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PRIME MINISTER

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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH HEATHER EWART, WASHINGTON, 16 APRIL 1986

EWART: Mr Hawke, what do you really have to offer Australia ... as a result of these talks?

PM: I have a capacity to say to them two things I think are important. Firstly, that we have a commitment from the people of the United States that the framework will be available for continued discussions by us on behalf of Australian farmers as to the implementation of elements of the United States farm program where that implementation could impact adversely on our interests. And secondly, I have the unqualified commitment of the President of the United States that the United States will take a leading role in the upcoming multilateral trade negotiations to put trade in agricultural products at the forefront of the agenda.

EWART: But that does really go that much beyond what John Dawkins was assured during his recent visit here?

PM: Yes, it builds upon the very valuable work that the John Dawkins did. And as I said before I left Australia the groundwork had been done and I have now built that into a position where I have been able to talk with the President and get the commitment of the President. And that's a commitment at the highest level.

EWART: But do you think the commitment that the United States will try and push for agriculture on the agenda at the next round of multilateral trade negotiations was perhaps something he intended doing anyway?

PM: I think there is an enhanced perception by the United States of the importance of this issue not merely immediately for themselves and their relation with the European Community but the importance for us and the rest of the world. I think we have been able to add to their perception of the importance of this.

EWART: But in reality, you can't alter the trade war between the United States and the European Community, can you?

PM: I certainly can't wave a magic wand and say here is an end to the trade war, that's true. But what I can do is to import into their considerations a range of rational argument which takes it beyond the immediate considerations which I believe would serve to confirm the view that an end has to be brought to this international trade war because there must be an end to the situation where one large group says, here is the subsidy. The other group says here is a bigger subsidy. The other

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groups says here is a bigger one. That ultimately is destructive.

EWART: But as the trade war is continuing, do you accept that the long term impact for Australian farmers remains fairly gloomy?

PM: I'm not the long term outlook is gloomy. I am just saying that in the immediate sense it is gloomy and it can only be improved and have some basis upon which you can have optimism. For the longer term future if action is begun to be taken this year to get the negotiations to have agriculture on the agenda, what has happened in the past is that you have had a different set of rules and virtually no sanctions against people are involved in the subsidies and exports of agricultural products against the very strict sanctions which apply to manufactured goods. Now, manufactured goods have to be considered in the same way as they have been, but agricultural trade has to be put into the same category. So, under the rules of GATT the same sanctions apply. I think we, by our efforts, are adding our additional impetus to the understanding that that has got to be done.

EWART: Turning now to Libya, why at your news conference were you refusing to spell out whether the American action on Libya was justified?

PM: Well, that is your interpretation. What I have said is I am not going to get into the business - I put it as a squalid auction - of saying where am I on some support meter. I, and Bill Hayden, from the very beginning on Tuesday of this week, have tried to analyse the situation on the basis of trying to point to where we go in the future and what could happen in the future. And we have the position where some have chosen to interpret it in one way and others in the opposite. I am not going to get into that auction. We have said that force in international relations is not acceptable, particularly the use of terrorism, and that the essential condition for bringing an end to this concept is the repudiation by Libya of the direction export and control of terrorism against innocent civilians. And on that basis in the United Nations we have tried to point to possible ways in the future to the resolution of this matter. Now, that is what we are going to continue to do. You can try as much as you like to say, use a word or not a word, but, as I say, it's a squalid exercise.

EWART: The United States Administration is describing Australia's response as strongly supportive and that is the way it is going to be reported in the media here. Does that concern you at all?

PM: I am not concerned about interpretations that are put on. There has been an opposite interpretation by Mr Howard. As I have said, different interpretations by other people. What I am about is to state the position. We have done it consistently in Canberra, in New York, and in Washington.

EWART: Why do you think the Administration would be making that description, though?

PM: You will have to ask the Administration.

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EWART: Well, do you think the United States action has done anything to stop international terrorism?

PM: Well, I think it should have made clear to those who are involved in it that as far as the United States is concerned their patience is not unlimited. I mean, they've taken a clear stand there. There is some evidence of dissension to the point of fighting amongst elements of the armed forces in Libya. It may have involved some undermining of Gaddafi's position, I don't know. But, again, I'm not really going to get into that speculation. My job as Prime Minister, and Bill Hayden's job as Foreign Minister, is to try and use our best endeavours to - particularly through our membership of the Security Council - to try and find a way in which there can be some negotiation or its equivalent, in this matter.

EWART: Has there been any response to your call to the United States to publicise its evidence concerning Libyan terrorist activities?

PM: No, no positive response. I have put the case. I acknowledge and accept that the United States has to make its decision in the light of the obvious advantages that there would be in the publication of this evidence against, on the other hand, their concern at the exposure of their intelligence capacities. It would be presumptuous for me to tell them what they ought to do. That is ultimately their decision. What I can do as a concerned person is to point to, what I consider would be the advantages of publication.

EWART: What are those advantages?

PM: Well, clearly there are those who are saying that this is a fabrication. It is not authentic and it can't be compelling. Now, all I can say is, I have seen the evidence, I have had the briefing. I find the material authentic. I find it compelling.

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