



**PRIME MINISTER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH RADIO JOURNALISTS, SHERATON  
BRISBANE, 26 FEBRUARY 1990**

**E & O E - PROOF ONLY**

**JOURNALIST:** Mr Hawke, when did you find out about the New Zealand change of mind?

**PM:** Well I must say that when I was in New Zealand the Prime Minister indicated to me that this was the likely outcome but he obviously didn't want me to say anything about it. I am particularly grateful at this change of position by New Zealand because it's not just another country but it is the country after whom the convention, the proposed convention is named, the Wellington Convention. I think if it's seen around the world now that New Zealand has come aboard with Australia and France that's going to have a very significant psychological impact and it gives me great encouragement, a feeling of pride that an initiative which in the beginning was regarded as mission impossible is now shaping up as one which will be accomplished. I think that the developments in the United States look very favourable. I think it's now unlikely that the United States will ratify and if that emerges then I think we're just about there.

**JOURNALIST:** You made that point in the United States last year, that you expected the United States to come around but what are the developments in the Congress that are encouraging you?

**PM:** Well, we have in Senator Gore a very, very strong supporter of our position. He is a man who is regarded very, very highly. He is getting around him and the others who are supporting him in the Congress, a very great deal of support. As is happening in the rest of the world, so does the United States that the environmental movement is pushing this issue very strongly and public opinion is growing and growing in support of us. I think the politicians in the United States, as they come up to the mid term elections, are going to be taking account of these considerations. After all, I don't think it requires very much imagination to see that it is, as I've continuously put it, an obscenity to take the risk of mining in the Antarctic. So intrinsically the position is strong and

in terms of opinion growing up, I think the politicians are going to take notice of that.

JOURNALIST: Since your last visit have you pursued it further with the President?

PM: Indirectly and I have asked for my friend, Jacques Cousteau, who's going there shortly, to contact me after his visit. And in the light of what he writes to me, I've indicated that I'll make another approach then. It seemed to me to make sense to allow Jacques Cousteau to go there and use his influence. He'll be going to Washington and talking to people on the Hill and when I get a report from him I would on that basis, I think, contact the President.

JOURNALIST: It was only a few months ago that New Zealand was saying the only way to stop mining was to keep the treaty and they were saying flatly that they would not accept the Australian position. Why this sudden change?

PM: I think it shows the power of persuasion, doesn't it.

JOURNALIST: If you were aware of it while you were over in New Zealand why announce it now? Does it deliberately coincide with the campaign?

PM: No, no. Mr Palmer, as Prime Minister, was in a position where he'd come to the view that he thought when what I was arguing was correct. But he had to talk to his own Ministers, there are others there who had other views and he had to talk with them and persuade them so it was quite improper for me to jump the gun. As soon as he was able to get his Cabinet to the position of endorsing that he announced it.

JOURNALIST: Is it an election coup for you though?

PM: I don't know whether it's a coup but I certainly find it very, very satisfying but I think people would regard New Zealand as very important on this issue for the reasons I've put. It does give a very considerable momentum to our case, and that's the important thing rather than the election that we really do now look with a great deal of confidence in achieving that objective on which I set out last year and which, as I say, was regarded by many as mission impossible.

JOURNALIST: If the treaty is abandoned what's the next phase to getting the whole area declared a wilderness reserve?

PM: The next phase is the meeting later this year which was agreed on at the Paris meeting last year and that meeting will consider the next step and essentially on the basis of the Australia-French proposal.

JOURNALIST: That's really the deadline in a sense, time's still running out for you.

PM: I wouldn't say time was running out. I think time's running our way now. I really do believe time is running our way because the momentum is moving towards us. More and more countries are saying Australia's right. I think that there's no basis now for anyone saying, well the moratorium won't be respected. Of course it will be and that will give us time now to start at this meeting later this year, and I think more and more countries will come on board. I mean, the hard work will have to be done. The constructive work of saying alright we've spent all that time on CRAMRA now let's really do the sensible thing. It was not sensible in my judgement, it wasn't logical to be talking about saving the environment and saving the Antarctic from mining via a minerals convention. It didn't make any sense. Now the sensible thing is to start working out an effective, constructive way of protecting the environment, making it a world nature reserve by a comprehensive environmental convention.

JOURNALIST: But is there a timetable on that when you'd like to see the reserve?

PM: Well the sooner the better. But the important thing is that if the mind of the majority of nations is for that objective then we know that there will be no mining while that is being done and we'll have the time then to make sure that all our best resources are put in to creating the most effective, comprehensive convention. The important thing is that if the mind is there for that objective then nothing will happen in the meantime and it'll give us whatever amount of time is required to get an effective outcome.

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