

Interview with Laurie Power of 0/10 Network

14 April 1978

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QUESTION: Mr Fraser what is your approach to Mr Fukuda?

PRIME MINISTER: I won't be discussing bilateral Australia-Japan matters, because these have been covered by Mr Anthony, and indeed the normal Ministerial talks between Japan and Australia will be resuming in late June when a team of Japanese Ministers will be coming here. The Japanese Prime Minister and myself will be discussing the wider world economic issues and trade issues, because there are a number of important international forums taking place this year, multinational trade negotiations and UNCTAD meetings, which involve the North-South problems, developing world problems, and with the State of world trade it's going to be very important that the right decisions be made. We have got to get the world moving, towards an expansion of markets, an expansion of trade, otherwise I think there's going to be increasing protection, and I think especially from Europe, as people fight for a larger share of existing markets, and that could have very serious consequences for a number of nations. And I believe there needs to be a new momentum and new commitment on the part of many nations, to explore every avenue every possibility of getting world trade moving, expanding world markets, because that's going to ultimately be the only way that we can provide markets for the products from our farms and our factories and our mines, and when I say "our" I don't just mean Australia. It's going to be the only way in which there can be a full and sustained reduction of unemployment around the world.

QUESTION: Is that your approach that Australia's position will improve relatively if you can get a better world trading situation?

PRIME MINISTER: If there is a better world trading situation, of course that will help us enormously in our own economic recovery. We're greatly dependent upon world trade, as I think every Australian knows. But there are things we can do on our own account, but at the same time we are greatly affected by what happens overseas.

QUESTION: You won't be mentioning the prospects of trade or things of that nature at this time?

PRIME MINISTER: No. When I approached Prime Minister Fukuda I said that I wanted this matter to be on the major economic issues that affect all of us, and he later on is going to the United States, I've been asked to the Manley meeting in Jamaica at the end of May, which again is motivated out of the very same concerns that I've just expressed to you, and the Manley meeting, as a result of the Jamaican-German initiative is I think the first time there'll be an informal meeting of Heads of Government between developed and developing countries.

Now when you get to the formal discussions, countries tend to go there with fixed positions, hard negotiating minds, and the purpose of informal discussions, I believe, is to try and find a way through. If we get to the situation in the next three or four or five months where there isn't progress made at MTN, no progress made at UNCTAD, there will be increasing bitterness amongst developed nations, between developed and developing. I think under those circumstances there would be much greater world protectionism again particularly from Europe, and under those circumstances the world would end the year in a pretty unhappy situation.

QUESTION: One final brief point. Would you hope though that your discussions, or first meeting, with Mr Fukuda as the Prime Minister, Prime Minister, will ultimately help Australia's relationship with Japan?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I would hope so. I believe we have a very good relationship, and I was asked yesterday why are you discussing these matters first of all with the Prime Minister of Japan? I think the reason is very clear. We both live in the Pacific, we have a very significant trading relationship, we're both very significantly affected by what happens in the wider world scene, and I think that we both share these concerns, but I'll be exploring that in this coming week and identifying avenues of common interest to see if we can't independently or jointly contribute towards better solutions throughout the course of this year.

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