

TRANSCRIPT - PRIME MINISTER HAWKE - FORUM PRESS CONFERENCE
28 AUGUST 1984 - 1.45 P.M.

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

P.M.: Ladies and gentlemen, most of the time this morning has been spent on functional topics. The meeting commenced on consideration of the special problems of smaller Forum states and our consideration of that matter was on the basis of a short paper that had been prepared by Kiribati. They propose a committee of government representatives to direct itself really to the concern that Kiribati had that is shared by other smaller states that to some extent the co-operative arrangements that are often made within the Forum and from out of the Forum respecting Forum countries tend at times to pass the smaller states by because they haven't got the intrinsic country capacity or infrastructure to take advantage of some of the aid proposals that are involved. Now that was the feeling that was understood by members of the Forum and so a Committee of the smaller states to be chaired by Kiribati and comprising Western Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Nuie, Fiji and New Zealand are to look at that matter and to report to the next meeting of the Forum. The next item was under the heading of Forum Institutional Arrangements and this involved the weighty subject of the name of SPEC - as to whether because SPEC didn't in fact contain the name Forum - this did tend to confuse people. I admit early on it confused me. But there was an affection evidenced for the acronym SPEC and they couldn't bring themselves to change the title at this stage and so it will continue to as SPEC and continue the work of the Secretariat of the Forum and be responsible for the co-ordination of the economic co-operation efforts. And it may be that the matter may be considered again next year. The next item was the Pacific Forum Line. This really concerned the fact that within New Zealand Mr Harry Julian, who had been the New Zealand director of the Forum Line and Chairman of the Forum Line, he has ceased to be the New Zealand director and so it was indicated that there would be a meeting of the Forum Line directors in about the third week of September and of course the appointment of the Chairman is a matter then for the Board. I note that David Lange gave reassurances to the meeting that the Chairman's resignation will not impair the Line's operation and that his Government remains committed as was his predecessor to the operation of the Line. There was another item dealt with and I mention this very briefly. It was about supply of energy in to Forum Island countries - some concern that they at times paid higher prices than appropriate for petroleum. There was very little discussion on this item because there is an ongoing study under the Pacific Energy Program and they will continue those discussions and that again hopefully will be a matter of a more substantive report for the next Forum. The question of the Solomon Island introduction to the Forum then of the dispute they are currently having with the United States over the rest of the arrest of the Jeanette Diana

P.M. cont... arose and there was general sympathy expressed for the Solomon Island position. The purse seine, the Jeanette Diana was arrested by the Solomon Island authorities fishing some 30 miles off the coast and obviously therefore significantly within their exclusive economic zone. The matter has been discussed as to an appropriate form of resolution and officials of Australia and New Zealand and the Solomon Islands will be working on that this afternoon with a view to inclusion of an appropriate reference in the final communique. I think it's understood that ultimately the matter will have to be resolved in bilateral negotiations between the Solomon Islands and the United States Government and that ultimately this issue, not only in respect of the Solomon Islands but of other regional island states, will depend upon the successful conclusion of a multi-lateral access agreement and in that respect we've noted that discussions are to take place on this issue in Suva next month. The next item that was dealt with was an item introduced by New Zealand in regard to the law of the sea. New Zealand introduced a paper to the Forum urging countries to sign and to ratify that agreement. The current state of play as I recall is that about 135 countries have signed, at this stage 12 have ratified. So the proposal urging further signatures and ratification was uncontroversial and was accepted. Then there was some fairly routine reports to Forum heads from SPEC itself, the Forum Fisheries Agency and the South Pacific Regional Environment Program and the University of the South Pacific. They were quite routine. There was virtually no discussion on those matters. Then under the heading of Other Business I took the opportunity there myself of reiterating some general points by way of background to the consideration we had had yesterday of a nuclear free zone to put it in the context of our concern at the way in which the variety of international negotiations, particularly START and INF had broken down and the increasing tension in negotiations or absence of negotiations between the two superpowers and in that context referred to the work that was being done in the Conference on Disarmament as a result of initiatives on the subject of a comprehensive test ban treaty. And I raised that because it seemed to me it was appropriate to have that background in anything that we say in the communique on the subject of the nuclear free zone. And that intervention that I made was accepted by the heads of Government and will be reflected in the communique. Michael Somare made a report on the situation regarding border crossers between his country and West Irian. And the substance of that report was that -- I think it could be available, I don't think there's any problem about its availability and I would think you could get copies of that if you wanted it from the Director -- but the essence of the report is that following the outbreak of this incident in February when there was the flag incident initiated by the OPM in Irian Jaya -- Jayapura -- the talks took place in April between the representatives of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. And there was an expression of confidence by Michael Somare that this matter was being satisfactorily resolved between the two Governments. But that as I say if you want the fleshing out of that it is available and I think Michael Somare was particularly keen to get that statement out in the light of an unofficial paper that was circulated yesterday by some Vanuatu based group on this matter. And you will see when you read the statement

P.M. cont.: of Michael Somare that he refers to the fact that a memorandum of agreement with Indonesia was sent last week which indicated that no problems are expected and he is looking forward to a far better understanding with Indonesia on this. One other matter - well really four other slight matters - the Solomon Islands had put a paper in in regard to the idea of an honours system for the region and I indicated that I thought we couldn't accept the idea in principle and if they wanted to pursue it they would need to put a more detailed proposal in to the Secretariat and in those circumstances the Solomon Islands withdrew their proposal. The representative Nakayama of the Federated States of Micronesia reported on the successful negotiations that were proceeding with the United States in regard to their constitutional position and I am pleased to say that in the course of making that report he indicated full support for the Australian proposal in regard to a nuclear free zone and indeed said that the constituents of that proposal were entirely consistent with the constitution of the Federated States of Micronesia. Twofold points - towards the end Sir Walter Lini raised the question in respect of New Caledonia of whether given the fact that there is frequently reference to the lack of trained Kanaks in the professional and technical area and that that has been one of the elements of the problem in the early granting of independence, he raised the question of the possibility of educational scholarship facilities being made available by member countries to enable some acceleration of such training. And that was noted and the countries gave a positive response to it. That, in other words, didn't require a collective Forum decision but a positive reaction from individual members. Finally the dates for the 16th Forum next year were the 4th to 6th of August and to be held in Rarutonga in the Cook Islands. May I say this, that the officials will still be working on the communique this afternoon and it's intended to adopt that this evening - when the reception is held we'll go into formal session very briefly to formally adopt the record and communique.

JOURNALIST: So apart then, sir, than the communique ... the Forum's finished.

P.M.: Yes, and the feast tonight.

JOURNALIST: Any dancing.

P.M.: And dancing.

JOURNALIST: Did New Zealand present a paper today on diplomatic initiatives that Forum countries could take to put pressure on France over New Caledonian independence.

P.M. No there was no paper presented.

P.M.: cont... It was certainly not to the Heads of Government, there was no paper circulated by New Zealand in regard to ways of putting pressure on France. I certainly didn't see it.

JOURNALIST: What position did you take on the Solomon Island ...

P.M.: That - well it was a common position really - that it was a matter for resolution between the United States and the Solomon Islands. We all agreed and while there were some differences of view about just the words to be used there was no difference about the fact that it was an illegal action which was apprehended by the Solomons and that will be reflected in the communique.

JOURNALIST: Is there going to be any criticism in the communique of the United States' attitude to the 200 mile ...

P.M.: Well what the form of expression will be is being resolved in discussions between officials of the Solomons, Australia and New Zealand. I mean in other words I can't say what the form of expression will be until we see the communique.

JOURNALIST: When you raised the topic of the test ban treaty did any other leaders speak on your background.

P.M.: No, they accepted what I've said - that it was appropriate that a reference to that general background should be included because it provides, if you like, the current international environment on these matters within which we'll be taking our initiatives. There was no dissent at all from that position.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke how did you find working alongside David Lange.

P.M.: I didn't work alongside him, he was at the other end of the table.

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

P.M.: Oh, I found it congenial. I don't wish to go into comparisons with his predecessor.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, sir, have you discussed with the leaders of Kiribati and Tuvalu the recommendation that their people should be given assisted immigration aid to Australia.

P.M.: No.

JOURNALIST: There's no suggestion though or might there be in the communique that Forum countries could agree to taking trade sanctions or retaliation against the Americans.

P.M.: No.

JOURNALIST: What sort of titles did the Solomon Islanders have in mind.

P.M.: I don't know. It didn't get to that stage.

JOURNALIST: Why weren't you in favour of it Prime Minister.

P.M.: My Government has a very clear attitude to exogenous titles.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke do you believe that the slightly differing attitude that Australian and New Zealand have to nuclear disarmament as a central issue makes the relationship between New Zealand and Australia slightly more tense than you would normally expect from two Labor Governments.

P.M.: No I wasn't conscious of any tension on this issue and in respect of the matters that we were dealing with here, of course, we are at one. Because I repeat that we agree to the concept of a nuclear free zone and the position which I've put on Australia's behalf last year is one which is entirely consistent with their position. That is that in respect of the one matter of access of nuclear powered or armed vessels to a country's ports - that that is a matter for decision by the country concerned. We are at one on that.

JOURNALIST: Does that put the ANZUS treaty at risk as a result of that.

P.M.: Does what.

JOURNALIST: New Zealand's decision not to allow ships.

P.M.: Well I'm not aware that it's at risk.

JOURNALIST: When do you next expect to carry on discussions with David Lange about the ship ban and ANZUS.

P.M.: Well, as I've made clear before, this is not a matter now for negotiation between Australia and New Zealand. We have had our discussions. I've put our point of view. Mr Lange's clearly aware of what our position is now as I've made clear on a number of occasions and I do again, I don't know why one has to keep repeating it, it has been made clear on many occasions, but I'll do it again - that it is now a matter for discussion and negotiation between New Zealand and the United States. Those discussions are going on. That's a matter between those two countries.

JOURNALIST: The PNG border question - Mr Somare was merely making a report to the Forum was he about what was happening, he wasn't asking for any special agreement.

P.M.: No on the contrary - it was a matter of courtesy on his part. He was certainly not asking for anything. His'

P.M. cont.: position that he made quite clear at the CHOGRM meeting in Port Moresby earlier this month was when it was raised in fact by another of the countries, he was very firm and correctly firm in my judgement, that this is a matter between two sovereign independent nations - Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. And he was merely doing two things I think - doing a courtesy to Forum members to acquaint them of those facts, not seeking endorsement - acquainting them with the facts - and in a sense, of course, responding to what he again might be regarded as improper references in an unofficially circulated paper yesterday.

JOURNALIST: Therefore in fact the Forum was tacitly accepting the fact that it was a bilateral matter between PNG and the Indonesians.

P.M.: Not tacitly, explicitly.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, any thoughts of visiting New Zealand.

P.M.: Yes, sure.

JOURNALIST: When do you think you might get around to it.

P.M.: Well I don't know. We haven't got a specific timetable in mind, but I'm certainly looking forward to coming over there some time in the future.

JOURNALIST: Have you been ...

P.M.: Oh yes, there is an interchange that Lange and I have had. There's been an indication on both our parts that we would like to see one another in our respective countries.

JOURNALIST: Do you expect Lange to visit you too.

P.M.: I've got no attitudes about these things. We've both got our programs and the priorities that we have to fulfil and there's no standing on dignity as to who visits first at all - either on his part or on mine.

JOURNALIST: Would you say Mr Hawke that you have a good rapport with Mr Lange.

P.M.: Oh yes, I would think so.

JOURNALIST: Have you actually spoken to him one-to-one since you've been here.

P.M.: Yes.

JOURNALIST: Was that at the retreat.

P.M.: I spoke at the retreat, I spoke to him on his vessel and just to even it up he spoke to me on mine.

JOURNALIST: Who circulated the paper on what Mr Somare was responding to.

P.M.: It was some group based in Vanuatu.

JOURNALIST: You don't know what they're called do you?

P.M.: No, I don't know ...

JOURNALIST: It's based in the Vanuatu Party Office.

P.M.: Is it. I didn't actually see one, it seems to have had a rather restricted circulation. But Michael saw it and he had a strong reaction.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke you've been to Tuvalu and you have seen some of the problems ... can you be able to tell us what Australia may be doing in ... immediate assistance ...

P.M.: Well we're already giving very substantial assistance and my visit here has confirmed that it's appropriate that we should continue to do that.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, any special assistance?

P.M.: Well there's been no request for special assistance and we're not intrusive.

JOURNALIST: Do you see something that might be ...

P.M.: Well I'm not one who becomes an instant expert. After a 24 hour visit it's much more appropriate that the Government of Tuvalu should indicate what it's areas of priority are. They know their needs better than I do.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister in view of the Papua New Guinea stand on West Irian is the Forum's view that it should take no notice whatsoever of a force of oppression and atrocity that's being committed in that part of New Guinea by the Indonesian Government.

P.M.: The Forum didn't direct itself to this issue because it accepted what is manifestly the correct position and that is that Papua New Guinea is the only, by the way, the only member country of the Forum which has contiguous boundaries with another nation, and that the matters between those two states and concerning their border is a matter for them. It didn't address itself to the issue. It wasn't on the agenda.

JOURNALIST: So the reason that the Forum was so reluctant to debate the West Irian - is it that Australia and Papua and New Guinea are simply scared of Indonesia?

P.M.: Oh, we're not going to pursue with that ridiculous line of questions. Is there a sensible question.

JOURNALIST: It think it's a reasonable question.

P.M.: Well we're not here to debate.

JOURNALIST: Did you argue for a less strong criticism of the United States over the Solomon Islands fishing ...

P.M.: I don't think it's appropriate that we go into the sort of particular contributions. But I'm prepared to say this, that generally I take the view that if what you're about is trying to resolve a dispute and to get back to a situation which is going to be to the benefit of the complainant, which in this case is the Solomons, then it makes more sense to direct and concentrate what you've got to say and do upon a method of resolving it rather than spending a great deal of time hurling accusations around. That's the attitude that I've always adopted and I do in this.

JOURNALIST: Were many of the Forum members supportive of the Solomon Islands ...

P.M.: It was not evident, no.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister has anything gone further regarding Australia's patrol boat offer. Is that firmed up yet.

P.M.: Yes, I reported to the Forum in the course of the discussions on the Solomon Islands issue that requests for tender have been let, let last month - the month before last - and so those processes are now underway. We'll receive tenders and construction would start next year I would hope.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke what about the small countries. I understand Tuvalu, for example, claimed that it would cost \$250,000 a year to run one of these patrol boats and their total income from fishing is something in the order of about \$500,000.

P.M.: Yes, there is a problem in respect of some of the states with low incomes. Kiribati has the same sort of problem and that's one of the reasons why we want to make the boats an issue as relatively unsophisticated as is consistent with the discharge of the function involved. The speed of the boat that we've been talking about is 20 knots. Now a couple of the island countries have suggested 25 and even in one case, 30 knots. Now obviously the more that you increase the speed of the vessel, the more sophisticated is the vessel and certainly more expensive and the more costly provisions for maintenance.

P.M. cont.: And so we've had this examined and at this stage the view is that the 20 knot vessel would generally speaking meet the requirements and be much more likely to meet the very real concern that you raise. Now it may be that in respect of some of the smallest of the states that have this problem, that there may have to be some consideration of the economics of allocating some of their other aid towards helping them in that respect. Because it depends, as you say, upon the level of income which they either have currently got or could ... But I don't believe that given the level of the aid program that that should not be a matter that's capable of negotiation.

JOURNALIST: Sir the American Tuna Boat Association has made some points about the fact the Jeanette Diana was arrested by what they described as an Australian pleasure yacht which has guns mounted on it. Do you have any attitude to Australian companies providing patrol boats for military type purposes.

P.M.: It's a matter of an arrangement between the sovereign government of the Solomon Islands leasing a vessel. Now if you're going to say that sovereign governments have the rights to lease vessels, then they've got to get them from somewhere don't they. They did and when we undertake our program of providing patrol boats for these purposes they will be provided under tender by private companies in Australia for the Australian Government.

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