



## PRIME MINISTER

E. & O.E. - PROOF ONLY

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW ON JOHN LAWS PROGRAM, 2UE, 5 MARCH 1984

LAWS:

And we welcome the Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke. Good Morning.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good Morning John.

LAWS:

Good to see you looking fit.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you.

LAWS:

Been out in the sun?

PRIME MINISTER:

A bit.

LAWS:

Playing tennis?

PRIME MINISTER:

Not recently unfortunately.

LAWS:

Good game.

PRIME MINISTER:

It's the best.

LAWS:

How's your backhand?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think it's effective, yes, it's effective.

LAWS:

I have terrible trouble with the backhand because I wiggle my hip round. You'll tell me I have got to lock that hip.

PRIME MINISTER:

And get that shoulder moving as well. You'll have to come up and have a game John.

LAWS:

Like to.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good. Done.

LAWS:

You've had your shoulder into it for 12 months today.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes that's right.

LAWS:

12 months that you've enjoyed.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes.

LAWS:

12 months that's been good for the country?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think so John, yes. Well when I say I think so you can point to the objective evidence. In the 12 months before we came in about 150,000 jobs disappeared. Since April there has been about 140,000 jobs created. The unemployment percentage has come down, inflation has come down, interest rates have come down. So those are pretty important tests, I think, for the average person John.

LAWS:

Do you think that some of that might have come to fruition even had the Fraser Government stayed there? Do you think that the breaking of the drought, for example, had an effect?

PRIME MINISTER:

Obviously the breaking of the drought has helped and I have made it quite clear all the way along the line that the breaking of the drought, the United States recovery have been pluses. We have obviously got to acknowledge that. But basically the substance of the Australian recovery has been founded in the new attitude, the new cooperation, the absence of confrontation. Industrial disputes are the lowest they have been for 15 years. People are now working together rather than dissipating our resources fighting against one another and specific policies - I mean the housing industry, that didn't depend upon the drought or the United States recovery. It was down on its knees now we have turned it round by specific policies - the First Home Owners Scheme, increase in funds to the public housing sector. So it has been Government policies and attitudes we have engendered which have been basically important.

LAWS:

What do you regard as the greatest achievement of the first 12 months?

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't think there is any doubt John that the greatest achievement is what I mentioned to you a moment ago. It is the end to confrontation. We had become as you know, you've talked about it, a very divided society where everybody was fighting one another. We were wasting time, wasting resources. I promised national reconciliation. I think we have gone a very long way to achieving that. That's the thing of which I'm proud of.

LAWS:

Yes, now do you see that as a Bob Hawke achievement or as a Labor Government achievement?

PRIME MINISTER:

We have all been involved in it. I have had to give the leadership. I guess the concept of the National Economic Summit was very much a Hawke concept but it worked because all my Ministry and the people around me worked to make it work. So I claim some personal involvement and credit. I certainly have some personal pride in it, but it couldn't have happened without everyone around me making this sort of approach central to their own approach.

LAWS:

Could it have happened without Bob Hawke?

PRIME MINISTER:

I doubt if the concept of national reconciliation was there in anyone else's eyes. I certainly had been the one who had been giving expression to that and particularly in terms of the Summit and what flowed from it it is a matter of record that those were my ideas. But I don't want to waste time on that aspect of it. The important thing is that all the people around me in the Government have worked themselves according to these ideas. They have applied their very considerable talents to making it work. It has been a team effort.

LAWS:

Yes. I get to talk to a lot of staunch Labor supporters, both privately and publicly. Some argue, and some argue quite vehemently, that the aims and the achievements of Bob Hawke are very often quite different to the Labor Party. Are they?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I think the correct answer is this; that if you look back over the 12 months John, we have seen more done in that 12 months to implement Labor policies probably than in any 12 months of any previous Labor Government. At the same time I have been quite astringent in saying that we have a basic obligation not just to the Labor Party but we have a basic obligation to the community as a whole, and essential to that, as you know I have talked over the years to you about this, is a healthy private sector. If you haven't got a healthy private sector where 3/4 of our people are employed then the country is not going to be working well. Now the emphasis that I have given on this relationship between the public and the private sector to get a healthy private sector going may be an emphasis that some people in the Labor movement haven't in the past given.

LAWS:

Does that worry you?

PRIME MINISTER:

No because I know that we're right on this.

LAWS:

What's more important, the people of Australia or the Labor Party?

PRIME MINISTER:

There is no question of what is more important, the people of Australia are the number one responsibility. They must come first and the Labor Party must understand that. Any political party must understand that.

LAWS:

Do you think the Labor Party does understand it?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes. Just let me make a point - sorry to interrupt you - if you look at the polls - I am not talking about just mine and the Government's, but the important point is look at the proportion of Labor supporters where they are saying that over 90% of Labor supporters are saying they support the approach that I am adopting in this respect, so the evidence is there.

LAWS:

I think it's refreshing, and I think that is probably an understatement, to hear a Prime Minister say that he believes that the people of the country are more important than his political party and its beliefs, you're saying aren't you?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I think that they are not inconsistent. I mean my first, and I say unequivocally, is that the people are more important than the party. There is no question about that. And I am in the fortunate position, John, where I believe that a sensible application, a sensible moderate application of the philosophy and policies of the Labor Party are consistent with the interests of the people. But if there ever came a point where I believed that the interests of the people of Australia required that a particular point of policy not be implemented then, then my view would be that the interests of the people came first and I believe that the great majority of Labor people would support that approach.

LAWS:

Yes, you have no guarantee that they would so what you have just said is a very brave thing to say because what you are saying is if it came to a point where you believe something to be right and the Labor Party disagreed, you would prefer to stay with the people of Australia than stay with the Labor Party?

PRIME MINISTER:

I didn't, I mean you are now, and I understand you are having fun and (INAUDIBLE) you can finish up with a headline if you want to.

LAWS:

(Laughs) Well I don't want to disappoint them.

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh no, well they are indebted to you, but you see I have been around for a while John as you know. What I am saying is that the Labor Party itself, I think the great majority of the Labor Party understands this. I mean you have say a particular piece of a platform. Now you can have circumstances where it was quite clear that to introduce, act on that piece of the platform at that time would be against the interests of the community. So you don't do it then. Now what I'm saying is that I believe that that sort of attitude which I have is one which the Labor Party understands, the great majority of them understand, so I don't think that this sort of position that you are trying to dramatise would arise.

LAWS:

No don't say dramatise, I am trying to hypothesize.

PRIME MINISTER:

Hypothesize, yes, that's a lovely word.

LAWS:

Not quite as strong as dramatise.

PRIME MINISTER:

And you know I don't go down hypothetical paths too far, John.

LAWS:

No, not too far. So we're never really going to get an answer to the question. If it was a toss up between the people of Australia and the Labor Government, who would Bob Hawke choose?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I have said that I think that a Labor Prime Minister, particularly one as determined as I am about the welfare of this country is not going to be really faced with a situation where the Party won't understand what is required to be done.

LAWS:

Well they'd be mad if they didn't.

PRIME MINISTER:

That is for others to judge, John.

LAWS:

Mm. Can you ever envisage a situation where you will totally win over the Left-wing or will they always be a bit of a thorn?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well if you look at the history of the Labor Party it has always had its factions - no more than the conservative parties. One time I would like to come on and have a yard to you about the factionalism of the conservative parties, but I think it is true to say that if you look at the Left in the Labor Party now, it is not monolithic John, and there are certainly parts of the socialist left who look with great askance with some of the observations of their more extreme elements. So I will never be in a position where some of those more extreme elements will love me or support what I am doing, but I think as you go steadily about the business of trying to create a better Australia in which clearly those who are in employment and those who are in business can improve their wages and salaries, can improve their profitability and at the same time are trying to do something for the underprivileged, when people see that being done as I think we have already achieved in this 12 months. I think more and more people in the Labor Party will understand that that is the way to go. You can't just focus on one particular issue - be a one issue Government or a one issue Party. You have got to say that the basis of everything else is economic growth - a more profitable industry, a workforce which is going to be able to maintain its real standards and improve its conditions. Those things are basic to everything else. It is only when you do those things that you can sensibly talk about creating a more equitable society - doing things for those who really can't help themselves. Now that is what Australians want and that is what we're about.

LAWS:

I think it is what Australians want and I think if they feel that their tax dollar is being, and you and I have been through this a number of times, is being spent wisely I don't think that they ever become selfish or self-centred about the monies that they pay in tax providing they believe that it is being spent wisely.

PRIME MINISTER:

I think that is a fair commentary. I think there was a period that we went through in the end of the '70s and right there at the beginning of the '80s where selfishness was almost made mandatory by Government. You remember we talked about this where we had the Fraser Government saying to the unions well look we'll abandon wage fixation. Go out and

PRIME MINISTER CONT'D:

grab or do what you can. Saying to industry well go and do what you can. It encouraged the syndrome almost of the tax avoider seemed to symbolise the society of "well damn you all, I am there to just grab what I can" and there was a period where that happened but I think you are right in saying that that's not the real Australia. I don't think it is.

LAWS:

No I don't think it is but I do think it was an understandable period. I do think that there was a period where the public felt that their tax dollar was being spent inadvisedly. And I think people are going to object to that.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well people are entitled to object if they can see that their tax dollar is being wasted or could be spent better, but I think for a lot that that would be a way of rationalising what they were encouraged to do in pursuit of their unbridled self-interest. I think it was very unwise of Government to give this almost unqualified emphasis, John, to go out and get what you can for yourself. Rather what consensus is about, what I am trying to explain, is getting through to business and getting through to the trade unions that their objectives are legitimate. It is legitimate for business to want to increase its profitability so it can invest and create more employment opportunities. It is legitimate for the trade unions to want to maintain and improve their conditions. Now what we're about is trying to make them understand that the achievement of those legitimate and mutually reinforcing objectives is more likely if you work together rather than belting your brains out and dissipating your resources fighting one another. So it is an enlightened self-interest I think which makes Australians understand that working together is going to be better for each of them than just in a mindless way just going out and grabbing for your own irrespective of everyone else.

LAWS:

Yes I agree with that. And you maintain that consensus and conciliation have brought around a change in that. I agree with that. It seems to have worked in most areas. A couple of areas seem to be giving a bit of a problem, one being the BLF.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, they behaved, in my judgement, abominably recently having given their undertakings to the courts and to the Government, and most particularly to their fellow trade unionists, then they didn't stick to that. Now it looks as though, as a result of discussions that the ACTU have had with them, that they are going to act in accordance with the rest of the trade union movement. Can I just make it clear that I hope that is what happens. If it doesn't then I make it quite clear that in conjunction with the ACTU an and will be brought to that situation. As I say I hope it will be worked out by consultation.

LAWS:

Do you get yourself into a situation where you talk across a table like you are talking to me to people like Norm Gallagher?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well when I was in the ACTU I used to deal with him.

LAWS:

What about now?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well he was at the Summit Conference and it appeared from the Summit and on for most of '83 he and his union behaved like the rest of the trade union movement. We had peace in the building industry, very substantially, and I can talk with people when they will discuss, make a commitment and keep it. What I can't abide and will not abide is people entering into undertakings and not keeping them. In that context there is no room then to talk. Now as I say it looks as though they have given an undertaking again. It had better work because if it doesn't there won't be any more consultation.

LAWS:

The reason I asked the question about Norm Gallagher sitting over the desk from you, Norm Gallagher is not prone to talk, he won't talk to me at all. Not even "Good day" to me. But I wondered if you two ever had the opportunity to sit across a desk, surely a man with half a brain, and I suppose we should credit him with that, must realise simply by the look in your eyes, that you are fair dinkum. Because I watched a total change come over your face when you talk about these people digging their heels in and it is terribly obvious to me that you are not about to abide it. Now why isn't it obvious to them?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I think it has been made obvious. The Secretary of the ACTU, Bill Kelty, who I think is one of

LAWS:

I think he is one of the brightest light around.

PRIME MINISTER:

One of the truly great Australians, Bill Kelty. Now we have talked. He knows my determination. He shares it because he realises that it is not merely the authority and policies of the Government which are at stake here, it is the authority and the integrity of the ACTU.

LAWS:

They made an agreement didn't they?

PRIME MINISTER:

That's right. Now Bill Kelty has conveyed these feelings to the Builders Labourers Federation and they understand that we've reached the bottom line. Either the BLF is part of the trade union movement, keeps its commitment and goes along with the trade union movement or it doesn't. And if it doesn't then there won't be any way in which into the future the BLF will be part of the trade union movement.

LAWS:

Will the BLF exist?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I think it is not helpful at this stage, John, to as I say get down the hypothetical path. I think I made it clear.

LAWS:

No, okay. I accept that, I hope he is smart enough to. But the point is if a union, let me really be hypothetical for the benefit of the listeners, if a union causes trouble and is dismissed from the ACTU can that union continue to exist independently of the ACTU?

PRIME MINISTER:

In the past it has been able to because the ACTU has said "Alright well then if there is a deregistration it has been brought about by forces outside the trade union movement". What no single trade union can tolerate is if the trade union movement and the Government say you have divorced yourself from the whole stream of the trade union movement. In those circumstances obviously other things happen.

LAWS:

Other things that cause them not to continue to exist?

PRIME MINISTER:

Now you have had your one little essay down the hypothetical path.

LAWS:

It was good though, wasn't it?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes.

LAWS:

So, back to the consensus and conciliation; we suggested it didn't work as well as it might with the BLF. It didn't seem to work at all with the doctors.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well John, with respect, that's not quite right. Let me say that in the negotiations about Medicare Dr. Blewett, who I think has done a very good job, has had discussions with the doctors and generally a lot has been worked out between them. A position was reached by the end of last week where they were having still some problems and it seemed as though it might be a good idea if I had a talk with the AMA with Dr. Blewett. We did that quietly, with no publicity last Friday and the AMA have had a meeting over the weekend. I don't know the outcome yet but I'm hopeful that as a result of the talks I was able to be involved in that that may be sorted out too. There's no point in doctor-bashing or AMA-bashing. I recognise that they have had concerns. It is not the sort of system that if they had their (INAUDIBLE) that is why they would have. Generally speaking I think they have recognised that the people have spoken on this concept. They have tried to protect particular interests that they have got. I think it is going to work out with their cooperation.

LAWS:

Yes.

PRIME MINISTER:

And may I say also that my old sparring partner, Joh, will probably be signing the agreement this week I think.

LAWS:

The cry from the doctors is, and I have had some talks with them, is that they are convinced that you plan to nationalise health care.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well that's absolute nonsense and not only is it wrong but there is no evidence for it and I guess my standing in the community is well enough for it to be sufficient to be said that that is not our intention and we will not do it.

LAWS:

Plan to nationalise anything?



PRIME MINISTER:

Well the Constitution as interpreted by the High Court prevents it.

LAWS:

Yes but Constitutions have been changed.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well then if the Constitution were changed it would be only because the people changed it. If the people indicate a desire for that course of action then it would be appropriate. But look, let's get it quite clear, nationalisation is not an answer to the problems. Who would want to nationalise the steel industry, for instance. What would you want to nationalise? The secret of successful Government in these increasingly complicated days is to make sure that those things that need to be done by the public sector are done well. There is much in this country that needs to be done by the public sector. It needs to be done in a way which provides an infrastructure within which the private sector can operate efficiently. There is nothing intrinsically good about the public sector and nothing intrinsically evil about the private sector. There is a necessity for each. There is competence and there is incompetence in both. Now what the Government has got to do, what a concerned Government has got to do, is to make sure that you make the public sector as efficient and as relevant as possible and to help the private sector to get rid of its own inefficiencies which undoubtedly exist so that together in cooperation we can maximise the vast resources of this country.

LAWS:

So you believe that they have got to work together and that they can and they will work together?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes they have got to and they can work together better than they have in the past and I think what we've seen in the last 12 months is a preparedness on the part of the private sector, and I welcome the positive response of the private sector. They have been prepared to sit down with us in Government, with the Public Service, and with the trade unions and say well look what are the things together we can do to make for a better Australia. The steel industry plan; think of that before we came in. We were on the edge of not having a steel industry at all. Now that would have been intolerable. Now the industry, the unions, the Government sat down together and now we've turned that round completely. We have a viable, strong and increasingly efficient steel industry where the private industry, BHP, has committed itself to significant investment. The unions have committed themselves to improve work practices and our Government has committed itself to assistance. Now that's if you like a dramatic illustration of what I am talking about. Getting the public sector, the private sector, the unions sitting down and saying "look we are not here wasting our time talking about ideological issues of public and private sector nationalisation. We are facing up to the realities of Australian life and trying to make those realities work better. Now that is what the Government is about.

LAWS:

Yes. It all sounds too good to be true.

PRIME MINISTER:

But it works, that's not theory what I am talking about in the steel industry, that's what happened.

LAWS:

I know but people still won't cop it. People say ah yes but wait and see what happens after the next election. They are being nice to us

LAWS CONT'D:

now but wait and see what happens afterwards. What have you got to do to convince them? Stay there I suppose.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes well we will do that John.

LAWS:

That's your intention.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes.

LAWS:

It is a little more than a decade since the early days of the Whitlam era and they were pretty heady sort of days. You were very close to that from the outside. Is this Labor Government very different from that Labor Government?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes it is very different and we have learnt from that period.

LAWS:

Do you think he has?

PRIME MINISTER:

He reckons Paris is pretty good. He is able to make a great contribution there and I think that Gough would understand what I am just going to say now and that is that one of the problems for Gough and the Labor Government was the time at which they came to power. I think you have heard me say this before, that we had had a generation then under Labor and then long-term Liberal Government where we had full employment. The economy was just going along easily, not dramatic growth but it was growing. Now Gough and Labor came to power at the end of '72. Within a few months of them being in office they got hit with the oil crisis in the latter part of '73 and the whole world economy broke up into something infinitely more difficult to handle. You had inflation burgeoning throughout the world, oil prices going up, and the relations between the developed and the undeveloped countries getting into an extraordinarily difficult and complex relationship. Now the problem, the basic problem for Gough and the Labor Government then was that they didn't understand that the economy wasn't just going to keep going on, growing automatically. That it had really moved then into a situation that required total concentration on economic management. They thought well that is just going to go on and we can go about the business of doing the other things that they were properly interest in. Now he was very unlucky that he had come at that time, if he had come into Government say 10 years earlier when those external forces weren't destructing the total economic situation he may have had a better ride.

LAWS:

Did he make many mistakes.

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh they, he and they made some mistakes, yes of course they did. But basically the point I am making is that I think most of the mistakes are attributable to the factor that I have just talked about, that it was difficult to perceive that they were in Government then at a time of dramatically changing economic environments here and externally and that was a major problem. Having said all that, never let's forget the great things they did, and not least of those great things is something I have just witnessed. I have just come back from China, a country of over a billion people, John. Almost a quarter of the world's population, a country undertaking dramatic changes in their

PRIME MINISTER CONT'D:

economic and political philosophy. A country of vast importance to the rest of the world. Now there is no country to which China is better disposed than Australia and that is something of great benefit to this country now and into the future and Australia owes a great deal to Gough Whitlam's vision then.

LAWS:

I wonder why people choose to forget? They do.

PRIME MINISTER:

Some people do yes. I think the sensible thing to do is to try and be as objective as you can about these things, to recognise mistakes where they took place, but don't let's just think about mistakes, let's recognise great achievements.

LAWS:

I know you have got to be at Randwick at about 10.00 o'clock so we haven't got a lot of time. I remember you once said that you wanted to create the climate where people viewed Labor as simply the natural ruling party, and I'm quite sure I am right with those words, the natural ruling party. How close are you to achieving that?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think we're a lot closer than we were 12 months ago. I think you get back to some of the conversations we were having before John. I think that there has been a view within the Labor Party and naturally enough reciprocated within the community that the Labor Party has a rigid socialistic platform which talks about you must nationalise this, you have got to go rigidly down a particular path, and that that's the only way that you can provide good Government. Now I think that we've, this Government, has brought people to understand that what the Labor Party in Government in this extraordinarily complex world is about. I emphasise that because you can't say it too often and emphasise too much John that as we are coming to the end of this 20th century we are living in an unbelievably and increasingly complex world where the impact of new technology is changing all our basic assumptions, so many of them. Now what I think we are conveying to the people is that we are aware of the complexities of this world. That the application of no "ism" or philosophy or ideology to provide an answer. What you have got to be about is trying to be aware of the forces at work here and internationally and to try and get your people and the organisations within our society cooperating in way which says alright, we are aware of change, we are aware of the great challenges that it imposes upon us, the opportunity it provides, and that what the Government is about is to bring people together to try and make sure that you maximise growth opportunities in those circumstances and at the same time, as the Summit communique said John, to remember that you must have an obligation to those who in these circumstances can't really help themselves properly. Now that's what I think we are getting across. And it is right, I believe it is the right philosophy and the extent that we are getting that across and that people are reciprocating and cooperating with us, then I think we are closer to people saying well that's the sort of Government, that's the sort of philosophy, we want.

LAWS:

Yes. It would appear at the moment in NSW they are not having such a dream run.

PRIME MINISTER:

No there is a bit of a problem but I think Neville Wran has made the wise decision. He has said well look, let's get the people to decide. Let's have a short election campaign.

LAWS:

We both know another fellow who tried that. (Laughs)

PRIME MINISTER:

A very different situation there.

LAWS:

A short run up to the election though just the same.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes a short run. Well let me say I think the result will be quite different.

LAWS:

Do you think that Neville is going to win?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes.

LAWS:

Are you going to be throwing your hat in to take care of things up here a bit too?

PRIME MINISTER:

I'll help certainly. NSW is the largest, most important State. It has been significant in Labor's development of Government since 1976. All that is true but also I just want to say quite unequivocally that I have known Neville Wran for a long time. He is a man of integrity, of honour, and of competence and I believe he deserves our support and he'll get it.

LAWS:

Yes. I have exactly the same feelings about him. I worry a great deal about the talk of corruption within the Government and I believe it is possible that there can be corruption within a Government but I would find it very hard to come to terms with the fact that Neville Wran the man himself is corrupt. In fact I can't take it.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well he's not and it is relevant to say that there have been three inquiries now into allegations in relation to NSW and in one respect with regard to Neville Wran - a Royal Commission into Neville Wran, complete exoneration. The Bottom allegations about a magistrate - complete repudiation, and withdrawal by Bottom. And Sinclair's absolutely contemptible allegations and then denunciation of a judge afterwards - an independent inquiry - complete exoneration. Now that doesn't mean, it obviously doesn't mean, John, that there may not be problems in some areas, and I concede that there may be. But what I am saying is that what has become the issue now I would suggest is not just whether there are problems, as there are I guess in most States, the issue has much more become are we going to have a situation where unfounded allegations are going to be able to so dominate the processes of our society that the Government is going to be frustrated in being able to go about its business.

LAWS:

Okay, after the election and assuming that Neville will win that election, do you think that that's going to shut the Opposition up?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't think an Opposition should be shut up.

LAWS:

You've seemed to have shut one up.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes well they haven't done a bad job themselves. Yes they are pretty ineffective aren't they. I don't want to see an Opposition shut up but I hope it will make them take stock of themselves. It doesn't mean that if they have evidence of what they think - given evidence of corruption or of some short-coming that they shouldn't pursue it, but I think that one good feature is that now out of these situations that there will be a process in place after the elections which will channel this into much more constructive ways of dealing with allegations. And people who make allegations, John, are going to have to be much surer than they have been in the past otherwise the rebound will be upon them.

LAWS:

I'm pleased to hear that.

PRIME MINISTER:

I think that's what will happen. But I certainly don't want to see an Opposition shut up.

LAWS:

I think you have shut one up, you don't hear a giggle out of them. But the problem is that Andrew can't say anything because he would have done what you did anyway had he thought of it.

PRIME MINISTER:

If he had thought of it. But the real problem for our Opposition now - well one of them, I mean they have got a number of problems - but I think Andrew - I mean you referred to him - I think he has been extraordinarily unwise in embracing Mr. Sinclair. Mr. Sinclair is literally incredible in our society today. His behaviour has been monstrous and untenable and is recognised as such. Mr. Peacock would have been much wiser to do what the National Party did to the Liberal Party at the time of McEwan and McMahon, they said that man is not acceptable. Now if Mr. Peacock had had the courage and the good sense to do to them what they have previously done to the Liberal Party he would have been much better served. But he has embraced the albatross.

LAWS:

You don't think he has either?

PRIME MINISTER:

He has embraced Mr. Sinclair, he supports him, and he now has that albatross firmly implanted around his neck.

LAWS:

And as if he hasn't got enough worries without that, eh?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well that was a gratuitous addition to his burdens. I am not shedding tears but I think I can say I'd prefer to see a more effective Opposition.

LAW'S:

Yes, well I know you'd like the sport.

PRIME MINISTER.

Yes.

LAW'S:

Okay, well I will practice my backhand, give you a call and we'll have a game.

PRIME MINISTER:

Okay, righto John.

LAW'S:

Thank you very much for your time.

PRIME MINISTER:

That's okay.

ENDS