

But I went up there to the Lodge. It was a pleasant place. It has a sunroom, almost like a filled in old style veranda that I used to live in as a boy. But much more grander. Gough was in the very spacious sunroom, eating a steak and seemed quite composed.

Alex Mann: Eating a steak.

John Menadue: Yes he was eating a steak just after the dismissal. He's having lunch. He hadn't prepared it himself. Obviously, he had staff that did it for him. Gough was a good eater. He never took much exercise and never seemed to be sick. He had physical stamina . Anyhow the steak might have helped him.

Alex Mann: Did that seem unusual to you?

John Menadue: No. Gough liked his tucker. As I do probably.

Alex Mann: You're on autopilot going about your tasks. And here he is hopping into a steak.

John Menadue: Oh, he was thinking I can tell you He was thinking probably much more freely than I was. The first thing he said to me was, Comrade, the bastards done a Game on me, meaning the Governor-General had sacked him in the same way that Governor Game in New South Wales had sacked the Lang government in the early 30s. He said to me, we've got a plan. What do we do? I hadn't appreciated that he was no longer the Prime Minister. He was still Gough Whitlam, but not the Prime Minister. It took a while for it to dawn on me that he wasn't the Prime Minister any more. He said get Clarrie Harders, who was the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department. I had sufficient of my wits about me to know that some things had changed. And I said I don't think you can ask the Secretary of Attorney-General's Department to come. You should ask Kep. Enderby, who had been the Attorney-General. At least I could see that a politician was more appropriate to come and speak to Gough on legal and constitutional matters rather than the secretary of the department.

Alex Mann: Can you just explain why that's significant?

John Menadue: I came to slowly realize without fully understanding it that Gough was no longer the Prime Minister. I hadn't grasped the gravity of that, but I understood sufficiently that it wasn't appropriate to bring the secretary of a government department, the head of a government department. He should report to the Prime Minister, not to the leader of the opposition. And I was there partly as a carry over as secretary to the Prime Minister, but also I knew Gough personally well.

Alex Mann: The rules had changed suddenly and Gough was still catching up.

John Menadue: We were all trying to catch up. I think Gough caught up pretty quickly. In any event he started drafting a resolution for the House of Representatives on resumption after the lunch break. The opposition, the ALP, as it was then, would move a resolution that Malcolm Fraser no longer had the confidence of the House and that the Governor-General should commission the member for Werriwa, Gough Whitlam, to be the next Prime Minister, Gough drafted that in his quite attractive handwriting. While that was happening, political colleagues started coming. Fred Daley came. I think Frank Crean and Graham Freudenberg from his private staff. Gough decided to call the Shadow Attorney-General. Kep. Enderby was no longer the Attorney General. All ministers had been sacked.

There was very little consideration, and Gough was criticized that the opposition, as it was then the Labor Party, should have acted in the Senate to stop Supply. Because if they had stopped supply the election could not have proceeded because Malcolm Fraser had guaranteed to the Governor General, John Kerr that he would be commissioned as Prime Minister on the basis that he could secure Supply. And Malcolm Fraser assured him that he could secure supply. If he had not been able to secure supply, who knows what might have happened? It was all speculative. Gough was criticized for not giving attention to the Senate because he was pre occupied as a parliamentarian with the lower house. He always gave priority to the role of the House of Representatives like the House of Commons. He didn't give a great deal of attention to the Senate. But in retrospect, we know that if the Labor Party in the Senate had decided to reverse its position and reject supply, a number of senators

who had agreed to deferment would not have supported that. They were anxious to get supply through. And so in retrospect that ploy, which a lot of smarties said Gough should have adopted would not have been possible in light of knowledge that we now have .

Alex Mann: What was the general feeling you've got? Who was there at the Lodge.? Daley, Crean, Enderby and Freudenberg. Did they all arrive at once?

John Menadue: Not all arrived together, but they didn't take long to get there. Word was out very quickly including on the midday news that the government had been dismissed. So it didn't take long for them to get up to the lodge. They would have had cars. They were probably still using government cars.

Alex Mann: And what was the feeling like in the room when they all got there?

John Menadue: Oh, a mixture of being stunned and angered by this unprecedented development. The ex ministers and a few private staff and myself discussed what should be done. Undoubtedly, like me, they were stunned. I could hardly believe what had happened after all the assurances we thought we had that the Governor-General would support his Prime Minister, his principal adviser. But now there was anger and bewilderment. How could this be possible in a parliamentary system like ours? Gough was focused enough to know that the remedy had to be in the House of Representatives. And that's why he was drafting this resolution to take back as soon as the House resumed after lunch. By the by this stage I was feeling a little apprehensive, confused about my role. I was Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. I thought I'd been working for Gough Whitlam. Now, it was clear to me that I wasn't. I was working, in fact, for Malcolm Fraser. And so I didn't know quite what to do. Then I got a phone call at the Lodge from Elaine Miller, who was my secretary in the Department, and she said, John, Malcolm Fraser wants to see you urgently in Parliament House. I said to her to tell him that you can't find me.

Alex Mann: Why did you get her to say that?

John Menadue: Oh, that's common practice. It's a ploy that's been used since the beginning of time, oh, I can't find him. I can't get in touch with him. I would use that excuse from time to time still.

Alex Mann: But did you want to buy time .

John Menadue: Well, it was partly to buy time and to comprehend what had happened. I needed a bit of space. And then about 10 minutes later, she rang back again. She said John, this is a message and I quote The Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, wants to see you urgently at Parliament House. So I've got to go. So I explained briefly to Gough and others that I'd been summoned. In retrospect I don't think I handled it all that well. I can plead that I didn't really appreciate and understand what had happened. Gough Whitlam meant so much to me. What he had done for the country, the inspiration he gave me. How do I make a break? How do say sorry. Gough. I'm off. I've got another employer. So I didn't explain it properly and as fully as I could have. At the time not many present would have listened. They were not really concerned about my problems. They were worried about the dismissal and how the issue should be confronted.

Alex Mann: So what do you wish you'd said?

John Menadue: I wish I'd said that in these circumstances with Malcolm Fraser the new Prime Minister and as secretary of his department and consistent with convention I was now working for him. There was a convention that as governments change, the public service continues to serve whatever government we have. That would have explained my position better. I don't know that they were of a mind to listen to that sort of twaddle as they probably saw it. So I took my leave and out I went.

Alex Mann: It still hurts to remember that moment.

John Menadue: Yes. And I stopped just as I was getting into the car. I thought I should go back and explain myself better. But I didn't. And off I drove to see Malcolm Fraser. Working for Gough Whitlam in the morning and Malcolm Fraser in the afternoon.

Together with Geoff Yeend who was deputy secretary of the department we went and saw Malcolm Fraser in his office in Parliament House, which was abuzz, not surprisingly, with prospective ministers. Reg Withers was there with Phil. Lynch and John Carrick. We discussed the issues that needed addressing. Geoff Yeend was a big help in this. He had more continuity and background than I did. We considered the dissolution of the parliament, arrangements for a swearing of a new cabinet the next day at Government House. The issue of writs for the elections, for both houses of parliament, required the cooperation of the states for the Senate election. That had to be quickly addressed. So there were many tasks. I shook hands with Malcolm Fraser and back I went to the department to do my duty as I saw it. I was still I guess on autopilot. There was a feeling there was work to be done and I had to do it.

Alex Mann: It's this scene that's unbelievable to comprehend as the world as you knew. You know, the rug is being pulled out from underneath you driving back to Parliament House and suddenly people are just pushing all of this work on to your desk. You know, there is a government that's here's an opposition that's now suddenly like them in government.

John Menadue: It was slowly, slowly dawning on me. I was probably brought up sharply because as I was walking back from Parliament House to West Block, which is only five minutes from Parliament House there was a stream of people walking through the car park and along King's Avenue across to Parliament House. I hadn't realized that they were getting over to Parliament House. They'd heard the news. They were getting over to protest about the coup that had been staged by Kerr and Fraser in cooperation with High Court judges. I was walking through the car park and my wife Cynthia and our oldest daughter Susan were also rushing through the car park. I said, where are you going? And Cynthia said, We're going over to parliament to demonstrate against that bastard Fraser. I had never heard her use those words in my whole life then or since. But it suddenly dawned on me like a bucket of water being thrown over my head that something quite dramatic had happened.

Alex Mann: Why was that such a powerful moment? What it that and others influences hadn't registered.

John Menadue: I guess just the family association. The people that I clung to, who matter so much to me were seemingly more upset than I was. And it really woke me up. The gravity

of what had happened. It was almost a Damascus road experience. I sensed that his was dramatic. What has happened? I'd put my head down and did what I had to do as I secretary of the department. But the gravity, the immorality and the deception that I had witnessed was now dawning on me.

Alex Mann: Reflecting the emotion of the people that were closest to you. So what do you do next?

John Menadue: We finished the work in Parliament House and there were briefings of people of the department to organize. For example we had a cabinet meeting to organize, the swearing of ministers next day at the Government House, writs for elections and listening a bit to the media to get an understanding of what was happening . On television I saw Gough on the front of Parliament House about Kerr's cur and nothing will save the Governor-General. And nothing did save the Governor-General then. I had to take some papers over to Malcolm to sign and he didn't say, comrade as Gough would have. He said, John, I'll be over at the Commonwealth Club. I was not a member of. It was where most senior public servants and lobbyists used to meet. Malcolm said Can you come over there and bring the papers and we'll have a drink? So on the night of the dismissal I had a red wine with Malcolm Fraser and got him to sign some papers. And he said, would you like to stay for a meal? I said no, if you don't mind, I think I'll go home to the family.

Alex Mann: What was it like? What did that feel like having to hold up? What did it feel like having to keep up appearances for so long?

John Menadue: Home was my retreat, to get home and try and shut out what had happened. A bit hard. But it was the only consolation I had that day. To get home to the family.

Alex Mann: What's it like talking to Fraser for the first time as Prime Minister?

John Menadue: He was easy to talk to. And in working for him later he was, in a sense, easier to work for than Gough. Despite my great admiration for Gough and the intellect and commitment he had. Malcolm Fraser had a commitment to certain conservative views and power, importantly power above everything else. I found Malcolm fairly agreeable to work with. I was agreeably surprised later that on issues like Native Title, apartheid and refugees, he was one of the best Prime Ministers we've had. I went later and worked in the Immigration Department and was heavily involved with Malcolm Fraser and Ian Macphee on the Indo-China refugee program, in which in total, with family reunion and other arrangements, about a quarter of a million people came to Australia. That destroyed White Australia. Gough had introduced legislation to remove discrimination in immigration and other race matters but that was never put to the test because under Labor there was practically no migration at all. But under Malcolm Fraser, there was large scale migration and a large, generous, multiracial refugee program. And that's what broke the back of White Australia. And I look back with gratitude to Malcolm Fraser for what he did. It was a rewarding period to be associated with those projects. But the one issue on which Malcolm and I would always disagree on to my dying day is that the dismissal was an improper, disgraceful abuse of power.

Alex Mann: What's your view on how Kerr handled himself.

John Menadue: I should restrain myself.

Alex Mann: You don't have to.

John Menadue: John Kerr was a disgrace. He was a weak and vain man. He deceived his Prime Minister. He deceived all those around him. I guess I was only a bit player in the lead up to the dismissal, but he deceived me. Absolutely.

Alex Mann: How did he do that?

John Menadue: I used to regularly go and visit him. As the Governor General he was a bit of a frustrated politician. He liked to be kept involved and to know what was happening. And so I would go and see him probably once every few weeks to inform him what was happening, what the cabinet was about. I think he found it useful. I probably did as well. In all those meetings, he was very concerned about the Prime Minister and his welfare. How was he standing up? He was, it seemed to me, very concerned about the Prime Minister's welfare. That lulled me into a false sense of security. I didn't know the deceit that was being conjured up by him and with others. I remember one particular matter. We discussed the speculation about a refusal of supply and Kerr mentioned very approvingly to me that he understood that Robert Menzies had said that Malcolm Fraser was wet behind the years to undertake refusal of supply like this. I took that to mean that Kerr did not approve of the course which Malcolm Fraser was on. That was consistent with the views I got on Malcolm from Kerr time and time again. And that's what led me into the false belief that the Governor-General would take the advice as he should of his Prime Minister. I didn't see John Kerr for about a month before the dismissal. My view then was and still is that I didn't want to confuse the Governor-General with me giving my interpretation of events. The only and most important person he should be talking to on this was the Prime Minister who should deliver his point of view clearly and directly without me or any others perhaps misinterpreting or misunderstanding what was at stake. Little did I know that Kerr, at the same time he was talking to me, was also talking to the Palace, the Queen, Prince Charles and two high court judges. One of those High Court Justices Anthony Mason was coaching Kerr over about three months on the dismissal. Kerr was directly talking on the phone to Malcolm Fraser about what was planned. It's disgraceful, disgraceful what happened. And I don't think this country will ever properly recover from the deception and the complicity that we had at that time from people that I thought could be trusted. This is the thing which I take away from those events is that that I was too trusting. I was naive to believe that these people, a Governor-General, the Queen, High Court judges a leader of Her Majesties opposition and people like Rupert Murdoch could be trusted. I learnt from bitter experience that I had to temper my trust of people who parade themselves as being better, more credible and trustworthy than the rest of us.

Alex Mann: Do you think that's what's so painful to recall about this, that you didn't just lose your boss. You lost a part of your own ability to trust?

John Menadue: Yes. I'm. I'm more careful about trusting people now. I guess we're all brought up to learn and believe that we need to trust people. Our society could not survive without trust. We can't just rely on laws. We need to trust one another, that we will each behave in a temperate, reasonable, sensible and honest way. Society couldn't be any other way. And the people that I thought believed most in that were people, institutions like the

High Court and the Governor-General. I naively thought that these were somehow my betters. That they could be trusted. What a fool I was to think that they were my betters and that I could trust them. To my bitter experience, I learned that I could not trust them. And that shook my confidence in so many of our institutions, like the High Court, the Monarchy and the Governor-General ship. The so-called powerful and influential people could not be trusted. That's what I carry. That's the scar that I carry. The events of November 1 1975 still live in me today, I was naïve to trust these people. I learnt that one has to be more discerning in the people you trust.

Alex Mann: Did the public, the nation learn the same lesson?

John Menadue Not yet. But we will see. The consequences that have flowed from that coup by Kerr, Fraser and some High Court judges meant that Australian institutions are less trusted. Parliaments, parliamentarians and politicians are not trusted. Business is not trusted. Trade unions are not trusted. Churches are not trusted. From my experience, I view that falling away in public trust, at least for me was triggered by the dismissal. How could these people be trusted anymore? The Queen was into it. She gave Kerr assurances that she would stand by him. Prince Charles met John Kerr in New Guinea at the time of the celebration of independence and Kerr conveyed to Prince Charles that he was worried for his position in that if he undertook what he was clearly had in mind to dismiss the Whitlam government, that Whitlam would be on the phone to the Palace to withdraw Kerr's commission and appoint someone else. Kerr conveyed that to Charles three months before the dismissal. We also now know from Kerr's own records that are in the federal archives that Kerr also spoke to Martin Charteris, the Queen's private secretary, and got reassurances from him that if Whitlam attempted to ring the palace to end Kerr's commission as Governor-General the palace would find some way to delay that process. We know subsequently that Lord Mountbatten, who was the Prince Philip's favourite uncle conveyed to Kerr his thanks and congratulations and wisdom in the dismissal of the Whitlam government. We know that two months after the dismissal, Kerr was in London at Sandringham. Lady Kerr, who was a big player in this dismissal. The Queen conferred on her an award which was in the gift of the monarch which didn't require any recommendation from the British or Australian government -a lady commander or a sister commander of the order of Saint John or some such silly thing. If the Queen disapproved of what she and John Kerr had done, why would the Queen be giving this personal award? Twelve months later, John Kerr got another promotion of an Imperial Award. I can't remember the name of it. The Queen was applauding John Kerr for what he'd done. And we're still not a republic. I cannot believe that we allow that sort of thing to happen and still believe that the Queen should have a role in our public life. It's been worsened now because Professor Jenny Hocking has revealed several things that we didn't know for many years. The first is that Anthony Mason who was a High Court judge at the time and later became chief justice spent about three months coaching John Kerr on the dismissal including even drafting a letter of dismissal, which Kerr could hand to Whitlam That draft dismissal letter wasn't used, but a justice of a high court had drafted that and had coached John Kerr. Talk about the separation of powers? You couldn't get anything more close than that Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee of John Kerr and Anthony Mason, conniving, collaborating to dismiss a properly elected government. Then on top of that on the afternoon of the dismissal the parliament passed a resolution of no confidence in Malcolm Fraser. The parliament hadn't been dissolved at that point and a resolution was passed expressing no confidence in Malcolm Fraser and calling

on the Governor-General to re-instate the member for Werriwa, Gough Whitlam as the Prime Minister. The Speaker took that resolution immediately to Government House. And John Kerr refused to see the Speaker.

In the United Kingdom kings were beheaded for not listening or responding to a Speaker of the House of Commons. But Kerr refused to see the Speaker. He kept him locked out for an hour at Yarralumla. Kerr was obviously flummoxed. He had planned the coup, but here was the speaker at his gate knocking for entry to convey the resolution from Parliament. He refused to see him. So he rang Anthony Mason his coach on the dismissal and said what should I do? And Mason said you could ignore the speaker of the House of Representatives who is conveying a resolution passed by the majority of the House that Whitlam be restored as Prime Minister. Kerr and Mason collaborated to ensure that the Speaker was locked out.

The next day when I was present at Government House for the swearing of the new Fraser Cabinet I recall two things that John Kerr mentioned. The first was that when they were having a photograph afterwards they should be smiling or laughing that they should have a 'sober mien', as he described it. They shouldn't appear to be gloating over their success. Secondly he had been concerned that the Speaker had wanted to see him the previous afternoon. But that he had decided not to see him because having committed himself to the course he was on, he would have to see it through. So he continued to act dishonourably. Even the next day he was justifying why he hadn't seen the Speaker. If there's one thing in our parliamentary system that even Queen Elizabeth would acknowledge is that you never refuse to see Speaker because it's the Speaker who conveys the view and the mood of the House-whether this party or that party has a majority At the critical point of time when that resolution was passed in the House of Representatives, the Labor Party had a majority. And Kerr refused to listen to the Speaker or to act.

Alex Mann: At the swearing in ceremony, you described being there for the swearing in of the Fraser cabinet. Can you describe the scene? How many people were there? You were arriving. Can you take me through that event?

John Menadue On this occasion, on November the 12th, I don't think there was anything particularly exceptional. I was there again. I was sitting on the side with the staff from the Department of Prime Minister, together with the Official Secretary to the Governor-General. They knew the processes the new ministry and new cabinet of Fraser would follow. Wives and friends, would be sitting out in front. Each Minister would come forward and swear allegiance. We see it often on television today. I was sitting on the side of the process. But as I remember particularly and clearly those words of John Kerr on why he refused to see the Speaker.

Alex Mann: How did you feel at the beginning of this day? What a momentous occasion. You've finished this glass of red wine with Fraser, go home to your family. And then tomorrow's another day. I mean, can you remember the morning of November 12?

John Menadue: Not particularly. Once the new government had been sworn there was a cabinet meeting that afternoon. Malcolm Fraser gave the new ministers a pep talk about how they should behave. There was really no policy issues discussed that I can recall, except there was an election coming up.

I should mention that one of the conditions of Fraser agreeing to become the Prime Minister was that there shouldn't be a bloodbath of officials. I guess that I was in that category because I was regarded as close to Whitlam, one of the jobs for the boys, along with Jim Spigelman and Peter Wilenski. Many months before, members of the Liberal Party, Philip Lynch and others said that on the first day of the new government I'd be sacked. Malcolm Fraser never said that, but it was a condition that Malcolm Fraser not conduct a bloodbath of senior officials. So there was an undertaking he'd given, and I guess also he felt that he had broken so many conventions that he had to preserve some sense of continuity. I was part of that continuity with others. And that's why I think he decided to keep me in the job.

Alex Mann: You described earlier the interactions that you would have with John Kerr and the things that the two of you would talk about. What role do you think John saw for himself?

John Menadue: He didn't see himself as a rubber stamp for the Prime Minister. That's very clear. And I think that in retrospect, one of the mistakes that Gough Whitlam made and he said on many occasions and I think in one particular function in Goulbourn that the Governor-General would do what I tell him. Which is constitutionally correct. Take advice from his Prime Minister and really no one else. But a man as vain and as weak as John Kerr would be offended by that. Probably more than most. He could be pushed around easily by people more unscrupulous even than he was like judges of the High Court. But he saw a role for himself. More than just a titular head of state. He wanted to be briefed by me and others about what was happening politically.

Alex Mann: What exactly did he say to you in those conversations?

John Menadue: He was keen to know what was happening and as I mentioned before, how the Prime Minister was faring over these attacks that were being made upon him. What was coming up in the cabinet in future? What were the difficulties which the Prime Minister might have in the cabinet or in the caucus? He was a bit of a frustrated politician, I think, and he was keen to be abreast of politics. A bit of gossip, I suppose, is what he was looking for. He was particularly interested in the opportunities and role of the Governor-General in overseas travel. A bit like Gough, he was keen to travel as the Governor-General of Australia, to be received and welcomed and get all the trappings that would go with that. He went to India and other places. I explained as best I could to him the constitution and conventions about Australian Governor Generals when they were outside Australia. What status did they have. But Kerr's knowledge was probably as good or better than mine, but not as good as Gough Whitlam's. The Governor-General of Australia is a representative of the Queen when he's in Australia. He cannot be the representative of the Queen when he's in some other country. That was particularly hard for non Commonwealth countries to understand. But Kerr thought he was smart enough to persuade them. And he was quite well received in some of the countries that he went to. And he was very keen to do that. He wanted to expand the role of the Governor-General. And the epitome of that, of course, was in the end the dismissal of his Prime Minister. But that was just the apex. There was a whole range of other things he was wanting to do to expand the role of the Governor-General. He talked a lot about an expanded role.

Alex Mann: It's really powerful to hear those stories. Thank you. I think you're really going to bring people back to those times. That's very good. I wanted to also take you back to a

couple of the factors that led up to this momentous occasion. And one in particular was the way that that the media and that the issue of a woman's advisor to Gough Whitlam became something of a controversy that had to be dealt with in the same way that Jim Cairns affairs and the Khemlani affair and these sorts of things became issues for the government. Do you remember when Elizabeth Reid was hired?

John Menadue: No, I was not secretary of the department at that stage. I think she was would have been hired in early 73, 1973, and I was still working for Rupert Murdoch. God bless him at that stage.

Alex Mann: So It's more at the end of her...

John Menadue: I got to know of her activities after she'd been appointed. Our media went to town on Liz. They weren't used to feminism and probably I wasn't either. And it was all very new territory for the public, for a woman like Liz Reid to be so active in promoting the rights of women in a whole range of areas politically, economic and socially. And the media gave her a bad time. They weren't used to this sort of thing. And by implication, Gough got some of the backwash of that.

Alex Mann: Do you remember the Women in Politics conference?

John Menadue: I'd heard about it, but no. I think it was in Parliament House, the old Parliament House. And I remember vaguely some of the stories about what was written on the mirrors in women's toilets and things like that. But no I don't remember the details of it, and I don't think it's important either.

Alex Mann: I know that there were negative stories throughout the Women in Politics conference that add to this momentum of stories and headlines against the women's adviser. How damaging was the publicity around Elizabeth Reid or the Women in Politics conference for the government and this backlash coming back to Gough.

John Menadue: I certainly think there was a backlash. Australians were not used to talk about the rights of women. It was in 1973. We have made a lot of progress since. But God only knows we needed to make a lot of progress. So Liz Reid was starting from almost ground zero on these sorts of things and the media had a field day. Again, they saw it as an opportunity to attack the Whitlam government. The Whitlam government was embarked on a major reform process in foreign policy, defence, the American Alliance, Medicare ,rights of women, equal pay. It was reform across the board. And that was unsettling for a lot of people. Equality was very unsettling for many people. And Gough and Elizabeth Reid found that the media, business and politicians were just out of step with what was necessary and what Gough was trying to do. Some of those people are still here today. When you look at the Liberal Party with very few women in parliament that discrimination against women is still rife in Australia, particularly the question of domestic violence against women. It is still rife. There's a long way to go. But Liz and, Gough decided to take it head on and I think they paid a price for it.

Alex Mann: What do you remember about the day that Elizabeth Reid resigned?

John Menadue: I was partly responsible for that. I didn't expect it. I. Perhaps anticipating the future, which I guess would have been in mid 75, I came to the view that the promotion of the rights of women would be better protected if the administrative group responsible was in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet which ensured some continuity rather than in the Prime Minister's office which would be abolished when the Prime Minister was no longer there. In retrospect, that was the right decision. From then on, we've had an Office of Women's Affairs in the Prime Minister's Department .Sometimes it went out of the department and then came back again. But there has continued to be in the government arrangements for an office of women's affairs usually close to the Prime Minister, even to Tony Abbott. And that's what Gough and I decided. We discussed it with Liz Reid. I said to her that I would hope that she would head the Office in the department, but we'd have to go through public service procedures of advertising and selection on merit. But if I didn't succeed in that I would find some way to get her employed as a consultant in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to work alongside the Women's Affairs office .The Public Service Board agreed to that. I then spoke to Liz and explained that to her. I don't want to go into the detail but it didn't work out. And Liz resigned.

Alex Mann: She wouldn't have been able to speak publicly and advocate for the issues that felt so important for her in that role, would she?

John Menadue: That's true. But the rights of women go beyond one person. I think if it is institutionally anchored its much better as people come and go. It then doesn't depend on the adequacy of one person. I can understand her point of view, but my view was that the rights of women would be better advanced by grounding it in the department.

Alex Mann: Elizabeth Reid remembers the meeting with lots of the newspaper clippings laid out on the desk. In this moment, to sort of demonstrate the cost, if you will of the activities of the women's advisor.

John Menadue: I can't remember that. I'm not aware of that story.

Alex Mann: Do you remember who else was in the room in when you had those conversations with Elizabeth Reid?

John Menadue: Yes, there were others, but I'd rather not go into that. I won't go into that.

Alex Mann: Elizabeth Reid remembers the newspaper clippings on the table and given that she wouldn't be able to speak publicly in this new role as it was proposed. Was this, in a sense, a way of, quartering the wound by silencing the women's adviser?

John Menadue: No. I thought it wasn't a question of the adviser or me or Gough Whitlam, but how in the long term the advancement of women could be better promoted. That may sound a bit high minded, but that's what I was trying to do and I think in the long term, that's correct. Because if, in fact, the Office of Women's Activities in the Prime Minister's office had gone when Gough was dismissed, then at least we had a continuing legacy in the department.

Alex Mann: And you copped it for that as well.

John Menadue: I remember we had a few.

Alex Mann: How so?

John Menadue: Oh, it wasn't too bad. There were a few demos outside the department, very small ones. I got a few letters saying I was a chauvinist pig. That comes with the territory. When I was later head of immigration and we were bringing Indo-Chinese and Asians into Australia outside the department there was scribbled graffiti Menadue equals mongrelisation. I took that as a badge of honour. But these things come and go. You just put up with them.

Alex Mann: Concurrent among all of this was the story of the security crisis. I will just ask you a few questions about that, if I can. Did you get a sense when you started work of this long running feud between the elected government and the Australian security establishment?

John Menadue: I remember I was with Gough Whitlam in Kuala Lumpur in 1963. We had a meeting with Tun Razak who was the Deputy Malaysian Prime Minister at the time. Tun Razak was concerned about the activities of ASIS the Australian Security Intelligence Service in Malaysia. Gough Whitlam had never heard of it. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition Gough Whitlam had never heard of ASIS in 1963. It had been established many, many years before. Partly with the connivance of Arthur Calwell, who didn't want his deputy to be involved in these things Gough Whitlam did not know about ASIS before he was told by the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. Amazing. That's how secretive and deceitful they were towards Labor people. With the Cold War security people believed that Labor was not to be trusted. They were in league with the American CIA and others. And the best thing to do for Australia's security was to keep the Labor Party as far away as possible with little or no local knowledge of our security services. So it was frankly a shocker for Gough Whitlam to learn from the Deputy Malaysian Prime Minister about Australian security agencies.

Alex Mann: It is unbelievable. I mean it's difficult to understand the extent to which the Labor Party as a political organization was under suspicion from our national security apparatus.

John Menadue: I should have also mentioned that this was also in the aftermath of the Petrov Affair which the Labor Party believed and would still believe and I believe was exploited dramatically by Menzies. It was aided some would say by the foolish behaviour of Bert Evatt, but it did great damage to the Labor Party. It smeared them as being disloyal. Some of Evatt's staff had to appear before the Petrov Royal Commission, but Petrov defection was engineered before the 1955 election. In fact it was the end of Bert Evatt as a possible Prime Minister. But the Labor Party to this day and Gough Whitlam's son Nick has written a book about how the Petrov Royal Commission was engineered to bring discredit to the Labour Party. So that would have also been a factor as well as the Deputy Malaysian Prime Minister.

Alex Mann: Whitlam establishes a royal commission. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

John Menadue: Most of the Labor Party was suspicious of our security agencies because they were intrinsically anti Labor. They were also not particularly efficient. They also

believed that they were more patriotic than anyone else. They had a loyalty to the nation as they saw that went beyond elected representatives and the government. Gough was keen to clarify their role and their accountability. And that's why he established the Hope Royal Commission in 1974.

Alex Mann: And what did the royal commission actually discover about ASIO?

John Menadue: It discovered that ASIO had been infiltrated by the Soviets. These highly competent cold war warriors had been infiltrated. And it was the Americans, as I recall, that conveyed to Gough Whitlam their concerns about this infiltration. The royal commission found that that was correct and the head of ASIO was shifted and replaced by Frank Mahony from Attorney Generals Department for a period and later by Edward Woodward. There was no suggestion that Peter Barber the head of ASIO was spying in any way, but his organisation was in trouble.

Alex Mann: We know that by this stage, Murphy had his raid on ASIO headquarters, Whitlam establishes the royal commission into ASIO and then appoints his own pick as the head of ASIO. Did you get a sense that the security establishment was worried about this?

John Menadue: Well, I'm sure they were worried about it. And John Kerr was on the fringe of the intelligence community.

Alex Mann: How so?

John Menadue: He had been Deputy Director of the Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs which was an intelligence agency attached to General Blamey in the Second World War. He was the deputy director under a fairly colourful director Alf Conlon who had a strong intelligence background. That Directorate later became the Australian School of Pacific Affairs, of which John Kerr was the head. The School was active on security issues in the region. Sir John Kerr had this background.

What also concerned the Whitlam government was that it had discovered that ASIS was operating on behalf of the CIA in Chile at the time of the Allende government. And they didn't tell the Prime Minister. He told them to desist and stop. When he checked again, they were still doing it. Later he was concerned that ASIS was operating in East Timor through a commercial person and never told the government.

Alex Mann: What did Whitlam do about that?

John Menadue: He sacked Robertson, who was the head of ASIS. That in itself caused reverberations from a tightly knit group of oddballs in our security services. And I don't think they ever forgave him for that. Incidentally an issue which Kerr raised with me when I had my tete-a-tetes with him from time to time was the question of what happened and why Robertson was sacked?

Alex Mann: Did Kerr seem concerned about the sacking of Robertson?

John Menadue: He was yes, as he was on the fringe of that community and always was from the days in the late 40s, under that group reporting to Blaimy He was always very interested in security and intelligence matters.

Alex Mann: What do you remember about that meeting? Where were you present at that meeting when Robertson was sacked by Whitlam.

John Menadue: No, I wasn't but I did hear afterwards that Whitlam's voice and rage could be heard blocks away about the way Robertson had behaved. But as usually happens in these matters the intelligence agencies gathered together, protected and defended Robertson. They criticized Whitlam for interfering in their affairs. That problem still exist today, intelligence agencies who think they are more important than government. Many believe that governments can't be trusted and that they should be part of the policy making process. They are unaccountable still and they were unaccountable in the days of Gough Whitlam,.

Alex Mann: Arthur Tange was in the room when Robertson was sacked. He was the head of the Defence Department. Did you get a sense at all then or since about how he was feeling about all of this?

John Menadue Arthur was a very effective minister, secretary of the Defence Department. He pulled together the three disparate departments, Air, Army and Navy. He did that well. But Defence traditionally has always been part and still is part of the intelligence, security community and very closely allied to the United States . ASIS operatives were, in fact employed under cover overseas by the Department of Foreign Affairs. But I don't think DFAT knew anything about Stallings and the other CIA operatives in Australia . Tange did not tell his Prime Minister that Pine Gap was operated by the CIA. Whitlam thought it was operated by the Pentagon.

Alex Mann: What about Fraser? In all of this, there's clearly a growing list of slights against the intelligence community. But how did Fraser respond to the sacking of William Robertson, the head of ASIS?

John Menadue: He would have felt common cause with them. He was from that sort of background. He was interested in intelligence and security matters and probably believed that they had a patriotism above others.. And being very conservative in almost everything that they did they found it hard, as many others in Australia found it hard to come to terms with a Labor government. That was a major problem.

But after you've had the Menzies government and others following -Holt, Gorton and McMahon- in power for 23 years they thought they were born to rule. And when they were no longer in power, they found it hard to accept that the Whitlam government was legitimate and had been elected by the people. They were, in a sense, like spoilt kids that had lost their lollies. So having been deprived of their rightful position in government and society they exploited every opportunity to disrupt a government that had just been elected. So the security services and others like High Court judges found it increasingly hard to come to terms with the legitimacy of the Whitlam government. That was a continuing feature of the three years of the Whitlam government. It was not accepted by large, powerful vested interests in business, politics and the courts that it was legitimate. Fortunately, the Hawke

and Keating governments changed that and powerful vested interests came to accept that Labor governments could be legitimate. But Gough never had that benefit of the doubt while he was Prime Minister.

Alex Mann: So when did you learn that there might be spies in Australia that Gough Whitlam hadn't been told about? Was it before or after the dismissal? Stallings?

John Menadue: It was after the dismissal.

I was not across that directly, but it certainly disturbed Gough Whitlam.

Alex Mann: What did Gough do?

John Menadue: He asked Arthur Tange for a list .But frankly, everything was pretty chaotic at that stage with the refusal of supply hanging over the head. I can't recall.

But a couple of my own experiences about failure to inform. When I was in Japan as the Ambassador two ASIS agents were declared to me. But they had another operative that they didn't declare and tell me about. That person was a very senior Australian businessman operating in Japan that I used to meet frequently. He would participate in discussions but I didn't know he was an ASIS agent. Later when I came back to Australia I was secretary to the Department of Immigration. We refused a visa for a Japanese academic called Hidaka.. That refusal was based on ASIO's advice that he and his wife were members of the Red Army, a very militant group. We accepted that advice and Hidaka was not issued with a visa. Ian Macphee, who was a minister and I took a trouncing in the media. Academics and others interested in educational affairs claimed that Macphee and I had infringed academic freedom by refusing this academic admission to Australia. And we copped it for about six months. And then the head of ASIO Harvey Barnett came to see me at Belconnen and said, John, I can see you and your minister has, been having quite a pounding from the press about Hidaka. I said, well, we certainly have. And he said to me, would you like us to change the recommendation? As easy as that. I don't know whether they found out after a while that their assessment was wrong or was it wrong from the beginning. So we got in touch with Hidaka , and this was 6 or 9 months later. Would you like to come to Australia? And he said, no. He could have said, you can go and jump in the Molonglo.

But my experience with these agencies is not very encouraging. We need them. We need them to be competent and they're not. We need them to be accountable. And they're not . It used to be understood that in security and intelligence areas that there would first be collectors of information. Then they would be assessors of information and finally policy decision. Ministers would not be involved until the policy stage, the third and final stage. Now those collectors like ASIO are right at the top involved in policy and propaganda. ASIO has been recently directing the anti Chinese campaign in this country, not the Department of Foreign Affairs, not the Foreign Minister, not even the Prime Minister. The anti China campaign is being led by a coterie of intelligent people around ASIO and related agencies. A large part of the media has been drawn into the ASIO web as willing patsies.

Alex Mann: Do you remember the day that Whitlam actually accused the Country Party of being funded by the CIA?

John Menadue: I remember it. I don't think it's correct. At least I never saw any evidence of funding. If they were, it would have come through a big mining company or it would have been disguised in some way. Stallings was renting a house in Canberra that was owned by Doug Anthony, who was the parliamentary leader of the National Party. But it was probably a legitimate landlord /renter arrangement.

Alex Mann: Did it seem like Gough was drawing a pretty long bow here, but did it seem a bit crazy?

John Menadue: No, I think he felt, as I still feel that our agencies, intelligence agencies are not to be trusted. That's still my very strong opinion today. I I've not been directly involved for many time, many years. But the public evidence that I see gives me cause concern. And there's nothing more obvious than the attempt by the intelligence agencies to secure the prosecution of Bernard Collaery and Witness [K?

Alex Mann: Yeah it was K

John Menadue: Over the bugging of the Timorese Cabinet room as a means to advance the interests of Woodside Petroleum. That bugging would been authorized by the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer. Alexander Downer subsequently took a consulting position with Woodside. Ashley Calvert, who was secretary the department at the time, became a director. Draw conclusions from that court case which may be held in secret. It's hard to know what's happening. The people that were responsible for that bugging should be prosecuted rather than those who exposed it. Unfortunately, the person in charge of ASIS at the time of that bugging was later promoted, not disciplined. He was promoted to head ASIO and is now the chair of the Foreign Investment Review Board, which is advising the government on Chinese investment in Australia. We have a strange intelligence world. They are not properly accountable.

Alex Mann: Can I just take you back to this press conference where, you know, Whitlam claims that the CIA was funding the Country Party. I mean, you said that effectively he had no reason to have these suspicions. But how did the Country Party take an accusation like that? How did they respond?

John Menadue: I think I'd be very upset. I can't recall. I'm sorry. I'm not avoiding the question, but I can't recall. We were just so overwhelmed at the time with how the government was going to survive the day to day leaks out of Treasury and the political campaign by the Murdoch press against the government.

Alex Mann: There's this you know, there's the time when people have these competing views about the dismissal and the different factors that led to it. One of the stories, particularly relating to involvement of the security establishment relates to this sense that, you know, Whitlam was about to do something in parliament, that he was about to name Stallings in parliament and that, you know, he never got to because he was dismissed. I mean, did you get a sense then that, you know that there was any significance to the fact that Whitlam planned on naming Stallings in Parliament.

John Menadue: I didn't know. I should mention that there has been a lot of speculation that the CIA helped engineer the dismissal. I never saw any direct evidence of that. There's no

doubt the Americans were pretty unhappy with Whitlam, particularly after he criticized the bombing of North Vietnam over the Christmas break in 1972. The Americans took a while to recover. What he had said was quite right but the Americans weren't used to having an ally that had a different view. They were used to allies that did what they told. And we've reverted to form on that over the last decade or so. But there's no doubt that the intelligence community in Australia was hostile to the Whitlam government. He was suspicious of them and rightly so. But I never saw or heard evidence that persuaded me that the CIA was directly involved in the dismissal.

Alex Mann: What's your feeling about this story that the Australian security establishment had some contact with Sir John Kerr in the lead up to the dismissal?

John Menadue: I'm not aware of it but it wouldn't surprise me. He deceived so many others. Why wouldn't he do this also in the intelligence field? He was in touch with Malcolm Fraser on the telephone three months before the dismissal. He was in touch with Garfield Barwick. He was in touch with Anthony Mason and Rupert Murdoch. Why wouldn't he get in touch with intelligence agencies who I know were very concerned about him challenging them? They're not used to that. They would have caught a flavour from the United States, particularly Marshall Green, who was the US Ambassador about. There was a general feeling of suspicion and lack of trust. But I don't think that in the end it was decisive by any means in the dismissal of the Whitlam government. But we do know John Kerr could collaborate and deceive others.

Alex Mann: I just wanted to ask you a couple of questions. I haven't heard about Murdoch.

John Menadue: He was my friend! Yeah.

Alex Mann: Yeah, that's right. When did you first meet Rupert Murdoch?

John Menadue: I first met Murdoch when I was on Gough's staff. And I was a close friend of Eric Walsh. Rupert was a frustrated politician as well as a media owner. Rupert would occasionally drop into Eric Walsh's Daily Mirror office in the old Parliament House on a Friday night when he was on his way to Cavan outside Yass. We'd have a chat but very briefly. So I got to know him a little bit and frankly I admired him quite a lot. I'd come from South Australia and I'd seen what he'd done on the Adelaide News with Rohan Rivett, a very famous and excellent editor. There was a celebrated murder case. With Murdoch's support Stuart had campaigned against his conviction and was successful. But in the process Murdoch stirred up the Adelaide establishment who hated him for standing up to them. Murdoch had something going for him. In my early association with him, I admired him. My view changed later. I can tell you. But I got to know him through Eric Walsh. Come 1967, I'd been with Gough for seven tough years. We've done a lot in terms of policy development, but it was hard going with a young family travelling around Australia. And I thought it was time for change. So I canvassed and looked at various possibilities. I was interested obviously in public issues, the media, because I'd been a de facto press secretary with Gough. We had a staff of three with all sorts of roles to perform. So I spoke to Eric. And he said, how'd you like to work for Rupert? Things developed from there. Eric spoke to Rupert and Rupert got interested in me.

Alex Mann: Did he call you?

John Menadue: Yes.

Alex Mann: Do you remember the phone call?

John Menadue: No, I don't remember the phone call. But he was interested in me because he was a frustrated politician and loved playing the game of political power and using his media to do it. But he was interested in to me because I was associated with Whitlam So I was offered a job as a sort of personal secretary, adviser, consultant to Murdoch, based in Sydney. A few months later I became General Manager of The Australian. Then there was an amalgamation of newspapers and I managed the combined Sydney operation of the Daily Telegraph, the Sunday Telegraph, the Daily Mirror the Sunday Mirror and The Australian. That led to a very close relationship with Murdoch. I admired what he was doing, the establishment of the Australian national paper, a different sort of voice in the country and one that wasn't part of the establishment. So it was quite refreshing to be working for Murdoch, at least then.

Alex Mann: What kind of agenda was there.. Was there an agenda? And if so, what sort of agenda was being pushed by the Murdoch papers at that time? We're talking, you might say, in the lead up to the 72 election.

John Menadue: And a bit earlier than that including the lead up to the 69 election.

Alex Mann: The 69!

John Menadue: Rupert was leftish inclined in those days. He felt that the Liberal Party was running out of time. Menzies had gone. There was Holt and then Gordon and then McMahon. But I think what drove the Murdoch agenda was that he wanted to be close to power. And the Liberal establishment wouldn't allow it. Murdoch was the boy wonder, the Dirty Digger, the boy from Adelaide who had upset the establishment. Rupert believed that as his father Keith Murdoch had run the Melbourne Herald group, that he should be accepted and have the same influence politically that his father had in the Melbourne establishment. Menzies and others, The Melbourne Club wouldn't have a bar of it. They didn't like this upstart young Murdoch. I thought, that's terrific, a person shunned by the Establishment.

The first person that gave him any real political recognition was Jack McEwan, who was the leader of the Country Party at that stage. And later Arthur Calwell, who was the leader of the Labor Party. To some extent, they were ports in a storm, because he'd been rejected by the establishment and he saw these others, McEwan and Calwell as possibly the rising alternatives. And he ingratiated himself to them through the Daily Mirror. From time to time he projected a more small liberal leftist position. He identified with the campaign against apartheid in Australia and then quite heroically against Australia involvement in Vietnam, but particularly after the MiLai massacre where over a hundred Vietnamese were massacred by American Marines. So Murdoch was slowly moving to the left and was at least more hostile to the establishment. Then Gough came along. And he saw him as a better prospect than Arthur Calwell. That wouldn't be hard to see. He saw Whitlam as an opportunity to rise to power with him.

Alex Mann: He saw Whitlam's potential election as an opportunity.

John Menadue: There was an opportunity for him to be associated with power and he liked pulling the strings in terms of getting particular favours. But he was media oriented and he saw Whitlam as a winner, and that's what matters most. With Rupert, he will go with who he thinks will win and get some concessions. It's the fun of the battle as much as anything else. It's testosterone, the excitement that he gets out of that political battle. Gough didn't like him at all. He was sceptical of him and kept his distance. I remember several times because I was still on Rupert's staff. I discussed Gough spending more time with Rupert. About getting together with Murdoch. He often said to me, comrade, I'm not going to be beholden to anyone. He would never get into fundraising or asking favours. I was on Murdoch's staff at the time until September 1974 .

But coming back one step to the 1972 election where it looked increasingly likely that Murdoch would be on board and supporting Labor. And he did boots and all. I arranged a dinner between Rupert and Anna Murdoch, Gough and Margaret Whitlam, Ken May, who headed of Rupert's operation in Australia, and Tom Fitzgerald, who was editorial executive and formerly with the Herald. The dinner was in dinner in Paddington here in Sydney. I had arranged it, but I decided not to go, that I was too much of a participant and I needed to stand back. But I was anxious to make sure that Gough and Rupert were getting on reasonably well in the lead up to the 1972 election, despite Gough's reservation about Rupert. I asked Gough next morning, how was the meal with Rupert? And he said, Comrade, it's the most boring meal of my life. He said, it was awful. He said, I know you needed to do it but can I avoid a meal with Rupert in future? He found Murdoch quite boring. In the final week or 10 days before the election in 1972 together with Mick Young, an old friend of mine, we organized a Chinese junk on the harbour to seal the relationship between Gough and Rupert . We fixed a boat on dates convenient for Rupert. Then I had the job of going to Gough and saying, hey, we want you to be socially nice and pleasant. Come along on this two or three hours on the harbour with Rupert. Gough replied, Comrade. I'm too fuckin busy. I'm too busy. And then said, Will Margaret do? And I said no, Margaret will not do. You've got to come. I've told Margaret the story and she understood. Any how, Gough came along reluctantly and the cruise worked well.

Then Rupert threw his lot in, boots and all, into the campaign including writing leaders. I remember one event very well. Eric Walsh was acting then with Mick Young. I remember a journalist Mark Day from the Murdoch stable asked Eric if there was much new in a statement that Gough had just put out about withdrawing troops from Vietnam. Eric responded that there was something very new in the statement in that because Rupert wrote it.

On Gough's first visit to the United States in early 1973 Eric Walsh arranged a dinner between Gough and Rupert, to have a chat like old buddies. But unfortunately, on the morning of the arranged dinner Gough met David Frost the famous BBC and British journalist. Gough decided that David Frost would be more interesting dinner companion than Rupert. So the dinner with Rupert was cancelled at very short notice. Well, Gough didn't endear himself to Rupert, but on reflection, he could pick Rupert better than many of us did.

Alex Mann: Eventually Rupert Murdoch swung his support away from the Labor Party. He didn't stick with Whitlam for the full term. His support then switched for Fraser. Was that right?

John Menadue: Yes.

Alex Mann: Why did he do that?

John Menadue: He was becoming disillusioned with Gough and the problems that he was getting into. The business establishment and others were becoming hostile and Rupert always wanted to belong to the powerful and influential. They were getting highly critical of Whitlam. The 1974 election had been provoked again by the possibility of a refusal of supply, which Gough headed off by seeking a double dissolution. In that election when I was still with Murdoch he played both sides of the road. He had to have one editorial writer who was pro Whitlam, Evan Williams. I don't remember who the conservative writer was, but Rupert was betting a bob each way. It was left reasonably open. Then the Murdoch position hardened, through 1975. There is no doubt that he was in close contact with Fraser leading up to the dismissal. That was reflected in his campaigning.

There was an important meeting of Kerr and Murdoch at the end of 1974 after the second Whitlam victory, the double dissolution election. Murdoch was holding a soiree at Cavan where he gathered his editors, not from just Australia, but around the world, to discuss the state of affairs, the world affairs and how the newspapers were going. It was a regular occurrence. And often when I was working for him, I went to them. I didn't go to this one. But George Munster, who wrote a book about Murdoch *The Paper Prince* wrote about this meeting between Kerr and Murdoch at Cavan. Ian Fitchett was also there. I knew him well. He was the senior Sydney Morning Herald correspondent in Canberra at the time. Fitchett told me and I am confident he told Munster also, which I'm certain is correct, that at that soiree John Kerr was also invited for drinks. John Kerr liked a drink at the end of the day or indeed any time. One of the issues in the media at that time had been the possibility that there could have been a denial of supply. Bill Snedden was the Leader of the Opposition and there'd been speculation, particularly in some of the media and of course amongst vested interests that they would get rid of the Whitlam government by refusal of supply. Gough headed that off in advance by a double dissolution election. But at this soiree the issue of the role of the Senate and the role of the Governor-General were discussed. It was a very topical issue. Rupert, was pretty good at getting people to talk their heads off. He encouraged Kerr to talk. And Kerr according to Fitchett elaborated the options he might have if there was a refusal or deferral of supply in the future. Murdoch would have tucked that away for next time. A month later Murdoch had a lunch in Canberra, would have been December 74 with the American ambassador. We know from a WikiLeaks that Murdoch told the American ambassador that Whitlam would be dismissed in twelve months time. And he thought that either Snedden or Lynch would be the next Prime Minister. He didn't think that Malcolm Fraser would make it. But Murdoch was confident one month after that soiree with Kerr, that the Whitlam government could be gone in twelve months time. That is what he told the US Ambassador.

In the week before the dismissal I had a lunch with Murdoch in Canberra at Manuka. I remember the restaurant very well, although it's changed a bit since then.

Alex Mann: What did it look like?

John Menadue: The food was quite a nice. We had a white tablecloth. It was well done. I can't remember the name, but I know the corner location. Ken Cowley was there with

Rupert. Ken was heading Murdoch's operation in Australia. A very loyal member who had been my production manager years before when I'd been working for Murdoch.

Alex Mann Do you remember what was on the plates?

John Menadue: I think it was a light meal. And I think we had some nice bread, but it was a light meal. Probably only one course. I don't think we had any alcohol. I'm certain that I wouldn't have had any alcohol not because I was an old Methodist, but being in the Prime Minister's Department at that critical time I had to be careful. And things were heating up. Naturally, the discussion with Murdoch and Cowley got around to the political prospects, the dismissal. Murdoch was adamant that there would be a double dissolution including an election for the House of Representatives before Christmas. I said that would not occur but Rupert insisted there would be a vote for the House of Representatives. And he said, to reassure me and perhaps with a fatherly touch, that I need not worry as I would be appointed Ambassador to Japan.

Alex Mann: What did you think about that at the time?

John Menadue: Murdoch knew I was interested in Japan. My daughter was up there on a Rotary Exchange scholarship. I went regularly to Japan. I'd appointed Greg Clarke as The Australian correspondent in Japan. Our family went regularly to Japan and stayed at Minshuku, The Japanese version of B and Bs We loved it and the family loved our visits to Japan. So we were very interested and clearly Murdoch knew that. But he said, John, don't worry you won't be out of a job, you'll become Ambassador to Japan.

Alex Mann: And what happened?

John Menadue: That's what I became. Fifteen months later, when Malcolm decided and I can understand he want to make a change. I wasn't of his sort of background but I had provided the continuity that he wanted. He was very courteous about it, he said. Would you like to go to Japan? Good old Rupert had secured the job for me. Rupert was extraordinary close to the dismissal. He was part of it.

Alex Mann: When Murdoch says there's definitely going to be a house of Reps, a full house of Reps election by the end of the year. What did you take that to mean?

John Menadue: I didn't believe him. The problem was that I'd been so conned and deceived by the Governor General and others and I felt very strongly that there'd be a half Senate election and no more and that the deferral of supply would be resolved in Gough's favour. I still find it hard to believe that senior people like a Governor General and a High Court justice would be so deceptive.

Alex Mann: Do you think Murdoch knew or was he just speaking with conviction?

John Menadue: He knew. I'm certain of that.

Alex Mann: How would he know?

John Menadue: He was very close to Fraser. They'd had the same nanny way back in Western Victoria years ago. More importantly Rupert would want to be close to anyone that he thought might be politically influential. I'm certain that he knew. And who else would have told him about Japan except Malcolm? Rupert knew very clearly my interest in Japan and that would be a bolt hole for me after the dismissal. Rupert knew

Alex Mann: John, there was just one last thing that I thought I could return to if you have just a few minutes. You mentioned East Timor a little. I wondered if that was one of your regrets about the Whitlam Government?

John Menadue: I'm satisfied that Gough never encouraged the Indonesian takeover. He certainly believed that in the long term, the major powers, like China, Indonesia, Soviet Union, Russia, would be very influential in countries in their immediate environment. And that hopefully the people of East Timor given a chance to decide would decide in favour of Indonesia. That is the way the people of Goa had decided -in favour of joining India. That had happened some years before. What wasn't appreciated was how corrupt and brutal the Indonesian military was. And that would colour, not surprising the attitude of the people of East Timor towards the Indonesians. It was made worse that the Portuguese Government in a sense, like the British in India just fled. They downed tools and left chaos. Fretilin and others moved in. I know it was an issue on which Gough felt sorely tested right to the end. But he had a good relationship with the Suharto. I was with Gough when he first met Suharto in Indonesia with Sukarno, actually still in Merdeka Palace before Suharto pushed him out. Unfortunately things didn't work as Gough had hoped that the East Timorese might one day choose Indonesia. But after their experience with the Indonesian military, that was no longer possible.

Alex Mann: I know you've spoken about this at length throughout our conversation today, but this is a podcast for a younger audience, and so if you were to sort of imagine speaking to those people, how would you summarize the sort of pressures that led to the dismissal and what we should take from it?

John Menadue: First we need to become a republic and get the Queen out of our hair. She acted disgracefully in the dismissal of the Whitlam government but she's a smart operator. So we should become a republic. The second is that we need to improve our parliamentary institutions, our judiciary and our executive government. We need to more clearly define the separation of powers. We need to ensure that people appointed to our senior courts, are reputable and honest people. We didn't have that then and we don't have it now. For example the Federal Court in Australia is still refusing to let Australians read the Palace Letters that led to the dismissal of the Whitlam government. It calls them private papers as if they were Christmas cards. The Queen and her advisers insist that those papers not be disclosed until 2027 and maybe not even then. So we can't even read our own history. How extraordinary that is. This was probably one of the most divisive and most public and political events in our history. Yet are not able to read the evidence in the papers from the Queen. It is extraordinary. So we need to clear up those issues so that we can govern on our own behalf through a republic. And that through constitutional change ensure that the events we saw in November nineteen seventy five never happen again. They could happen again. The one thing that makes it difficult is that Whitlam and others drove the Governor-General from office. He became a discredited figure. And any Governor-General in

future will know that if he or she tried something like that again they'll be derided and abused like Kerr. Driving him from office was the way to assert that a Governor-General should never do that again.

Alex Mann: John Menadue, thank you so much for your generosity today. Okay. You're fantastic. Thank you. You were just so good at telling these stories and taking us back to those moments. It's just it's a real privilege to have been there.

This is an edited account of the ABC interview.. I wrote much of this 20 years ago in 'Things..'