

PRIME MINISTER INTERVIEWED BY MEDIA, OUTSIDE LIBERAL PARTY
SECRETARIAT
CANBERRA

Prime Minister

A large part of the discussion during the course of the day centred on the sorts of things that are going to happen during the 1980s. I think everyone present recognised that the Federal Coalition is critical to the sound and sensible and good government of Australia over the next decade. We are starting to see a very substantial investment in development in this country now: the \$4 billion of investment of the aluminium industry alone, \$2 billion in coal. That is just in two major industries. In the aluminium industry it can occur because not only have we got plentiful supplies of bauxite, but also we've got very great supplies of relatively cheap, by world standards, electricity based on coal. What we need to do and what the Federal Government is examining how this might be achieved in co-operation with the States, is to bring together the resources within this country, and our energy sources such as coal and electricity based on coal, to the advantage and development of this nation. This is happening in the aluminium industry in a very dramatic way. What we are interested in is to see whether a greater rate of development in the electricity industry can achieve something more. It is worth noting that about \$800 million of the infrastructure money that has so far been approved, is in electricity or electricity-based projects and greater rate of expansions, greater rate of development.

We spoke about a number of these things and how the Commonwealth and the States can co-operate together to achieve the sort of development that we wanted. I think that kind of discussion really took probably the major slice of the pie. We have developed, or spent a fair amount of time, also on our concern at the negative and destructive policies of our political opponents, policies that would place trade unions above the law; policies that were confirmed very vehemently at the Adelaide Conference; economic policies which Mr. Hawke himself called a gutless sell-out to the left; other policies in relation to uranium which Mr. Hawke called futile and totally ineffective and implying it is against Australia's interests; policies that are anti-investment and anti-development because of the attack on major resource projects through taxation or other means.

In addition, of course, the small States are very concerned at the continuing constitutional attack by the Australian Labor Party - an attack which would destroy--leave the Senate in place--but destroy the powers of the Senate and therefore the capacity of the Senate to protect the smaller or less popular States from the majorities of people in Victoria and N.S.W., especially in Melbourne and Sydney.

Prime Minister (continued)

I think it is, in a sense, disheartening from a national point of view, to see that the policies for the Labor Party that were confirmed at the Adelaide Conference, are as negative as they have ever been. In a sense, it is different personalities, but it is the Whitlam policies all over again, endorsed without any change whatsoever.

Question

You mentioned the significance of the Federal Coalition, sir, what about the State Coalition - the problems at that level?

Prime Minister

We were talking about Federal issues, and Federal matters. Anything relating to the Coalition would have taken almost seconds, maybe a minute or two. That was the attention that was given to it.

Question

You mean the problems at the State level were in fact ignored today?

Prime Minister

We weren't discussing problems at State levels.

Question

Prime Minister, it sounds very much like a rally 'round the flag exercise. Why has that been necessary given that an election is a year away?

Prime Minister

Rally 'round the flag exercise - no, that's the wrong way of looking at it. A lot of things happen in a quite routine way. We have this discussion once or twice a year on a pretty methodical basis. The last meeting was at the time of the Federal Council Meeting in Perth. We have made a practice of getting together a couple of times a year. You don't have to look upon it as unusual or extraordinary, or needing some dramatic event to build a meeting around. It is a meeting of people committed to the same political philosophy, and broadly to the same policies.

Question

What about industrial legislation, Prime Minister? What was the general feeling about it, and was there a feeling that it didn't go far enough, that Canberra should start to get tougher as Western Australia is.

Prime Minister

I think that you will find, and I think there is an appreciation of it, that with the Commonwealth's own employees through the CE(EP) Act and for the legislation that went through the Senate at 3:00 o'clock last night, that the Commonwealth is really taking to itself the kind of armoury that we believe is needed. We would much prefer not to have to use those powers, but in the circumstances in which a union, or unions, are confronting and damaging and attacking the well-being of the people of Australia, quite obviously governments, whether it is a State Government or a Federal Government in their respective areas of responsibility -- they've got to act to protect the interests of people. I think there is one area which the States are interested in - and I don't think it could happen anyway, but we are certainly prepared to look at it - if there is a union that wants to escape the provisions of a State law, if it gets de-registered in a State for example by Federal registration, they would hope that that could not happen so that they couldn't escape the consequences of State law by jumping jurisdictions as it were. I think on the same basis, if a union is de-registered in the Federal arena, we wouldn't want to see it escaping the consequence of that by achieving State registration. So there is a matter there that I think we need to look at. I am advised that it is unlikely that it could occur in any case, but we do have the discussion going on. There has been a meeting, not just from Liberal or National Party Ministers, but there have been meetings with Tony Street and Industrial Relations Ministers which is preparing papers to go before the Premiers and myself in December at the Premiers' Conference. I hope there will coming constructive matters coming out of that, involving all governments.

Question

Do you feel that there is a risk that (inaudible) risk of worsening industrial confrontation. (Inaudible).

Prime Minister

No, I wouldn't have thought so. I think that there is a feeling that governments are more determined and that governments know that they have to stand up and protect the interests of the average people right throughout this nation. I haven't got the slightest doubt that that is what people out in the street, people in their homes, want.

Question

Prime Minister, your opening statement was very political. Do you have an electoral, election timetable in mind?

Prime Minister

No, I don't. (Break in tape).

Prime Minister (continued)

... to go to that Adelaide Conference and know the total madness of the policies that the Labor Party committed itself to. I was very modest in my language when you relate the language to the policies that it was describing.

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