



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF UNEDITED INTERVIEW WITH SUSANNA BIEDENKOPF, ZDF
GERMAN TV, BONN, 28 JUNE 1989

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

BIEDENKOPF: After six years of negotiation, Australia decided not to sign the Wellington Convention, why?

PM: Because we believe in the end that it doesn't make sense if you are committed to protecting this last pristine wilderness, the Antarctic, to do it via a Minerals Convention I think that the world now at the end of the 80s is different from the beginning of the 80s when the process was started. There is now a much greater commitment I think around the world to the causes of global environmental issues. We say no mining. We say it's appropriate to have an international wilderness reserve and that a Mining Convention is not the way to get there. So we respect the work that's been done and the intentions of everyone that's been involved. Most people have been involved in it. We are now trying to get the support that we have of France and India. I think if we can get as many more nations I'll be talking to, I'll discuss it while I'm here and hopefully we'll get support here. I think that's what the world wants and I think it is what is necessary.

BIEDENKOPF: But isn't one argument that the Mineral Convention is what is the best protection and ever get -

PM: Well it's pretty hard to say that a Convention about mining is the best way of getting protection against mining. A rather glaring lack of logic in that situation I think. I don't believe now that it is appropriate to contemplate mining in the Antarctic region. We're getting more and more evidence of the fragility of this type of environment. One point which is very important is that it is the last area in the world in which it's possible to take measurements of changes in global climatic conditions unaffected by human activity. This is very important as we are now beginning more and more ... with the Greenhouse Effect. Now if in fact

(PM cont) we were to allow the emergence of a situation in the Antarctic with that natural unpolluted environment which is affected by human activities, particularly by mining and associated activities, then there would be some degradation of the environmental capacity to take those sorts of measurements which are going to be important for us and the world community, to understand what is happening and on the basis of understanding what is happening, what are the things that we need to do.

BIEDENKOPF: New Zealand started a similar initiative in '72 without success. Are you pretty positive on the results of the initiatives?

PM: We can't be dogmatic and say, 'you're going to succeed, you're going to try very hard'. But I think that we're now talking in 1989, that's 17 years on from '72. But there's one thing that we know surely is that the world is a dramatically different place, 17 years on from 1972. Part of that dramatic difference I think is an enormous acceleration in human understanding of and concern for global environmental issues.

BIEDENKOPF: What other issues are you planning to talk about while you're in Germany?

PM: Obviously there are bilateral issues, how can we increase trade and commerce between our two countries. There are enormous opportunities. The German firms that come into Australia, using Australia as a spring board into the Asian Pacific region. Likewise for Australian firms to come here using Germany as its very, very high purchasing power as well as a basis into this market of 320 million people after 1992, we'll be talking about that. We'll obviously be talking as well about international issues. We'll be very interested to hear from Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher, their perceptions of the most recent moves in the armaments field and their perceptions of developments in Australia's All these sorts of things.

BIEDENKOPF: Thank you very much. I hope you enjoy your stay.

PM: Thank you very much.

ADDITIONAL QUESTION FROM REUTERS JOURNALIST

JOURNALIST: To what extent are you willing to support the trade of flow but stabilising your economy, or put it differently, where do you see your currency ...

PM: We floated the currency. When you float the currency you don't fix it at the level in the dollar. It'll be fixed by the flow and force of market circumstances. It's not for me to predict where it's going to be. But obviously it is down significantly from the point at which we floated it some five years ago. I see it as being at levels which are going to enable Australian industry to be significantly competitive, that's the important point.

JOURNALIST: And you would continue to keep interest rates high to fight inflation ...

PM: That's a very simplistic analysis of what we've done. Interest rates are high because we've got a very high level of economic activity. It's too high and we've got to cool the economy down somewhat. I've said that interest rates will stay high as long as is necessary to achieve that objective, but no longer than that.

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