

PRESS OFFICE TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH DUNCAN FAIRWEATHER

26 FEBRUARY 1980

Question

Prime Minister we heard terms used in the House today that we haven't heard for some time. Why do you think that the motion that the Labor Party bought on was argued in those terms?

Prime Minister

I do not know except that I sometimes think that there is a concerted campaign and a decision by the Labor Party to use terms like 'liar' and 'hypocrite' and all the rest. For the last two or three years there have been concerted times when that has happened. I think they have generally done it when they have not had an argument, haven't had a case and they have been wanting to, as was the case today, prevent what otherwise was being said, from being heard. The words I've used which seemed to cause this I thought were fairly moderate in the circumstances - they are totally accurate. What I said was that there is or seems to be a thread in the Labor Party, not the whole Labor Party, a thread in the Party which wants to find excuses for the Soviet actions in Afghanistan or if not excuses at least reasons why Australia should do nothing about it. I do not think that is good enough. I think that what was said was totally accurate and it remains accurate.

Question

In response the descriptions that Mr. Hayden made of you were rather savage. Why didn't you defend yourself?

Prime Minister

There was not a motion before the House. If they had moved that censure motion it would have been taken and the words, the charges would have been thrown back in their teeth. But they were moving the suspension of Standing Orders which we opposed because it was in the middle of Question Time, in fact I was in the middle of answering a question, which I completed after it was all over. But I can only say that there was no motion on the books. There was nothing before the House and if a motion of that kind is debated, or is moved, it will certainly be debated, then I believe that it will only degrade those who move it.

Question

Do you think we can expect to see this sort of debate coming up through this session through this election year.

Prime Minister

No I would hope not. Because what goes on in the House is vastly important, just as the Government's view of Afghanistan is vastly important and carrying sufficient importance to require us to do something about it. And if the Labor Party are going to take the view that, all right they condemn the invasion of Afghanistan, but they seek to undermine everything we seek to do to bring that home to the Soviet people. Well if that's the view they are going to take then I suppose there will be some rugged debates. I think that is a pity and I only wish, for example, Mr. Hayden had kept

Prime Minister (continued)

with his original view on the Olympic Games. Because he has said and I think believes that a boycott of the Olympic Games would be a very effective way of bringing the abhorrence of Australia and of other countries home to the Soviet Government and people. But he at one point said if there was a significant international support he will join it, or would consider joining it, to be quite fair to him. But it's not good enough saying that 40 other countries have to do this before we would consider it. We believe an effective boycott would be of great importance in bringing the message home to the Soviet Union and in preventing them moving into other areas because they know the reaction that it will get. We are committed, ought to be committed, morally and practically and every way to doing something about it. But Mr. Hayden not only doesn't want us to do anything about it, by his argument he quite plainly seeks to frustrate the achievement of an effective boycott. I just find that very difficult to understand and to put that alongside his condemnation of the actual invasion.

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