



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT - PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE -  
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E & O E - PROOF ONLY

PM: Ladies and gentlemen, I thought I'd just make a brief statement about the visit which will commence later on today and then be available for any questions you'd like to ask.

I'm going to refer firstly to the visit to Thailand. As I said in the Parliament yesterday, of course I'm looking forward to that visit with Bill Hayden to meet Prime Minister Prem and Foreign Minister Siddhi. We will naturally be talking about two ranges of issues - the bilateral issues between our two countries and the question of concern recently in matters raised particularly by the Singaporean Foreign Minister: our relations with ASEAN.

While I'm there I shall making two important statements, one on regional political issues and the other on regional economic issues. I can't stress too much the importance that we attach to this visit. It will be the first visit to Thailand by an Australian Prime Minister since my Labor predecessor, Gough Whitlam, was there in 1974. On the actual ASEAN issue, as I said in the Parliament yesterday, we believe that it's appropriate now that these issues should be discussed in the talks in Thailand. Bill will be following them up when he goes to Indonesia in talks with Dr Mochtar. And I believe, and I'm quite confident, that out of these direct discussions there and Bill's follow up in Jakarta, and the opportunities that I'll have in Dehli to talk with the representatives of Singapore and Malaysia, I'm quite confident that we will be able to have a clear understanding of what is basically an identical position on the major thrust of our concern about Indo-China.

The purpose of the discussion, of course, will not simply be to clear up those points but in the process I will be emphasising, as Bill and I have, this matter of importance that this Government is going to make its decisions in regard to all national questions as a sovereign, independent nation. And on the basis of the assessment of this Government of what the interests of Australia demand. Out of all those discussions, both there and in Bangkok; Bill's in Jakarta, my further discussions in India, we will continue to see what we can do to try and help the resolution of the situation in Indo-China. Repeating as both Bill and I have said from the beginning that we don't in any way over-estimate our capacities in that regard or under-estimate the difficulties of the issues with which we're dealing.

PM: cont...

The second stage, of course, is the visit to Dehli for the purpose of the CHOGM meeting. I'll make a couple of preliminary comments about that and then go to some of the issues. Obviously it's my first CHOGM meeting and I and my Government attach importance to the meeting. It gives the opportunity of bringing together heads of government from a wide and diverse range of countries to come together by certain interests. Naturally enough I'm looking forward to the opportunity that this will provide of meeting a range of leaders from the Commonwealth countries many of whom I have not yet had the opportunity of meeting.

Coming to the conference itself. There are, as we see it, two major agenda items at the meeting. One, if you like, dealing with the international political situation and the other with the international economic scene, particularly as that international economic situation effects the welfare of developing countries. I'd just make these points generally about these major agenda items as far as we are concerned.

I will be making what I hope will be useful and constructive contributions to these two major agenda items. I will not be attempting to make any dramatic new initiative nor, may I say, will I be adopting positions at the conference on themes which are different from those which my Government pursues at home.

As far as the first general item is concerned - the international political situation - I will be stressing the great importance that our Government attaches to the need for constructive and realistic approaches in the area of disarmament and international arms control. There are two particular points that I'd make in that regard as to why we have a deep interest in that. Firstly, given that we have in this country joint facilities which are significant in the whole question of the verification of arms control, we have a right therefore to have a position on this issue. We are particularly concerned for that reason. And, of course, secondly, and it's heightened somewhat by the recent decision that the Government has taken in regard to the supply of uranium - we have a particularly vested interest in making sure that the non-proliferation treaty is made as effective as possible and that there be the strictest adherence to the principles in that treaty..

On the international economic issues agenda, on behalf of our Government I will be urging that there should be flexible and realistic responses to the serious contemporary international situation. Now, of course, finally for any of the countries represented at CHOGM, as for indeed many other countries in the world, ultimately their economic well-being will be primarily determined by the sets of economic decisions that they make themselves. But as we know we all live in an inter-dependent world and we will be arguing that it's crucial that the domestic policies of the major countries, and particularly of the United States, should be of a kind which are not going to of themselves to involve avoidable economic hardships for the rest of the world.

PM: cont...

And that of course particularly refers to the adverse impact that there will be on the rest of the world in an economic and trading sense if there's a continuation of large domestic deficits in the United States. And of course what is required in current economic difficulties internationally is a strengthening of the international institutions whose primary concern is to facilitate the economic development of the less developed countries. And we will be in the contribution that I make at CHOGM stressing that point so that there can be a restoration of the opportunities for growth and the creation of a free and open international trading system. And while I will be addressing those issues in those general terms in the contribution that I make I will hope to be making some specific contribution to the program on those issues.

In respect of current political items may I just say that obviously I will be looking forward on behalf of Australia to hearing from other Commonwealth countries and the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Sonny Ramphal, as to their assessment of the current position in Grenada. You know on behalf of the Australian Government that I've made quite clear that we are not going to be providing armed forces for the peace-keeping force. We will consider whether there is any other contribution that we, together with other Commonwealth countries, may be able to make other than the contribution of armed forces to any peace-keeping there.

I shall also, of course, be registering the concern of our Government at the irresponsible unilateral declaration of independence by the Turkish section in Cyprus and as I said yesterday I will be indicating that we will be prepared with our Commonwealth colleagues to take whatever steps may be possible to restore the unity and sovereignty and territorial integrity of the island and to safeguard the legitimate interests of the two major communities on the island.

Just finally may I refer to the fact that, of course, the general question of Southern Africa will be a matter of discussion at the conference either specifically in formal sessions or in the corridors and I will be indicating the strengthening of the position of Australia as a result of recent decisions by our Government.

One that might be regarded as a minor item, but as you will appreciate is a matter of some particular interest to me in regard to the operation of the Commonwealth itself, I believe that the initiative taken two or three years ago to establish a Commonwealth Trade Union Secretariat is a sensible one.

I will be indicating that I think that the effectiveness of the Commonwealth itself will be strengthened in addition to the regularity and formalisation of the meetings of heads of governments that other institutions within the Commonwealth also seek to have a degree of co-operation which is reflected I think usefully in the establishment of the Commonwealth Trade Union Secretariat.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's all I would like to say at this stage. I'm open to any questions if you'd like to address them.

DENNIS GRANT: Mr. Hawke, in respect of this Bretton Woods proposal which you will be specifically addressing, could I ask you a question, but could I ask you to answer it in two ways, firstly as an economist and secondly as a Prime Minister.

PM: They are mutually exclusive are they? OK, I'll try.

GRANT: Will you be supportive of the proposal for ...

PM: Speaking as an economist - it really is an unreal dichotomy you are putting to me - as an economist let me say this. We share the concern of Mr. Muldoon who is identified as the author of these proposals. We share the concern of Mr. Muldoon and others about the basic issue which is letting them make this proposal and that is a feeling that the world of the 1980s is a very different one from that of the immediate post-war period in which the institutions were established and that there needs to be an examination of the best way in which the international community can provide the support system and the stimulatory mechanisms which are going to address the problems, particularly of the developing world. And so we recognise that there have been difficulties in the operations of those instruments, particularly the IMF and the World Bank. We will be seeking to say that the first emphasis should be upon trying to make those institutions more effective and you will appreciate that steps are under way to try and bring that result about, including, I'm pleased to say, the initiatives of the United States administration in regard to their commitments to the IMF. Now I believe that if you look at the way in which Mr. Muldoon has been talking about these proposals there has been some change in his approach in that he is not now stressing so much the gathering together of another great international conference, but he seems to be talking now more about - at least in the first step - of some core group of leaders of some nations. So, both as an economist and as a Prime Minister, let me say, we will be indicating our sharing of the concern about what is a real problem, but our tendency will be towards seeking to make the existing institutions more effective. That does not preclude the possibility perhaps at some further stage of looking at the possibility of some conference, large or small, but I think that is the important first step.

KEN BEGG: Prime Minister, do you have any reason to believe that the Americans may have been responsible in some way for our difference of opinion with ASEAN, particularly the Singaporean Foreign Minister?

PM: No, I don't think the Americans have been responsible. I think that the past record under previous Labor and non-Labor Governments in this country would indicate a tendency at times for those sorts of problems to arise autonomously from within some of the ASEAN countries. You would be aware of the difficulties that the previous Fraser Government had with ASEAN,

and particularly with Singapore in regard to a number of these issues. You remember the civil aviation matter and so on and the question when they were no longer prepared to recognise the Pol Pot regime. So there is a record which shows that the current difficulties are not something which has just arisen now. Now, I am aware of what has come out in one newspaper in this country relating to alleged off the record background briefings which now seem in some respects to need a new definition, but I don't want to enter into that. It seems to me that that is a matter between that newspaper and with that correspondent and the Americans. I notice the press release that has been put out by the United States Embassy in which they deny the thrust of that story and they make the point, which I think is a perfectly valid one, it is not in the United States interests, it is not in ASEAN interests and not in Australian interests to have any significant divergences or public disputes. That seems to me to be an obviously correct statement and I accept it. It is conceivable that in some background conversations there have been some emphases made. I don't accept that if that has happened that that in any way reflects the position of the United States administration. I am particularly pleased to note in the press release from the Embassy, Ken, they go out of their way to stress their pleasure - if I can put it that way - with the statement on behalf of the Australian Government by Bill Hayden in regard to the ANZUS situation.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, do you think that as a result of the current problems with the ASEAN countries that the Australian initiative concerning Vietnam is now a lost cause?

PMI wouldn't say it is a lost cause, but I think it is right to get that initiative, as you call it, into its perspective. I repeat what both Bill Hayden and I have said from the beginning. We haven't tried to overstate what it is that we are about nor the difficulties of the objective of getting a more constructive dialogue between all the parties to the issue. No, I think that the conditions which made it realistic to think about that still pertain. That is that despite the current diversion, if you like, our relations with the ASEAN countries are sound and good. Our relations with China are excellent. Our relations with the United States are excellent and we do have a capacity for dialogue with Vietnam. Now, all those basic conditions still pertain. I don't think anything that has happened changes those basic conditions. Therefore, within the limitations that we acknowledged at the beginning, I think there is still a capacity to try and facilitate ..

JOURNALIST: Mr. Hawke, without pre-empting the talks in Bangkok, do you see the emphasis in the discussions over the rift in ASEAN being on reclarifying Australia's position on Kampuchea, or telling the ASEAN nations that Australia will determine its own policy?

PM: Well, I think it is a melding of both. You will be aware that I won't be having to say anything new in Bangkok for both Bill Hayden and I within the Parliament and elsewhere have emphasised as strongly as we can our view about the situation in Kampuchea which is in regard to the fundamentals at one with the ASEAN countries. We have criticised as strongly as it is possible to do the invasion of Kampuchea by the forces of Vietnam and have indicated that the withdrawal of those forces is a necessary precondition of the emergence of an acceptable condition in Kampuchea. So I don't have to go to Thailand and say that for the first time. I think the task is to make it clear to the Thai leaders that that is our position, that we have stated it publicly and we reiterate it to them. Within the context of doing that I will, of course, be explaining the reasons why we did not co-sponsor the ASEAN resolution on Kampuchea and I will be emphasising in that context that of course it is not only the right, but indeed the responsibility of any Australian Government in assessing its position on these matters to do so independently and in a way which reflects our judgement of the best interests of this country. Let me conclude by saying that I find - in these circumstances I find no difficulty or contradiction in that situation in that what we adjudge to be in Australia's best interest and what we believe is the right assessment of the position in Kampuchea. I see no basic divergence between that judgement and that analysis on our part and that of ASEAN.

JOURNALIST: Mr. Fraser put a great deal of credence and significance on the Commonwealth and indeed CHOGM. Can I ask if you put that same form of significance and credence on the meeting that essentially can't force an issue and doesn't have the power to force through decisions that they make?

PM: Well let me make 2-3 comments about that quickly. I am not in the business of trying to denigrate my predecessor. He is past and nothing is served by engaging in that exercise. I tried gently in my opening remarks to make the point that I am not going to use CHOGM as an opportunity for appearing to put positions or initiatives which are not consistent with policies that we put at home. Secondly, I would say that I don't think it is a fair assessment to down-grade CHOGM in the way I think was implicit in your question because their track record has some significant plusses in it. Indeed, I think no other institution internationally could have produced the outcome in Zimbabwe, that did in fact come out of the Commonwealth. So I think the value of the Commonwealth is to recognise its strengths and its limitations. You tended to emphasise its limitations. I think once you approach it in that way there is the capacity of getting the best out of it.

JOURNALIST: Mr. Hawke, how important do you think it is for Australia to develop and broaden its links with Vietnam, particularly as part of the initiatives which you have referred to. And secondly, are we prepared to do this if countries such as China and the United States make it clear that they oppose this approach?

PM: I think the correct answer to that, Paul, is along these lines. I think it would be against the interests of Australia (inaudible) if we were to say look, it is important above all else that we strengthen the relations with Vietnam and say that could conceivably have certain plusses about it. You have got to put these things in the balance. It is tremendously important for the future of this country. There is nothing more important for the future of this country than that Australia has very sound and constructive relations with the range of countries in our area because the future welfare of our children and their children is going to depend upon Australia being able positively to be linked into the very significant economic development which has been, is and will continue to take place in this area. We as a Government are not going to do anything in respect of one country which if pursued mindlessly would prejudice our capacity so to link in to the optimal extent with the other countries. I think the secret, if I can put it that way, is that we have to understand and the other countries of the area have to understand, that it is in none of our interests that Vietnam continues to be in a situation of virtual isolation in the international community resting solely - almost solely if I can put it that way - on a relationship with the Soviet Union and so I hope that gradually through these processes of dialogue to which I have referred and that there will be able to be developed a situation not simply where we are able to develop an effective relationship with Vietnam, but that would be part of a process in which Vietnam itself is brought broadly back into the community of nations. Now that is, I think, a correct statement of objectives and principles. I can see that giving effect to those objectives and those principles may create difficulties, but I believe that it is capable of being achieved.

JOURNALIST: Can I bring you back, just for a second to a question raised by Ken Begg earlier? Apart from the official document put out by the US Embassy yesterday, have you had any personal assurances from the Americans that there are no basis in these claims that have been made consistently over the last couple of days and not just by the Sydney Morning Herald.

PM: I had, as you know, a discussion with the United States Ambassador recently and you would imagine that we discussed this issue and without going into the details of that discussion, it is fair to say that he did give me that assurance.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, could I ask you on a different subject - a French business daily has reported that - quoting you as saying that Australia is prepared to review uranium exports on certain conditions and you are quoted as saying "we shall deliver 250 tonnes of uranium late in 1984".

PM: Yes, that has been brought to my attention. Let me say unequivocally that that report is wrong. There is no foundation for it and to save your time I merely indicate that there is a transcript - a full transcript of that conversation that I had with the French journalist on 8th of this month and that is available in my office.

JOURNALIST: Sir, Mr. Cheysson said yesterday he would be surprised if the Australian Government did not meet the commitment on the contracts. Do you think he has got reason to be surprised?

PM: Well, I simply put the position as it is. I don't think that the putting of that position is aided by my commenting upon the state of mind of Mr. Cheysson. The position is that we indicated that we are not going to deliver uranium to France at any point before the due date which is the end of the latter part of 84, as you know. We have indicated quite clearly that we will continue to have discussions with the French. We will be having the Slattery enquiry and together in both ways we will be trying to achieve a situation where the French would not be persisting with their tests. Let me make the point that it is quite clearly not in Australia's interests to create a situation of disarray, not merely with France, but with the European community and that is something, of course, that we are not seeking to achieve. It would be futile to try and achieve that position but at the same time we have to take account and I take account and the Government takes account of the well-based concern about the actions of the French in regard to nuclear testing and so our current position is clear. We will continue to address ourselves to it. Both Bill Hayden and myself and other relevant Ministers and nothing is served by speculating about a future position. We are not, as I say, going to be making any early deliveries. We will be addressing ourselves to the situation in the hope that we will be able to have an acceptable situation between us and the French on this issue.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, could you describe the circumstances in your meeting, some years ago with a man described by the Opposition last week as having mafia connections or a mafia background?

PM: Yes, I can. Before I do that can I take it that there are no further questions on the international ... Yes, let me make it quite clear that as I think you all understand, the meeting that you refer to was one of total innocence and one-offedness. In 1978 I went to a - I don't know what you'd call it - a cafe/bar that had been suggested to me as an interesting place near where I was staying. I went there with David Combe, who for his own reasons has seen fit with recent circumstances to raise this issue. And spent



a couple of hours there and this gentlemen whose name - what was it Sal Ameno or whatever it is - apparently was there - a somewhat Daman Runyonesque character, as I recall - but may I say if I saw him as he walked into this room again, I wouldn't recognise him. I never saw him again and left and that was it. I wouldn't have known what he was then. It has been indicated to me subsequently what he was and is and that was the beginning and the end and I don't imagine that the gentleman, Mr. Combe, who has seen fit to raise this issue, suggests that that meeting was established that he has mafia connections or links and, of course, that is true equally as it is with me.

JOURNALIST: Sir, did you have any indications since then that you may have been filmed or photographed by the FBI as you were coming or going?

PM: No, I had no indications then or since. I'm not in constant communication or even unconstant communications with the FBI.

OAKES: They didn't send you the negatives?

PM: NO, I'm not aware of anything like that, Laurie.

JOURNALIST: Can you recall anything that was discussed with the gentleman ...

PM: No, I can't. I can't. I can just remember that David and I were rather amused by the way the fellow talked and he was a character.

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