



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF ARRIVAL STATEMENT, RAAF BASE FAIRBAIRN, 12
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E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Do you support the Treasurer's move to ban the officials from Treasury and the Reserve Bank from talking to Moody's?

PM: I haven't had a chance to talk to him yet. I've been dealing with international matters. I'll no doubt hear from Paul about this. I'm sure he had very good reason for doing it.

JOURNALIST: But you weren't aware of it before it happened?

PM: Look you ought to know by now - you've been watching me for six years - I don't sit over every Minister in the discharge of his portfolio responsibilities, that's why we've got a good Government. I trust the Ministers, they do a first class job. I don't sit there watching every move they make. Why should I?

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, are you concerned that the latest Morgan Gallup poll shows your personal popularity has dropped 4% and Mr Peacock's has risen 4%?

PM: I know whose rating I'd rather have, both in terms of popularity and in terms of preferred Prime Ministership. You didn't mention that. Why not? Leave him behind a country mile on that.

JOURNALIST: Are you disturbed by the backbenchers' meeting tomorrow to talk about mortgage relief?

PM: I don't get disturbed by backbenchers' meeting. Why should I? I mean if your a Liberal Party leader or a National Party leader that's when you've got to be worried about your backbenchers' meeting. I don't have to worry about mine meeting.

JOURNALIST: You support their meeting then?

PM: Of course. It's a democratic country.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, do you want the issue of south-east forests solved before your environment statement, even if that means confronting New South Wales?

PM: ... talk with my two Ministers about that. I've asked them to be looking at it over the last week or so. I'm not making any comment about that until I have a chance to talk to them.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister do you think the travel overseas in the last month and a half has had a impact on the Government's standing with the electorate?

PM: I don't know. It's impossible to tell. But the only important response to that question is that what I've been doing has been important for the present and future welfare of Australia. I mean just look at the issues. As far as the trip to Europe and North America was concerned, the centrally important issue on that of course was the international trading environment question. There's no doubt that on that issue I was able to advance our interests wherever I went. That's going to mean that not only for the present but more importantly for the future, better possibilities not merely for Australian farmers but for the whole Australian economy. It would have been a dereliction of duty on my part if I hadn't been there advancing Australia's cause on those issues. On this two days I've been away - or three days there and back in the South Pacific Forum - no-one is going to question surely the necessity of maintaining and improving relations with the countries of the South Pacific. All the things we discussed there were of intrinsic importance. Of course in regard to driftnet fishing we have now been able to initiate a move there which I believe, will lead to not merely a regional ban on driftnet fishing but I think that will be the lead to a more extensive and I hope global ban on fishnet fishing. Now that's something which is again important for Australia, important for the region and important for the world because if we don't move on this issue we will be sitting back idly and witnessing the obliteration of a fundamental resource. Now you only have to have that exposition from me to know that what I've been about is important. It would be a very churlish interpretation which put it in any other light?

JOURNALIST: But while you've been away, for example John Button has been his characteristic self and being very honest in saying that in his own Party he's failed in his Ministry?

PM: That is a total misrepresentation. You don't think that while I'm away I don't read the transcripts and find out what's happening. That's a total misinterpretation of what he said. He didn't say he'd been a failure.

JOURNALIST: inaudible

PM: No, no, no, no. Don't misinterpret what Button has said. He's referred to a disappointment in terms of the reaction of industry to some extent. But he hasn't said he's been a failure.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, how worried are you by events in Papua New Guinea in the last week?

PM: You can't help but be worried about events in Papua New Guinea. There've been another three civilians killed there and that is disturbing. I've had the opportunity on this visit of course of having fairly lengthy discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, as well as being kept informed by our own resources. One must be worried and one can only hope that with the action that the Government of Papua New Guinea is taking now under the Declaration of the State of Emergency that they will be able to bring that insurgency in Bougainville under control and get the mine open because you've got to realise that that mine provides the best part of 20% of the Government's revenue. They can't go on indefinitely suffering that haemorrhaging of revenue.

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