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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT: JOHN LAWS (RADIO 2UE, SYDNEY) INTERVIEWS THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. R.J.L. HAWKE, AC, MP.

DATE: FRIDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 1984

LAWS: Prime Minister Good Morning and welcome.

PRIME MINISTER: Good Morning John. Thank you.

LAWS: Settle down to a cup of coffee.

PRIME MINISTER: Thanks.

LAWS: Wasn't the best day in the world yesterday eh?

PRIME MINISTER: No, not an experience like that.

LAWS: I don't think it's an experience that anybody would like to go through. I must say that I felt great empathy with you yesterday having had a similar experience at the hands of others, and when your family and your children are involved it's pretty tough to handle.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes and you know particularly when people just can't know exactly what's involved and you've got to just carry that. What I've wanted to concentrate on since I've been in Government, and what I want to concentrate on is running the country and turning Australia around. That's what the important issues are about. But when something like this arises in a matter on which you have the deepest possible feelings as I do about the issue of drugs, as I said in my statement, that is one area in which I have to struggle to be rational when I contemplate what I would like to do to anyone who is involved in drug trafficking. It is just impossible to, when you've got intimate experiences about this sort of thing, it produces that sort of situation and it's not something I'm ashamed of. It's just there. But what I want to concentrate on, as I always have, is the important questions of, as I say, of getting this country running, trying to get people back to work, get inflation down.

LAWS: I wonder if people really realise how strongly you do feel about drugs. It's not something that you've been openly public about before.

PRIME MINISTER: Well behind the scenes I've tried to be involved - Odyssey - I've given my support there. But there are deeply personal things involved that one can't go to. When you experience - see the experience of these things and you know the tragedy that's involved John, it just gives you a depth of repulsion about the drug trade that unless you see it like that first hand you can't - no one - can understand and that is what has upset me so deeply - the accusation

that I would protect people involved in that sort of business where in fact, as I say, I have to try and control my rationality in terms of contemplating what I'd do to anyone that was involved in it.

LAWS: Yes, and irrespective of what Costigan ultimately shows, irrespective of who Costigan may ultimately point to - anybody - it wouldn't matter who it was or what it was, you would still carry the same repulsion to that sort of activity as you would - friend, foe or otherwise.

PRIME MINISTER: Absolutely John. As I said in my statement yesterday: let the cards fall where they may. Whether I know or don't know, whatever the station in life of the person/persons who may through proper processes be brought to book, then not only no sympathy but you will find this Prime Minister insisting that it be taken through to the end.

LAWS: Do you believe that Costigan will show anything worthwhile in that regard?

PRIME MINISTER: Well it's difficult for me to make the conclusion. All I can say is that in areas of tax avoidance industry Frank Costigan made a monumental contribution to the welfare of this country. Now there are references in the drug area which he has handed across to the National Crimes Authority. It's for the National Crimes Authority now, on their examination and the inter-governmental committee in their examination to make the decision, and I simply think it's not fair for me to either of those authorities or to any individuals who may be involved for me to see externally timpose my judgement. The only think that I want to say John is that I will be insisting - not that it will need it because the National Crimes Authority is composed of three competent and dedicated men - but the absolute insistence that every investigation that possibly can be made must be made.

LAWS: It seems to me the Opposition's main thrust has been allegedly that you cust short Costigan.

PRIME MINISTER: Well that's simply not the case. Both Mr. Fraser and myself, both our Governments have had the position that the work of the Costigan Royal Commission would be subsumed into the National Crimes Authority. We have, as a Government, almost doubled the resources available to the Costigan crime commission so that they would have everything available to them. We've extended the time. It is true that Mr. Costigan would have liked more time but he spoke with Mr. Young earlier this year in the light of the correspondence between us, and the timetable was agreed - not for finishing the work of the Costigan crime commission but arranging the transition of it to the National Crimes Authority. I think what must be recognised is that in the constitution of the National Crimes Authority you have in Mr. Justice Stewart a person who is widely recognised and respected for his capacities in this area, and you have the two others, Mr. Dwyer and Mr. Bingham, who were unanimously endorsed by all the Governments of Australia, and that's one of the important things if you are going to make a National Crimes Authority work. You have got to have the cooperation of the States and the State police forces. So we believe that the sort of thing that was said, John, by Redlich in the Special Prosecutors report early this year puts it correctly, and I referred to this yesterday: he talked about the debate as to how the National Crime Authority should be constituted, that there were different elements in it. There was the element of making surc

PRIME MINISTER: Absolutely baseless. As far as I am concerned I want the Costigan Report published. They are going on and saying will I publish the Costigan Report. I want it published, and the only considerations which must apply, and which have applied under their Government with the previous report that they received from Costigan - the majority of which were either not published at all or were published with deletions - that's what happened under their Government and rightly so because what Royal Commissions are concerned about if they are investigating these sorts of things is that what they find in their reportings, where it's going to lead to further prosecutions, you shouldn't publish which will inhibit the capacity of the ongoing Authority to pursue their investigations and bring people to justice on the one hand, and on the other hand, the civil liberties of individuals who may be proved to be innocent. So there is a constraint upon names, but let me make it clear that if those constraints are recommended by Mr. Commissioner Costigan or the National Crimes Authority who will see the report, or the Attorney-General's Department or Mr. Temby, if then there are those deletions of names for reasons recommended by those who have to undertake the inquiry Mr. Peacock as Leader of the Opposition will be given the unabridged report. There is no question of hiding anything. The Leader of the Opposition will get the full report but there may be, because of the instructions of Mr. Costigan and those concerned, be a deletion of names for the public interest so that

LAWS: But that's normal procedure.

PRIME MINISTER: That's exactly - all the previous Costigan reports that went to the previous Government they were either not published at all or there were, on the strict recommendation of those concerned, the deletion of parts which, if published, could hinder future inquiries and prosecutions.

LAWS: Now Andrew Peacock must have been aware of that.

PRIME MINISTER: Of course.

LAWS: Why did he then endeavour to make something unpleasant from it?

PRIME MINISTER: A very simple answer - you ask yourself how far Mr. Peacock or the Opposition has addressed itself to the economy in the last 12 months. We sit on that front bench and wait in vain for questions about the economy because the performance of this Government has been so outstanding. We've achieved a turnaround from where they had this economy in recession to the point now where we've achieved in the last year the strongest economic growth of any country in the western world - the highest - and a situation where we've created a quarter of a million new jobs against the quarter of a million that were lost in the last 12 months under their Government; where we've more than halved the inflation rate; where we've brought interest rates down; where retail sales are now moving upwards; where private investment is picking up; where we've deregulated the financial sector to give great competition in the banking system which will be of benefit to the people. Now these are the things that we've done which in everyday terms mean that Australia is becoming steadily a better place for all Australians. It's little wonder that we get no questions in that area. So what do desperate men do when they can't attack you, they can't find any cracks in your performance in the running of the economy - desperate men do desperate things.

LAWS: But why is it - I've not heard of it happening anywhere else in the world - you're far more wordy than I am, maybe you have.

PRIME MINISTER: I don't know about that John.

LAWS: The denigration of a human being simply because he's successful seems to be the easy out in Australia. It doesn't matter in what area, the tall poppy has got to be struck down, and in the dirtiest way with accusations of drugs and hidden money and unpleasanties. Why does it happen in Australia.

PRIME MINISTER: Well it seems to be a part of the pattern of conservative politics here of not going to issues. You remember in the earlier days the attack upon the Labor Party was not upon policies it was the commy can - kick the commy can - now that's gone out of fashion. Perhaps people are a bit more sophisticated now because they understand the truth of Australian politics and it looks a bit silly attacking Hawke as a communist sympathiser. So you can't attack Labor leaders on the basis of they are commy sympathisers or something like that. So instead of commies it's crooks now. Now I said yesterday John and I repeat it here on your program, I understand the rough and tumble of politics, I engage in it, but I have consistently said from the day I entered the Parliament that I would never say anything in the Parliament that I wasn't prepared to say outside and I have religiously adhered to that. Now it seems to me that there are limits and the Australian people expect limits to this rough and tumble of debate and Mr. Peacock has gone beyond that limit when he calls me a crook and that I associate with criminals and that I'm directed by criminals and that in the context where he knows that the major area that's involved in these investigations is drugs. Now to accuse the Prime Minister of this country of being directed by criminals to try and protect those engaged in the drug traffic, as I said yesterday, that's not the gutter of politics, that is the sewer.

LAWS: They now say, the Opposition, today that you've dished out plenty and obviously you can't take it. I think John Howard said you had a glass jaw when it came to this sort of thing.

PRIME MINISTER: Well I don't believe I've got a glass jaw but I'm not in the business of defending my emotions and my characteristics. I'm made the way I am for better or for worse. There are some aspects of my makeup that at times embarrass me but I've always been one John who felt, whether it's in regard to yourself or any other aspect of life, there's not much point spending time wishing that something else may have been different because that is the most fruitless exercise in human existence - to waste time on trying to undo things that can't be undone. What people in life must do, if they are committed to public life, is to try and concentrate their energies upon changing things and improving things that can be changed and can be improved. Now I just draw this distinction which I would hope John Howard would understand - I will criticise and I'll be a tough criticiser of my opponents, or of my friends for that matter, if I think they have acted improperly, unwisely - but I don't think that the whole of my record would display any occasion in which I have without foundation questioned the basic character of a person and I just take the view John that there is no fouler attack that can be made upon anyone than to say he associates with criminals and is directed by criminals to protect criminals particularly in respect of the drug trade. I mean I just can't think of any more repulsive

unacceptable attack and if I respond with emotion to that attack so be it and particularly in the circumstances in which I find myself placed.

LAWS: You said that there are facets of your makeup that sometimes embarrass you.

PRIME MINISTER: It just seems to be in my nature that my emotions show more easily perhaps than a lot of people in public life. Now it's always been the case. There is nothing that I can do about it. I wish obviously that the makeup was different at times. It can be somewhat embarrassing. I'm not expressing shame or any of that sort of thing but obviously there is a degree of embarrassment about it. I accept that. But as I say I don't waste time thinking about it, I want to get on with - as I have since the day I became Prime Minister - I want to get on with the commitment of trying to make Australia a better place. I believe that we have an enormous number of runs on the board already John. I want to keep accumulating and piling those runs up on the board for Australia.

LAWS: I said to you earlier and I said it yesterday and I said it this morning and I'd say it again, a man who becomes Prime Minister of a country is a man who requires a modicum of ego, you don't become Prime Minister unless you are pretty sure of yourself.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes I accept that.

LAWS: And I think that for a man to be prepared to throw aside his opinion of himself in order to express an opinion that he has for people that he loves takes a great deal of character, more character than perhaps a lot of people realise.

PRIME MINISTER: Thanks John.

LAWS: And I hope your family give you the love that they should give you and the love you deserve when you're prepared to throw your own ego out the door in order to defend them.

PRIME MINISTER: There is no lack of love in that direction, it's very much a two-way relationship.

LAWS: What did your wife say when you got home last night?

PRIME MINISTER: Hazel is on her way back from Western Australia and we've only been able to talk on the phone John. She'll be joining me here in Sydney later on this afternoon. We've got a lot to talk about. She, more than anyone in the world, understands the nature of the experience that I referred to, and I'm looking forward so much to being able to talk with her. She's, you know, totally supportive as you'd expect, and I'm just looking forward to seeing her again.

LAWS: And giving her a big cuddle.

PRIME MINISTER: (laughs) Yes, exactly.

LAWS: Okay, I shan't keep you any longer. I thank you very much for fulfilling the obligation that you didn't have to fulfil to come and talk to me this morning after a pretty tough day yesterday.

PRIME MINISTER: Well it was tough John, yes, but you've been kind enough to say some generous things and it's not a mutual - you know

in one anothers pockets, but there is no one I respect more in this area of communications than yourself and I'm very pleased to be here.

LAWS: Hope things are good for the family. I hope I see you soon.

PRIME MINISTER: Thanks very much John.

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