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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT - GOOD MORNING AUSTRALIA - LAURIE OAKES
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OAKES: Mr Hawke you've won on everything that matters this week. I think you'd be fairly happy with the Conference.

P.M.: Yes, I'm very happy with it Laurie indeed. I think it's been good for the Party, good for the country.

OAKES: What do you think the Party's got out of it.

P.M.: Well it's got sensible policies and sensible, I think, has to be judged, if I can put it in terms of the speech I made to the Conference, of what's relevant to the Party's basic principles and tailored to the needs and expectations and aspirations of the Australian people. And I think we've struck the right balance because, as I said in the speech Laurie, I think the two really are identical and we haven't been diverted from the real aspirations of people by irrelevancies I think.

OAKES: Well, specifically, what's come out of it that will be good for the country.

P.M.: Well in the area of economic policy we've got an endorsement of the Government's economic strategy in general, the mandate to pursue that and, specifically in that area, we've got the mandate to make a more competitive, effective, efficient, financial sector by the bringing in of foreign banks. And that must benefit Australians as individuals and Australian business. So in that important area I think we've a great advantage.

OAKES: Did you expect to win as easily as you did on all these issues - on your economic policy, uranium, Timor, U.S. bases - they were all big wins weren't they.

P.M.: They were Laurie. Well we've done a lot of work and May I address myself to an issue that's been talked about a fair bit just before and during the Conference. May I say that I and Paul Keating in the economic area for instance, and myself particularly I suppose in the uranium area, beforehand had done a lot of work in these areas. I acknowledge the assistance that we have received from the disciplined way in which others who I think, in the absence of a formalisation of the Centre Left would have voted with us. Nevertheless it has been the

P.M. cont...: fact, which I acknowledge readily, that having formalised and having adopted the discipline, if you like of the Caucus vote, that's been helpful. But it's reflected a lot of hard work that's gone on in respect of each of these issues over a fair period of time.

OAKES: I know that a lot of people around the Conference were referring to it by the end of the week as the Centre Right. Do you agree with that?

P.M.: Well I think you know from conversations that we've had over many years, I find pretty unhelpful the flicking onto to someone of a tag and to think that you've exhausted your intellectual responsibility by saying well there's the tag and it means something. I think if you look at different issues, Laurie, you'll see that people have taken positions which, if you want to fit in the spectrum, some of them might be described as right of centre, other a little bit left of centre - I don't think the tag itself means much.

OAKES: Well you yourself used the tag about the Left. What do you think of their performance. Are they a spent force.

P.M.: Well I don't want to be disruptive. I think the disappointing feature of the contribution of the Left has been that - well I don't want to say intellectual bankruptcy - but I think that, let me put it this way, if I was just engaged in an academic exercise which is the last thing I'm engaged in, but if I'd had to be briefed as it were to put a case for a so-called, radical economic position for the Left ...

OAKES: You used to I think.

P.M.: Well I don't know if that's right. I don't believe that I - for instance in the banks was putting the conservative position, I think the conservative position was being put by the Left which is the point I'm making. I think we were putting the radical position. I'm merely making the point that I think there was in an academic sense a better case to be put. I think that there has been a tendency for them to not to face up to the present and the realities and to think their way through on that - a pretty tired position I think.

OAKES: Do you think they lack leaders?

P.M.: Well, they've got leaders. They don't lack leaders. But I think that there is a generation problem there to some extent in the Left. Some of the older ones don't, I think, seem to be so respected by the younger ones. But I think the calibre of the contributions that were made were somewhat disappointing.

OAKES: You got together with one of the younger leaders of the Left, Peter Duncan, to end what's been a running sore in the Labor Party - the Combe affair. Are you happy about that now, that it's over.

P.M.: Yes, I wasn't as you know personally directly involved in the negotiations but they went on with my blessing. Of course I'm glad it's over. I think you know Laurie, because you've had a pretty direct interest, at no stage from the very beginning,

P.M. cont... from that first fateful day, if you like, when I received a briefing have I have any animus against David Combe as I've said to the Conference today. How could I? I mean all along ...

OAKES: You were friends for years.

P.M.: Yes, and I think it's recognised that I saved him in 1976 and did it gladly ... I received a fair bit of abuse across the spectrum for doing so. But I've had no animus against David. I had a responsibility to the people of this country and national security considerations in regard to an aspect of that issue in which he was involved. I never wanted to hurt him or his family. I know that he suffered hurt and I'm not surprised that he's had some pretty rough things to say about me. That's human nature. I hope now that, as we've said, David can come back into the mainstream of events. He's entitled to.

OAKES: Are you going to help him do that though, say offering a Government job or a contract?

P.M.: It won't be a question - no, no, I won't be offering any contract or jobs. I think David Combe has his intrinsic merits and capacities. If something arises and he is an applicant for that, well what's been cleared up now is there's no blackball there in the way.

OAKES: So he's entitled to apply.

P.M.: He's entitled to apply.

OAKES: One thing I'd like to pursue to end this interview - the Conference has kept you away from running the country for a week. How serious is that - for example, the dollar has dropped alarmingly in value. Have you been able to keep abreast of that?

P.M.: Oh yes. I don't think I've missed a minute of the Conference, I've been there the whole time which I think I have a responsibility to be there. But I also have a responsibility to keep myself informed of what's going on, so I'm in fairly constant contact with my staff. If anything's arisen where they need my guidance or decision, then it's been there. Obviously one will be glad when the Conference is over so that you can make the effort more to be fully involved.

OAKES: Have you been briefed on the dollar situation. Is it serious?

P.M.: No, it's inevitable. It's not an attack upon the Australian dollar. It's the residual effect of what's happening to the United States' dollar. That is going up because of reasons that are well known, internal reasons there, and what is happening to the Australian dollar is happening to other world currencies. Let me just make two points about it. Of course, as far as Australian exporters are concerned, that this is a plus for them, but we've got to understand that on the side of of our domestic economy that the weaker the Australian dollar becomes because of the strength of the United States' dollar then that makes imports more expensive and that will have some impact on our pricing structure. So I hope that

P.M. cont...: the American dollar settles down. We've alluded to this volatility, this upward volatility if you like, and that we can see the Australian dollar coming up again. That will happen.

OAKES: With the Conference out of the way you now get down to the task of preparing the Budget. Will the new economic policy approved by the Conference be relevant to the Budget, effect you planning there?

P.M.: No, I think it's fair to say that our planning was going ahead, would have gone ahead. What the Conference has done overwhelmingly of course, as they've had to do given the outstanding success of the policies we've been pursuing - they've endorsed those. We'll go ahead in the knowledge that the Party has not only endorsed but is proud of the way we've been going...

OAKES: Thanks Mr Hawke.

P.M.: Thanks Laurie.

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