

Interview with Laurie Power, 0/10 Network

21 April 1978

QUESTION: Mr Fraser, are you satisfied with the response you have had from the Japanese Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER: I think there's a remarkable degree of commonality in the general approach Japan and Australia have to the current economic situations in the world. I think we both know that what happens to Japan, what happens to Australia, very much depends on the general economic situation, and I've said before the purpose in coming here was to probe what countries, individually or collectively, might be able to do to achieve an expansion of markets. If we don't achieve that we're going to be left at the end of this year with developed countries arguing about the cut-off of existing markets, and increased tensions also between developed and developing countries.

QUESTION: Can you tell us now what plan you put to Mr Fukuda?

PRIME MINISTER: The discussions are continuing, and as I think you know they've also been extended to take into account additional talks with Mr Ushiba, which will be taking place in almost a few moments time. I'm not really I think in a position to say what's going to reveal the nature of those discussions before they take place. Australia does have views about what ought to happen at MTN, about what ought to happen in the North/South dialogue, the Common Fund. We've already taken actions, and publically announced those actions, to try and break the deadlocked that had occurred between what is called the "B Group" countries, largely the developed countries, and the group of 77, the developing countries. About 10 days ago the Ministerial Meeting of all Commonwealth countries, over 30 countries were represented, broadly endorsed the view that Australia put. That included the developed countries of the Commonwealth and obviously the developing countries. I think in a sense that's an encouraging sign, because other developed countries in the Commonwealth moved, as I believe is a consequence of Australia's actions, but at the same time the developing countries didn't stick rigidly on their position. Because there has to be movement from both groups if there is to be agreement. We believe these matters need to be pushed with vigour. I'm also of course pointing out that at the MTN we must have agreements in relation to agriculture, and not just in relation to industrial goods. I think that's of vital importance to Australia, because industrial goods would cover about 40% of Japan, North America and Europe's exports, but only about 5% of our exports.

QUESTION: Is there any chance of Mr Fukuda taking to Washington your plan, for discussion with President Carter?

PRIME MINISTER: Mr Fukuda will take his own views to Washington, and if Australia needs to communicate with the United States we'd do it directly. So, I think it would be quite wrong if anyone got the view that I'm suggesting that Mr Fukuda should act as a go-between between ourselves and the United States. Also, in that context, the Vice-President will be in Australia very shortly, and we'll be putting whatever views we have very directly to the Vice-President.

QUESTION: Did bilateral trade creep into the discussions at all?

PRIME MINISTER: No it did not, no.

QUESTION: And what was Japan's attitude generally to freeing trade. One of their situations is to tighten exports at the moment, going in reverse.

PRIME MINISTER: Well they're trying demonstrate voluntary restraint on exports, because they know the pressure that their exports have put other countries under. They're also trying to expand their imports in a very substantial way, hoping to reduce their trade surplus. I believe on the basis of what I've been told that Japan takes international responsibilities very seriously indeed, but the point needs to be made that there are responsibilities on all countries in this international environment, not just on the stronger countries such as Japan. There are also responsibilities on the weaker countries, and on the United States. But there are many things that nations can only do for themselves, and maybe in the past there has been too much emphasis on what the stronger can do, and not enough emphasis on what others should do.

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