



## PRIME MINISTER

E. & O.E. - PROOF ONLY

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE - 17 AUGUST 1984, 5.30 P.M.

PM: Ladies and gentlemen, I am sorry that you haven't yet been able to receive a copy of the report. We tried to expedite that to you. I will make a statement to you, and read relevant sections of the report. Once I have made that statement Mr. Young and I are available for any questions. I hope that will satisfy everyone. I make this point - if when you get the report which should be available very shortly, if you wanted to speak to me again - I hope it won't be necessary - but if you do want to, I am prepared to meet you again.

The report was made available to me this morning in Melbourne when Mr. Black and Counsel Assisting, Mr. Dunn, gave me the report in my Melbourne office and I had the opportunity of discussion with them then. I am very pleased to be able to say that the report completely and unequivocally clears Mr. Young of any suggestion of impropriety, intention or attempt to evade customs duty or to use improperly any influence and is a complete exoneration of Mr. Young in respect of any suggestions that have been made against him. And speaking personally, of course, and on behalf of the Government I welcomed that finding and am glad that now Mr. Young is fully re-instated into the Government because on receiving the report and reading it I immediately signed the appropriate letters on my return to my Canberra office to Mr. Young and to Mr. Bowen and to Mr. Peasley. And so as of this afternoon Mr. Young is fully restored to his position of Special Minister of State and of Leader of the House.

The report will be tabled in the Parliament on Tuesday and if the Opposition so desires an opportunity will be made available during the week for debate on the report.

JOURNALIST: Mr. Hawke, does this mean that Mr. Young did not make any false declaration to Customs. Is that what the report says?

PM: Let me read to you. I indicated that I would read to you the relevant passages which of course are properly to be understood in the context of the whole report. I will read what is annotated now as page 132 on the copy that I have. Part 13. Whether any

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impropriety may have occurred in the actions of the Honourable MJ Young. "Before expressing my final conclusions it is necessary to consider whether any impropriety may have occurred in the actions of Mr. Young in the making of the Customs declaration. I have concluded that there was no intention to evade duty, no attempt to evade duty, and no attempt wilfully to mislead any Customs Officer. Very strict standards are expected of persons holding high public office in their approach to the completion of documents of the nature of a Customs declaration. I conclude that Mr. Young, notwithstanding the difficulty with which he was presented by the circumstances and by the wording of the form, should have taken more time and exercised greater care so that questions could not reasonably have arisen about its correctness. On the facts, as I have concluded them to be, I am of the view that the circumstances fell short of impropriety and that a positive finding that there was no impropriety should be made. No other aspects of Mr. Young's conduct require further consideration in this context."

He then goes on on the following page to conclusions and I read the relevant section. It goes on, The Honourable MJ Young:

"There was no impropriety in the actions of the Hon. MJ Young. Mr. Young did not at any stage use or attempt to use his official position to his advantage or to divert any person from the proper and impartial performance of his duty. I express no conclusions as to whether any breach of the law of the Commonwealth may have occurred. My reasons for taking this course appear in Part 12 of this report. It should not be inferred that I make any finding that a breach of the law of the Commonwealth may have occurred in the actions of the Hon. MJ Young."

Clearly you would need to read Part 12 of the report that he refers to there, but if I may attempt to summarise for you Part 12 of the report, and I do that in the sense that after you have read it yourself, of course I am available for questions. But essentially what Mr. Black says in Part 12 of the report is that section 209 of the Act deals with the process there for summarily dealing with the situation where the form has not covered the declaration of goods and that process he finds was appropriately applied. And he refers to the fact that under Section 209 of the Act it is specifically provided that once that process has been followed, which he specifically finds was in all respects appropriately followed then no further action can be taken. He then says - he looks hypothetically at the question of Section 234e of the Act which deals with the question of the filling in of the forms and on that he deals with the question of knowledge and the line between knowledge and belief. He deals with the submission of Mr. Young's Counsel in which he says he finds merit and says that there is no statement of the law on the matter, but it is not appropriate in those circumstances and indeed would be unfair to go to that hypothetical question. That is the essence to the reference to Part 12 of his report.

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JOURNALIST: Mr Young who paid for the charter that brought you to Canberra today, and why did you use a charter?

YOUNG: Well I received a message from the Prime Minister to return to Canberra as quickly as I could and as you are probably aware now, you may have been aware earlier, that I'd been invited some days ago to partake in a sort of 60 Minutes extravaganza. They take a bit of time to do it. They had been with me for the past three days. Arrangements were made for us travel down here on a private jet which their company, I understand, will pick up the bill for and send me an account of the three fares of myself and my two staff members.

JOURNALIST: Mr Young do you feel as though you were unfairly treated by your colleagues and in particular do you resent the fact the four Parliamentary Leaders didn't advise you of the new information before they took their decision.

YOUNG: Well Milton, let me say this about the enquiry. As you know I'm on record as saying I didn't think it was necessary and I suspect we all feel that way when what we know to be true is challenged and I suspect it becomes a difficult and complex question for a government to decide when they received this new information as to how best to clear it up. As I said at the time I didn't think the enquiry was necessary and I'm pleased that I've been vindicated and that the views have been tested, my views which have been tested over three fairly exhausting weeks both by myself and my family have vindicated what I said then.

JOURNALIST: Do you think you should have been confronted by the new information before the decision was taken.

YOUNG: Well I think that's a difficulty which the four leaders have to deal with when they're given it. And obviously they chased it up and I was made aware of it after they'd received their reports back from their primary investigations. And it seemed to the four leaders then it was the best course to follow, it was the enquiry. As you know I disagreed because it was like someone giving information well Mick's not telling the truth. And I knew what the events of the day were on July 5th, I knew what had occurred and I was confident all along that Mr Black, QC, would find accordingly.

HAWKE: I should say in respect of the matter generally, a point I should have made at the beginning, that not only did Mr Black find as I've indicated in respect of Mick, but naturally he has found in respect of Mrs Young and her sister, Mick's sister-in-law, complete honesty and straightforwardness on their part. And in respect of officers, public servants of the Commonwealth, has also found no impropriety on the part of anyone else.

JOURNALIST: Mr Young do you think people were out to get you?

YOUNG: I suppose in politics they always are, sometimes you've got difficulty sort of pinpointing the enemies and I think that - I don't think that Mr Black has found anybody that was out to get me in terms of the case that's been presented. I think it's always difficult in these circumstances when someone in public office is caught up in issues like this. So I'm just happy that the report says what it does.

JOURNALIST: Do you think that although you did not behave improperly you were perhaps foolish?

YOUNG: Never been foolish.

JOURNALIST: I hope you're not going to make the same mistake again.

YOUNG: I'm not going to admit it to the Parliamentary Press Gallery anyhow.

JOURNALIST: Mr Young what tonight is your friendship like between yourself and Mr Hawke. Is it in good shape?

YOUNG: Very good shape and you'll see it in full action at the forthcoming election.

JOURNALIST: Would you expect to be involved in the forthcoming election ....

YOUNG: I'm chairman of the National Campaign Committee.

HAWKE: He's certainly chairman of the National Campaign Committee. And just let me say in respect of your question that there is and can be no suggestion that Mr Young returns to the full assumption of his portfolio in any way diminished. He reassumes that portfolio in a way in which will mean that he will expect and the Government will expect complete and undiminished discharge of his duties there, and as Leader of the House, and as he said as Chairman of the National Campaign Committee. And he will be, as he has been for many years, a very considerable thorn in the side of the Opposition.

JOURNALIST: Mr Young which particular forthcoming election is that you are referring to?

HAWKE: There's got to be one some time doesn't there?

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke despite what Mr Black has found and wide sections of the media have been saying of Mr Young that he's an accident prone Minister, is that an unfair label now for him to wear?

HAWKE: Yes.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke will the Government be moving to change the Customs Law.

HAWKE: That's a good question and I think when you read the report in full you will see that Mr Black addresses himself to this question and raises the point as to whether in fact there may not be a case for another box of 'Yes', 'No', 'Don't know'. And it's very interesting that he goes to the point of this question of the distinction between knowledge and belief and indicates that there is no definitive statement of the law on the points. So your question is a good one. I think that it will make sense that in the light of Mr Black's report that the Government should examine with the relevant Minister and officials as to whether there can be a clarification of these forms which I know personally, and which I think anyone who has travelled overseas and had to fill them in, can pose certain difficulties at times. And it's a good question you raise and I think we'll give attention to it.

JOURNALIST: Does the report deal with valuation procedures?

HAWKE: Yes indeed. I'm glad you asked that question. There's a very detailed examination of that question. And I can say this that when you read that section of the report I am certain that anyone who reads it will be totally convinced of the integrity of everyone that was involved in that evaluation. That is Mr Young, who wasn't directly involved in that, it was Mrs Young and Mrs Hughes and the Customs officials. And it is beyond any question of doubt that involved acted with complete integrity and indeed you will find from the report that the commissioner finds that if anything, on balance, the amount may have been overstated.

JOURNALIST: Mr. Hawke, if Mr. Young has done nothing wrong at all, is he to be refunded the penalty duty he has paid.

PM: What action Mr. Young would seek to take in that matter is a question for Mr. Young himself.

JOURNALIST: Could we ask Mr. Young?

YOUNG: Yes, you can. It is not at the top of my priorities.

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