



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH WARWICK BEUTLER, AM PROGRAM,
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BEUTLER: Two of three major newspapers have endorsed you today but the Australian rejects you. But even those papers that do endorse you, do so reluctantly.

PM: Yes, I wouldn't say it was, you know, an absolute black and white and that's, that's fair enough. I mean, I don't claim that we have been perfect, nor do I claim we're perfect now, but politics is about an imperfect world and the electors of Australia, tomorrow, have a clear choice and on that choice there is no doubt, in the judgement of many, not only in the newspapers, that it must be for Hawke and Labor.

BEUTLER: Yes, but the editorial writers and the voters seem to be saying that you've had long enough. They're sick and tired of the obfuscation, the excuses - they're not certain that the Liberals are any better than you are. What does it say about you and what does it say about our system if you have to win this election by default?

PM: I don't say that we'll win it by default. If we win on the poll of the electorate we will win because in the judgement of the majority of the people, we're the best party to govern Australia into the future and that, in my judgement, would be a correct decision. But one of the essential features, I think, in the judgement is and will be which Party is about fairness and equity as well as a capacity for economic growth and I think the outstanding, indeed, that glaring illustration, Warwick, of the relative concepts of fairness and what I come down ... is in regard to tax. Let me just give you these figures, very briefly.

BEUTLER: Very briefly.

PM: But to me they starkly set out the difference. Under the wage tax arrangement that we've just negotiated, the person on average weekly earnings at about \$28,000 a year gets a tax cut of \$7.50 a week. I, as Prime Minister, get \$13.25 - so that's the relationship, \$7.50 if you're on average weekly earnings and the Prime Minister gets \$13.25. What Mr Peacock is

proposing under his two tier system is that the person on average weekly earnings gets a tax cut of \$4.73 a week and he gets \$100 a week more than that, \$104.46. Now there you've got it -

BEUTLER: Sure.

PM: The concept of fairness.

BEUTLER: Sure, but I think the essential problem that voters are facing in this election is that they simply don't believe either of you. They don't believe you and they don't believe the Opposition.

PM: On the question of tax, on the question of tax there's no question of belief or not belief. There it is -

BEUTLER: Well they don't believe you on interest rates, they don't believe you on interest rates.

PM: Well you sit there in the comfort of your studio and assert that. I don't have any evidence to say they don't believe us on interest rates, particularly, Warwick, when the banking industry is saying that interest rates will come down if the Government is elected and not only are they saying that, but the market is saying that the coming down of interest rates depends upon Labor. You know what was on the Reuters screen the other night, they are saying a further easing in monetary policy in the next few weeks assuming, their words, assuming the Hawke Labor Government is re-elected at Saturday's federal election. So that's what the market is saying, but it depends upon us being re-elected.

BEUTLER: And they don't believe you on another statement of yours, that if you win, you'll lead the Government into the next election.

PM: But it's very easy for you to say they don't believe it. You haven't got one shred of evidence, my dear Warwick, to, to sustain your proposition that they don't believe that. You've got not one piece of evidence. All you've got is the abysmal assertion of Hewson that when the Hawke Government wins, that I'm going to last there for three months and then I'm going to resign. That's all you've got.

BEUTLER: Well -

PM: Hewson's assertion. Just understand what it means. What it means is that these people in the Opposition are frightened about the fact that the electorate seems to infinitely prefer Hawke to Peacock and so they're trying to say oh well look, if you vote for Bob, you're not going to get him. There's one person who knows, one person who knows Hawke's intention and that's a bloke called Bob Hawke and let me tell your listeners, now, unqualified, when we win on Saturday then I will be Prime

Minister for the full three year term and Mr Peacock and Mr Hewson in their desperation can try and peddle another story, but they are wrong and they are desperate.

BEUTLER: But it simply doesn't sound like Bob, Bob Hawke. Why not, why not got out on top? You win this election, you retire within a year, you leave Paul Keating or someone else a very real chance of winning the next election. Isn't that the Bob Hawke -

PM: I, I would suggest that I leave a better legacy for the Party if I lead the Party for another three years, take them into another election and they've been in for ten years and then whoever is elected to succeed me, takes over. I mean you are, you're really trying to desperately build a straw man and you haven't got the elements there, mate.

BEUTLER: OK. Andrew Peacock gave you a fright in 1984. How tough an opponent was he this time?

PM: I said before this election started and you will recall it, I said before the election started, I hope that the Liberals and the commentators make the mistake of assuming that 1990 could be judged in terms of 1984 and there is, as I see it now, a unanimous judgement that 1990, as far as the campaign was concerned, hasn't been 1984.

BEUTLER: What would Bob Hawke, as ex Prime Minister, do if you were defeated tomorrow?

PM: Well, I heard Mr Peacock saying that he wasn't contemplating defeat and fair enough, I'm not contemplating it, so, you know, I think it's a totally hypothetical question. I hope that I've shown in my public life that I have the capacity to accept victory and defeat with, with good grace.

BEUTLER: Alright. Well let's look at the other hypothetical that you are returned tomorrow. What would happen to some of the issues that you've been unwilling to talk about in this campaign?

PM: What's the issue I've been unwilling to talk about?

BEUTLER: Well, issues that you say are peripheral.

PM: Well, give me one.

BEUTLER: Privatisation, privatisation - a peripheral issue you called it.

PM: ... but you say I'm unwilling to talk about it. That -

BEUTLER: You've called it peripheral.

PM: ... it is a different proposition - I won't let you get away with that - it's a different proposition to say that I've said it's peripheral, to say I've refused to talk about it.

BEUTLER: No, I said you were unwilling to talk about it

PM: No, I'm quite willing to talk about it. Any question that's been put, I've been willing to talk about and I'll talk about it now for ten minutes if you want me to.

BEUTLER: Well, will you be pushing for privatisation of Qantas, the Commonwealth Bank? I mean, is it back on the agenda -

PM: OK, let's get it. The Commonwealth Bank, I mean, you really are somewhat uninformed aren't you? I have never argued for the privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank so why would I, why would I argue for the privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank now when I've never done it before?

BEUTLER: Is privatisation back on the agenda?

PM: Privatisation is on the agenda in the sense that I've talked about. That is that in regard to two institutions, the two airlines, we have a Committee of the ALP looking at the funding of them. If you want to say that that has privatisation on the agenda, you can describe it that way. It is a question of what's the best way of dealing with the question of the capital requirements of the two airlines. Now we have a Committee which is looking at that when I have been asked this question during the campaign, Warwick, I haven't dodged it I have said that's what's happening and when we get the report of the Committee we'll consider it.

BEUTLER: OK Prime Minister ...

PM: But it is only in regard to those two.

BEUTLER: At the start of this campaign you used that word bonkers. Have we gone bonkers?

PM: I think some people have gone bonkers but I certainly haven't and you haven't Warwick and I don't think the media generally has but it hasn't been a bonkerless sort of outcome but I don't want to identify the areas of bonkerness.

BEUTLER: OK. Good luck tomorrow.

PM: Thanks very much indeed.

Ends