



PRIME MINISTER

FOLLOWING IS TRANSCRIPT - INTERVIEW WITH PRIME MINISTER AND SENATOR PERCY, CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, U.S. CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, 14 JUNE 1983.

PERCY: WE HAVE HAD ONE OF THE MOST INFORMATIVE AND INTERESTING MEETINGS ... THAT WE'VE HAD FOR A LONG TIME. WE HAD THE UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THE PRIME MINISTER AS A FELLOW PARLIAMENTARIAN AND THE DISTINGUISHED TREASURER AND SIR ROBERT COTTON, THE FORMER MEMBER OF THE SENATE FROM AUSTRALIA ON THE FLOOR DURING A ROLL CALL VOTE WHICH RECESSED THE SENATE SO THAT ALL THE SENATORS COULD COME UP IN HERE. WE HAD A MOST INFORMATIVE MEETING AND HAVE BEEN REASSURED ON MANY POINTS WITHOUT ANY QUESTIONING OF THE FRIENDSHIP AND BOND OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA AND THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES. THE TWO GOVERNMENTS ARE CLOSER THAN EVER.

QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S POLICY, ARE THERE ANY PROBLEMS WITH IT?

PERCY: WE HAD ONE QUESTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST, BECAUSE I AM DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE PEACE-KEEPING FORCES OUT THERE. I'LL LET THE PRIME MINISTER SPEAK FOR HIMSELF ON THAT. WE HAD AN EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION, I THINK EVERYONE IN THE ROOM WAS VERY SATISFIED.

QUESTION: HOW WILL YOU BE RESPONDING TO THE CONGRESSIONAL LETTER ON EAST TIMOR.

HAWKE: I'LL BE REPLYING TO IT IN TERMS BASICALLY OF THE DECISIONS THAT WE MAKE. I'LL ACKNOWLEDGE THE LETTER. THERE WILL BE DISCUSSIONS THAT WILL GO ON WITHIN THE PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA AND THE DECISION THAT WE TAKE IN REGARD TO OUR ATTITUDE ON EAST TIMOR, AS I'VE CONSISTENTLY SAID BOTH IN INDONESIA AND AUSTRALIA, WILL BE MADE CLOSER TO THE EVENT AND IN THE LIGHT OF ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ARE RELEVANT AT THAT TIME.

QUESTION: MR HAWKE, WHAT DID YOU TELL THEM ABOUT AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN THE SINAI?

HAWKE: I INDICATED THAT I'D SAID WHEN I BECAME LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, FOR THAT BRIEF PERIOD, AND THEN WHAT I'VE SAID IN GOVERNMENT THAT WE WILL NOT BE TAKING ANY PRECIPITATE ACTION TO WITHDRAW OUR FORCES THERE. I'LL BE GOING TO THE AREA LATER ON EARLY NEXT YEAR AND THAT BOTH THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAVE THE VIEW AS INDEED I THINK THE GREAT MAJORITY OF OUR GOVERNING PARTY DOES, IS THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES NOW ARE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE TIME AT WHICH THAT COURSE WAS COMMITTED. SINCE THEN THERE HAS BEEN THE WAR IN LEBANON. THERE IS NOW THE PRESENCE OF FORCES FROM THE UNITED STATES, THE UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE AND ITALY IN THE AREA. WE'RE NOT GOING TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH ANY ACTION WHICH COULD IN ANY WAY DESTABILISE THAT ALREADY FRAGILE REGION.

QUESTION: ... DO YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT ... THE LABOR GOVERNMENT?

PERCY: NO, NOT AT ALL. WE HAD, LETS JUST SAY, ONE OTHER THING THAT WE DID ASK FOR CO-OPERATION HERE AND SUPPORT AND CONTINUED SUPPORT AND WE RECEIVED IT. BUT ALSO WE HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT SLOW IN RATIFYING THE PACIFIC ISLAND TREATIES. THE PRESIDENT HAS NOW WRITTEN A LETTER TO THE MAJORITY LEADER AT MY REQUEST ASKING THAT IT BE GIVEN A VERY HIGH PRIORITY. I THINK WITH SENATOR PELL'S CO-OPERATION THAT BIPARTISAN WE WILL ONCE AGAIN GET TWO-THIRDS VOTE FOR THESE TREATIES AND MOVE AHEAD WITH OUR STRONG AND CLOSE ALLIES, BOTH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT CENTRAL AMERICA SIR, DID THAT COME UP?

PERCY: NO CENTRAL AMERICA DID NOT COME UP WHILE I WAS IN THE ROOM.

HAWKE: I'LL BE DISCUSSING THAT NO DOUBT WITH SECRETARY OF STATE SHULTZ LATER ON THIS MORNING.

ENDS.