

INTERVIEW AT CANBERRA AIRPORT

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PAUL DAVEY: Prime Minister, welcome back to Australia. Can you give us a couple of words as to how you think the trip went?

PRIME MINISTER: I believe it went very well. Australia's view is now certainly understood where it has not been understood before and the main element of what I was involved in of course, in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations, which are going to mean a great deal for all Australians whether we move forward into a more sensible trading world or whether we go back to the discriminatory trading practices of older times.

There are mixed views in Europe about what ought to happen. There are some very disturbing signs because one of the things that has stood by small countries, middle-ranking countries, developing countries, over the years has been the most favoured nation principle. If you make a trade rule or a restriction it's got to apply to all comers and that has so far stopped you picking out a particular country and saying "your exports are damaging me, we won't have any more of your exports". Well now, in Europe there is a very strong move to try and do away with the most favoured nation principle which means treating all nations alike and establishing the circumstances in which a country which might be Britain, it might be France or it might be another country, can say a certain country's exports are damaging this industry, we are going to stop that country's exports to this country and this seems to me to be aimed at the heart of efficient producers and at the heart of the newly emerging countries, developing countries, as they get to the stage of industrial take-off and it's a very dangerous principle which does give Australia a good deal of cause for concern.

QUESTION: Are you confident, Prime Minister, that Australia's agricultural products will get into the EEC on a reasonable trading basis with them?

PRIME MINISTER: I'm confident we've got a better prospect of that happening than we have ever had. But at the same time I don't under-estimate the strength of Europe in pursuing its own interests. The United States has said there will be no trade agreement unless agriculture is included and that is precisely our position. Mr. Jenkins, as President of the Commission, said that he knows quite well in the agriculture area if the arrangements that are made don't give us a realistic opportunity of selling beef, for example, into the European market, then the arrangements are worthless so far as Australia is concerned and at least that recognition was an advance over previous attitudes.

QUESTION: Sir, there has been some speculation back here in Australia that you might have to use uranium as a lever to get into the EEC. Is that on, from your point of view?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, there's been a great deal of speculation, but I don't want to add to it.

QUESTION: Prime Minister, if I could just put one final point. You seem from your Asian leg of your trip to have had quite considerable amount of success on the trade level with the Asian countries. Do you think maybe Australia is pushing too hard to get into the EEC. Is it maybe time that we should start concentrating on the Asian area rather more?

PRIME MINISTER: We have been concentrating on the Asian theatre and our trade with Asian countries, obviously with Japan, but with Korea, with the ASEAN countries, both ways, has been growing very greatly. Now, I've got no doubt at all it will continue to grow. But what we need to understand is that certain Australian industries do need access to the highly affluent markets of Europe for their own well-being. This is the richest, the most powerful and technologically advanced trade bloc the world has ever seen - about 260 million people and it's in that market that we're up against non-tariff barriers that have really denied us the possibility of any sort of reasonable trade. We haven't been up against barriers in the Asian theatre. After I became Prime Minister one of the first visits I made was to Japan, to China, and throughout my political life I've travelled extensively in Southeast Asia. I've got no doubt I will continue to do so.

QUESTION: In a nutshell then, the Common Market is a must for Australia?

PRIME MINISTER: If any area is saying to us we are going to establish arrangements that won't allow your goods to compete, we've got to take that very seriously. It's not a policy that was introduced many years ago, it's a continuing one. They are now talking about a sheep meat regime that would do enormous damage to New Zealand-- really do to New Zealand what they have done to us in beef and New Zealand's economy is not so diverse or flexible as ours. A year ago they bought in a wine regime. Now this was technically not a tariff barrier, it technically wasn't a barrier at all, but they established requirements at their frontiers that have halved Australia's very useful wine trade into Europe. If we in our turn, established the same kind of regime on our borders, Europe would lose upwards of ten to twelve million dollars worth of wine trade with Australia each year. We believe that's the wrong sort of way of conducting trade and trade negotiations, but I'm making the point to show that their policies march on and what happened with wine is an additional example and a recent example of the way in which Australian commodities have been and are being excluded.