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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF PRIME MINISTER ON 3AW WITH DERRYN HINCH,
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PMThere is nothing on which the government can be attacked. In their desperation they have resorted to this tactic of smear and innuendo in respect of issues for which there is absolutely no basis whatsoever. I think you know, Derryn that there is no figure in public political life who has been around for so long whose life has been such an open book as mine. I am not a crook, I am not a criminal, I'm not directed by crooks, as your friend, Andrew Peacock said. Perhaps the best illustration of what weight you can attach to these people and their tactics was provided yesterday by Mr Steele Hall, acting in collusion and conjunction and presumably under the direction of Mr Peacock. He, in the house, at question time, by way of question, accused me of sending my principal advisor, Mr Peter Barron to see the editor of the Age, to secure the suppression of a story about a judge and a safe deposit box in a Swiss bank. That statement, that allegation, was absolutely without foundation. No foundation at all, now what were the course of events? When that was put to me in the parliament at question time yesterday, I repudiated, I said my advisor, Mr Barron had certainly seen Mr Creighton Burns, but I said there was absolutely no basis to the allegation. Later that day, later yesterday, Mr Creighton Burns issued the statement. I would like listeners to hear exactly what it was that the editor of the Age said in the face of that allegation. He said, "Mr Peter Barron, principle advisor to the Prime Minister came to see me last Thursday, at his request. He did not lobby me about anything. He did not mention a High Court Judge, or Mr Juni Morosi, or anything to do with a safe deposit box in a Swiss bank, or any other bank. He did not ask me to suppress any story or to publish any story. In fact...

fact he did not ask me to do anything, and he certainly did not threaten me." Mr Burns concluded "I do not know Mr Steele Hall, and to the best of my recollection I have never spoken to him. Certainly not about any matter relating to a High Court Judge or Ms Morosi?" Now Derryn, when that statement came from Mr Burns quite unsolicited by me, I went into the Parliament after giving notice to the Opposition that I was going in to add to my answer to question time. I read that out, and I attacked the Opposition. I said, now there you are, your tactics of, innuendo of allegation are totally revealed for what they are, and gave them an opportunity to apologise. They sat there like stunned mullets. Later on in the evening the member for Boothby, Mr Steele Hall came in and acknowledged that Mr Burns had made a statement, but did not withdraw the allegation at all. He said, the information put to the Opposition in regard to the story, was corroborated from separate sources, and for that reason the Government was tested at question time. I ask you to understand what Steele Hall, Peacock are saying. They are saying that they can fabricate, make up any story, get something from two different people, three different people and say thats a corroboration. The only way that that allegation that was so recklessly made in the Parliament could be corroborated was by one of two people, that was Mr Burns or Mr Barron. Mr Barron is not in the country and certainly it isn't true. If my principle advisor is going to tell an untruth about this. Mr Burns, the man in question repudiated it and yet, these miserable, desperate and increasingly rejected people on the Opposition knowing they cannot touch this Government on policies are getting up in that Parliament, and making absolutely baseless allegations. When repudiated, by someone of the standing of Creighton Burns, repudiating them absolutely, they say "Oh, its corroborated." By definition its not corroborated because it can not be. This tactic means that you can make up a smear, an allegation and get two people to say it and because two people say it thats corroboration. DH Well outside the Parliament, outside of Parliamentary privilege where Mr Peacock cannot be touched, he did say that he believes, he said, that you associate with criminals. That was said on Nationwide last night.

PM I can assure you Derryn, that Mr Peacock's statements are being carefully looked at, I am in this very difficult position that more....

at soon as I say to you that those statements outside the Parliament are being looked at by my legal advisers what is said, I'm trying to stifle you. You are put in a no win situation.

DH Yes, I'll agree, its like if you sued Andrew Peacock, or Andrew Peacock sues you, you are Parliamentary leaders and are meant to have freedom of expression at all time. If you gag either one, it is going to look sinister.

PM and yet, I must give very serious consideration to it as I repeat to you, as I put at the very beginning of the program, there is no person who has been in public life in Australia, as long as I have who at all times has made myself open to the public and to the press. An open book.....

DH Because of what is said... in the house yesterday I can come on this morning, as long as I quote it correctly and don't add to it, and I can quote all these things about somebody saying that the Prime Minister of Australia is a crook. That you are involved in a cover up of organised crime. All those things can be said, so what do you do about it and how do you feel about it. Because you are the Prime Minister of the country.

PM I noticed at the beginning that you said that my office is demeaned, my office is not demeaned by these tactics of Mr Peacock. There is only one person, and one office that is demeaned and that is Mr Peacock and his office. Because, I would suggest it is no wonder that on the polls, the majority of Liberal voters prefer me to be in the position of Prime Minister than Mr Peacock. It is no wonder because he has been such an abject failure. What I honestly feel sorry about is that Andrew Peacock having desperately failed as the leader of the Opposition has been judged a failure by his own people hasn't got the strength of character to act decently. He knows that these allegations are not true. Does he believe that if these things were true he would have mixed with me. Had close friendly relations previously? Would he have done those things if he believed that I am a crook and directed by crooks? I mean, the question answers itself. It is the desperate tactic of a man not only rejected by the electorate but despised by his own party. The major talk here, until the last two or three weeks has been the activity generated within his own party against him.

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Now unfortunately, he hasn't got the strength of character to rise above these things, and it is a tragedy.

DH Last time I talked to you on the program, I asked you about your personal relationship with Andrew Peacock, and it had obviously deteriorated then, can it get any lower than it is now?

PM..... I don't think he can get any lower than he is now. But as far as the relations ... I simply can not accept a man who makes unfounded allegations, tells lies, and knows they are lies. This is a reflection on the nature of the man and I just am sad about it. I accept the deterioration of the character of the man. I simply observe. The majority of Liberal voters are correct in their rejection of him.

DH ... I know you have to go, but one quick question. Why did you have to leave the Chamber yesterday which triggered the final outburst?

PM Very simple, they get up and move a censure motion which everyone in the press gallery treated with contempt. I mean, it was treated with contempt by the professionals in the gallery, but treated by everyone in the Parliament. Now when it is so manifestly contemptuous I am not going to dignify it by being there. If there is a legitimate motion of censure on the Government, then of course, as I have in the past, I'll be there and as I did at the end of the last session, destroy Mr Peacock in debate. But I am not going to dignify this tactic by getting up and giving it the status of warranting a Prime Ministerial participation. That when in the course of that this sort of thing goes on and Mr Steele Hall in conjunction with Mr Peacock issues these lies then I will repudiate them. As, indeed, as I say, they have been repudiated by Mr Creighton Burns. The tragedy of all this is not the tragedy of the moral deterioration of Mr Peacock and his repudiation by his own people. That is a phenomenon of politics not of itself a tragedy. Perhaps sad for some. The tragedy is that this dispirited immoral opposition resorting deliberately to lies and being exposed as liars independently by Mr Creighton Burns; the tragedy is that they are demeaning the Parliament.

DH Yes, well that is another issue, which I know goes on at some length, I know that you are out of time, and I thank you for your time this morning.

PM ... Thank you very much Derryn.

DH ... Thank you. The Prime Minister, Mr Hawke.