



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER AND
DERRYN HINCH, 3AW 5/3/84

E. & O.E. - PROOF ONLY

HINCH: Over the past 18 months you must feel pretty good
way it's turned out.

HAWKE: Yes generally speaking Derryn that's right. I think we have
delivered on the major problems and the one that's basic to everything
else and that is national reconciliation. Australia's a much better
country now - it's more cohesive, less confrontationist society and
that's at the foundation of the other good things that are happening.

HINCH: You said when you came into office that your Government would
make mistakes, you've admitted at the National Press Club that one
mistake shall we say, was the wording and the handling of the Assets
Test legislation, what happens if this panel that you have announced,
if it recommends that there be no assets test legislation?

HAWKE: Well firstly let me say that I don't believe that it would, but
if it were to do that obviously we would have to look at it, but I
think really there is no argument with the great majority of Australian
that the concept of an assets test is right. That wasn't the issue, it
was the uncertainty that arose in the minds of a number of people - who
would be covered, whether they might be adversely affected and there
was also some concern about possible anomalies in the system
that was proposed. Now as I have said we have to accept some respons-
ibility for this uncertainty and I think what we will see as a result
of the committee of inquiry is an indication of the correctness of the
principle and hopefully I would think as a result of those discussions
from such a broad representative group an indication of a more effective
and acceptable way of giving effect to the principle.

HINCH: But that would be one of the options that that panel could
come up with, say, that we don't believe in the assets test and we
shouldn't have one.

HAWKE

HAWKE: Well you say that but I reject that there was any problem because the community obviously have shared the view of Mr. Justice Hope to completely endorse the Government's handling of that issue.

HINCH: Well I might say that you did lose Mick Young for six months.

HAWKE: Yes and of course that was a loss but Mick is now back in the Ministry and performing very well.

HINCH: With only one year in office but already there is a lot of talk, you were on 'Sunday' yesterday morning on the Channel 9 show talking about the possibilities of when an election would be held. When you say it happened 22 times before and you quote all the examples, how does that gel though with the things that, I think you had said, and Mr. Hayden had said that criticising Malcolm Fraser for having early elections?

HAWKE: Well it um, in the case of Malcolm Fraser where it arose was a situation where he had control of the two Houses earlier and made a specific decision to go early and upset the pattern that had existed in the past. Now all I am saying is in these circumstances that the Constitution is there, we can't change that. Under the Constitution there must be an election by the middle of '85 in the Senate which is a general election that goes right across the country. Now what I'm saying is that it would make sense it seems to me to have the House of Reps early so that it can coincide with the one that must be held to avoid having one election this year and another election next year, but what we are also considering is putting at the same time a referendum proposal which would provide for simultaneous elections so that the people could be sure then that this was the last time you were going to have a circumstance where you might be having unnecessary number of elections.

HINCH: Could you give an assurance that if you hold an early election and get things back into sync. that you would give a commitment that your second term of government would run its full term?

HAWKE: Well I'm sure you could, and as I say the important thing Derryn, would be if you passed the referendum proposal providing for simultaneous elections, then that aspect of the problem is covered. But obviously one of the, I think the problems of government in Australia, is that we don't have long enough terms of office. I have always felt that.

HINCH: I would agree with you. Even the length of time that has been given to you or to other governments, hasn't been used up. You have got Neville Wran, who not that long ago was saying that you have got to get rid of the Russian roulette form of governments, of snap elections being called, yet at the weekend he has called an election six months early.

HAWKE: Yeah well I agree with his decision there for the simple reason I think that unless you have been up here, Derryn, it's hard to get the feeling of the impossibility of government that has been created by this incessant resort to allegation, smear, innuendo and despite the fact that where the inquiries have been held the allegations in each of the three cases have been found to be unfounded the Opposition continues down this track and I think it needs to be cleared up.

HINCH: So you agree with them going early?

HAWKE: In these circumstances, I think indeed that from the reaction that I've got from people they say, well we can understand these circumstances and clearly a segment of the media here is of that view that it is an appropriate course of action. Really Derryn until you, unless you are in it you just can't understand how pervasive is this attack - it's gone on and on and on - well I don't think a government is in a position where it can concentrate on government where it has got to deal with allegations and where at every occasion where they have been dealt with so far and followed up by investigations which take a long time, have been shown to be unfounded.

HINCH: But you see there are couple of points: One is that Neville Wran by saying that you can't govern with this sort of thing going on, he's virtually saying that I can't govern, I've got 66 seats out of 99 seats and I can't govern and he now he is going to appoint this new Commissioner to look into things, he could do that without having an election and he could push it all towards the Commissioner.

HAWKE: I think he's going to give the people an opportunity of saying whether they want this sort of process of opposition to be continued. What you have got to remember here is that in NSW you knock over opposition leader after opposition leader after opposition leader, now the normal processes of conducting an opposition have been abandoned by these people here so instead of dealing with issues and putting up alternative policies they have just concentrated on allegation wild allegations against anyone that comes into their sights, and this

has just produced a situation now which has been compounded by the fact that the judiciary has been attacked by their Federal colleague, Sinclair in the most horrendous way I can remember in the history of this country. Now the whole system has been brought into question in this way and I think government is entitled to say look, you say whether you really think whether this sort of thing is acceptable or not. I think it will very substantially clear the air.

HINCH: Surely when, if Mr. Wran is re-elected and the opposition needs an 11% swing to beat him, if he's re-elected and I assume he will be, what is to stop, that's not going to stop the allegations.

HAWKE: Well, two things about that Derryn, one, I think the opposition will understand that they have played it badly, that people really want a more constructive approach to opposition than that, and secondly, I think it will mean that there will be a much greater reluctance on the part of people to make baseless allegations, or allegations which are founded simply on hearsay, that it will introduce a much more astringent approach, so that we won't have a position where there is not going to be a concern with the administration of justice and of government. But that people are not just going to simply make wild allegations, that they will have to put up or shut up. It seems to me that that's a sensible approach.

HINCH: Well some of the allegations have been made since last year and in bi-elections since then there have been swings of between 10% and 14% against the Government and I wonder with Bob Hawke campaigning so strongly for Neville Wran up there if there is a swing of that magnitude, even an 8-10 % swing, whether that will reflect on you and or clout, your delivery power?

HAWKE: Well if I just make decisions on the basis of how it is going to affect my popularity or delivery power then that's one way of conducting yourself, it's not the way I conduct myself, I see an issue there where NSW is an important state, I see a position where Neville Wran is a man I have known for a very long time, his integrity and honour are something that I respect and about which I have no doubt. He is under attack, his government is under attack. It is the largest and economically most important state in Australia. It was important in the beginning of the revival of the fortunes of the Labor Party, now I'm not going to turn my back on that.

HINCH: No but there is things like the early prisoner release system and these sort of arguments I suppose I should be talking to Premier Wran about rather than to you...

HAWKE: I would have thought so.

HINCH: Yes but you have tied yourself very tightly to the Wran administration.

HAWKE: It is not a question of tying myself to the Wran administration. I will say that the Premier and his government have done a very good job. Noone, including the Premier, is going to be saying anything within a government, within an administration there may not be some problems. Let those problems be addressed by the proper judicial processes and if it shows improper practices then let justice take its course. And I certainly say that quite clearly. The processes have been set up and you won't find me if those processes come out and say this is wrong, that person has done something wrong. I won't be seeking to defend that person or that situation, but what I will defend is this Premier and the record of his government.

HINCH: Now this morning you have been launching Paul Kelly's book, one that is a very good book, "The Hawke Ascendancy",

HAWKE: I'm about to do that.

HINCH: You are about to do that.

HAWKE: That means I'm going to have to leave you pretty soon.

HINCH: Alright. Well before you go off to launch the book, all the reviews about it, the excerpts that have been printed over the past weekend which I'm sure you have seen, I know you saw the book before it was printed, the headlines all say things like, National Times, "The inside story of how Hawke knifed Hayden". In his book himself Kelly refers to you playing a direct role in the assassination of Bill Hayden. Now you recall after you got the leadership you attacked Richard Carlton when he said how does it feel to have blood on your hands and you got very upset about it, does this give any sort of credence now to what Carlton was talking about?

HAWKE: No it gives that individual no credence at all, I mean if you want a person lacking in any sense of objectivity and impartiality you have named him. No it doesn't, obviously in politics and there has been no attempt on my part to disguise it, you have to talk with people, you have to try and get numbers. That of course happens and

we know the result but the point I was making that in the end as distinct from blood on the hands the opposite was true, that in the end Bill Hayden took the view that the best interests of the party were served by the change taking place.

HINCH: On the heavy pressure of the Richardsons and the Bottoms

HAWKE: ... pressure from Sen. Button, that's right. But in the end there were two courses, Bill could have fought on I suppose and you could have had a bloody battle in the Caucus, now that is not what happened and what annoyed me about the individual that you mentioned on the ABC was that in fact it did very little justice to Bill Hayden's decision because he took the alternative course which he believed was right and best for the party.

HINCH: What changed Sen. Button's mind to support you? Do you know?

HAWKE: You said before you should be talking to Wran about NSW, I think you should talk to John Button about that.

HINCH: I will do that. I know you have to go Mr. Prime Minister, but may I ask you one more personal question from your Canberra Press Gallery, what are you going to do about the Press Gallery, are you in favour of moving it into the rose garden?

HAWKE: No I'm not in favour of moving it into the rose garden, it won't be moving into the rose garden.

HINCH: Oh, well that will be good news that I can pass onto Canberra. Thank you for your time. Bye bye.