

PRIME MINISTER INTERVIEWED ON SOUTH AUSTRALIA ELECTION RESULT
MT. GAMBIER

Question

It is a wonderful reaction (inaudible) the Liberal Party as a whole. I would like to congratulate the South Australian Liberals for a tremendous victory. It has been a hard-fought campaign. The main issue has come through and the question I think is "what is the future for South Australia". Over the last few weeks people have come to understand that Labor policies have held the State back; less investment, less development, less jobs, than would have been the case under other policies. It's been held back compared to other parts of Australia.

I think South Australians have shown that they just don't want those negative policies anymore.

Question

The State Government did try to argue, or to campaign on Federal issues.

Prime Minister

I think that is one of the Labor Party's gross miscalculations. They would the Federal Budget was going to be an unpopular one. Well it has been well received as a Budget that is appropriate and fair and reasonable. It was a major part of the Corcoran-Hayden campaign, that a vote for Labor in South Australia was a vote against Fraser and the Federal Government. I always maintained, and I still maintain, that State elections are basically fought on State issues and I do that whichever way the result comes out. But to the extent that people in South Australia might have been affected by that Labor Party campaign, it was quite obviously a repudiation of that general Labor Party approach. To the extent that the Labor Party did involve Federal policies in this campaign, the result is in effect effect an endorsement of Federal policy.

Question

Were you surprised by the size of the swing to the Liberals away from the Government.

Prime Minister

I don't think really surprised. If you had asked me six weeks ago I would have thought it was a difficult result to achieve, but over the last three or four weeks many things have changed. I think that South Australians had come to focus on the issues in a very real way, as people often do in the run-up to an election. It is quite different from an ordinary poll when people aren't focussing on an election and what the real consequences are. In this campaign, their attention was very sharply drawn to the fact that existing policies in South Australia

Prime Minister (continued)

were holding that State back compared to other parts of the Commonwealth. You not only had the Liberal Party saying that, all the major employer groups in South Australia had made up their minds that if there was going to be any future for their own industries, and trading commerce, and if they were going to have any capacity to provide more employment, something had to be done. So they came out and started telling the (inaudible).

Question

What influence did the ACTU's vote on uranium have on the election.

Prime Minister

You know Mr. Hawke's words - an exercise in futility - in terms of the decision. But it certainly served to emphasise the general Labor Party approach which is anti-development. Roxby Downs -- it can be one of the greatest mines in the world - being held back because of the Labor Party decision to leave uranium in the ground. Now that sort of thing was emphasised by the ACTU debate and to an extent therefore it would have helped the Liberal Party.

Question

I think it is the first time that Australian people have voted on any issue connected with uranium. Do you feel that this is a reflection of the general electorate feeling towards mining?

Prime Minister

I suppose in the last Federal Election uranium mining was in part an issue. It wasn't all that much to the fore. But overwhelmingly I think that people are sensible about energy policies. They know uranium is an important energy source, especially for many countries overseas that don't have supplies of coal, don't have supplies of oil. Many countries are becoming increasingly dependent upon uranium for peaceful purposes. I think Australians, South Australians, recognise that we've got a role to play. We've got a commodity for export. It can provide jobs for Australians. It is undertaken under the strictest safeguards and they want us all to get on with the job, I've got no doubt.

Question

Have you spoken to Mr. Tonkin, and if so were you discussing general areas of Commonwealth-State co-operation.

Prime Minister

I spoke to him before the counting started yesterday and I spoke to him this morning just to congratulate him on the result. I will be in South Australia tomorrow for a Pacific Cities Conference, and we are going to try to meet after that for a short while.