



PRIME MINISTER

E. & O.E. - PROOF ONLY

INTERVIEW FOR SUNDAY PROGRAM - 1 OCTOBER 1984

JOURNALIST: Thank you for joining us Prime Minister.

HAWKE: My pleasure, Robert. -

JOURANLIST: Every time we open a newspaper or turn on the radio or television these days it seems we get new information about crime. How bad is crime and corruption in Australia?

HAWKE: Let me say two things about that, Robert. You say every time you open up the papers you get new information about crime. It seems to me it is rather more accurate to say we get a mixture of information and innuendo. Having said that, let me say to you that I believe that organised crime in this country is a problem - a significant problem, particularly in regard to that aspect of it dealing with drugs and it is because I have that view that in my early meeting with Royal Commissioner Costigan last year I indicated to him that in the time available I wanted him to concentrate on the question of the Painters and Dockers Union, but particularly on the question of drugs. Now, I think that anyone in this country who under-estimates the dimension of this problem is stupid. It is a tragedy of very very significant proportions.

JOURNALIST: It would appear that the polls are showing that about 83% of Australians, Mr Hawke, are now very concerned about the problem of crime and corruption. Are those concerns justified? Does that make it probably at the moment the most important political issue in this country?

HAWKE: No, no, there are two different things. It doesn't make it the most important political issue. I am surprised that it is only 83%. I would have hoped it was 100% who were concerned about crime and corruption. I can't understand anyone not being concerned of it, but it doesn't make it the biggest political issue. The extent that our political opponents want to divert attention from economic matters, then we will accommodate them because their record in this area is appalling. After all, for the last 35 years in this country at the Federal level government has been in the hands of the conservatives. It is under their government that these things have developed and it is only under my

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Government that a significant and consistent attack is being mounted on all aspects of organised crime. So if they want to talk about this we will welcome it. But it doesn't make it the number one issue, nor does all the research show it. We have undertaken our research, as we do consistently as a Party, and no doubt the Opposition have, and the research doesn't show it as the major issue by any means. Still, in political life, George, and I think you've been around long enough that you'd agree with me, that there is a tendency for some of us intimately involved in politics - whether it's on the floor of the Houses of Parliament or in the galleries or in programs such as this - to talk about issues which have a particular vibrance about them. But the realities remain for the ordinary Australians for whom I'm concerned, what's happening to the economy, what's happening the prospect of jobs, what increased chances do their children have of getting jobs, what's happening to the rates of inflation, what's happening to interest rates - these things remain fundamental as they should.

JOURNALIST: On this question of crime and corruption, if they are as endemic in our society as they appear to be, why should we think that the Hawke Government or a Costigan Royal Commission or a National Crime Authority can do anything to stop it.

HAWKE: Well if we as a community adopt that throw up our hands in hopelessness attitude then there's probably nothing that will be done. The important thing, and I think this is where Commissioner Costigan has with Commissioner Stewart in his Royal Commission work and others have been helpful, is in highlighting a problem. But the thing that has to be done now is with the problem highlighted, we have as a community to adopt mechanisms and an apparatus, George, which will translate from making a community aware to having workable apparatuses which will start to bring people concerned to justice and that's where the National Crime Authority is so important. And I think the whole community should be indebted to Mr Justice Stewart and Mr Bingham and

HAWKE cont...: Mr Dwyer for what they've said this week, that what they are about now is having received all the material from Commissioner Costigan, some of which will be able to be used, other parts of it which will not, that the task of the National Crime Authority is now to get hard admissible evidence so that these people who are engaged in the abominations of organised crime in this country can be brought to trial on the basis of admissible evidence and fair trial.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, of the evidence against David Combe you said that we had to look at the total mosaic.

HAWKE: Yes.

JOURNALIST: If you take the total mosaic in New South Wales you see this - two top police officers retired under a cloud, a former Chief Magistrate facing trial, a former Prisons Minister facing trial, a District Court Judge stood down pending investigation - all these matters concern the administration of justice. Does that total mosaic concern you?

HAWKE: Well you are saying that about New South Wales, Robert?

JOURNALIST: Yes.

HAWKE: Wherever that sort of thing occurs it concerns me and what I want to say to you and I think that you know and appreciate that wherever in regard to any of these matters, and not all of them come into this category, but in regard to any of those areas where Federal law or jurisdiction is involved then this Government in the period we have been in office have moved immediately to refer such matters to the appropriate authorities and have received their recommendations for action and have moved accordingly. Now I want to make it clear that I don't play favourites. I said the other day in a press conference that wherever the cards may fall, and you will recall that that observation was made in respect of the Costigan Commission and the National Crime Authority, but I make that statement broadly and without exception where out of any inquiries, Robert, whether they be out of say Costigan, the National Crime Authority, Senate Committees of Inquiry, out of any appropriate form of investigation, whoever may be involved then that should be pursued relentlessly - and it will be.

JOURNALIST: Have you made that point clear to your N.S.W. colleagues in the Federal Parliament and in the N.S.W. Government.

HAWKE: Yes, it's been made clear to everyone because my position on these things has been crystal clear always. I will be never involved in the position of protecting anyone from the proper processes of the law where anyone should be subject to those processes for the prosecution of criminal activity. And it doesn't matter whether it's N.S.W., Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania - wherever it is - whether I know people or I don't know people there can be no room. And that is not a proposition which allows itself a qualification. There can be no room for protection of anyone from the proper due processes of the law.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, on the point of the political impact of this whole issue of crime, organised crime and corruption, it's now regarded as a fact of life in N.S.W. that Neville Wran's drop in popularity and approval has been due almost entirely to that issue. If it keeps rolling at the federal level the way it is, could you see it affecting in a negative way your own Government's standing and your standing for that matter?

HAWKE: No, because there is no suggestion, and as far as I'm concerned there never will be able to be any suggestion, about any improper activities on the part of this Government or of anyone under its control. Wherever anything is raised which requires investigation, and out of investigation - prosecution - that will be done. And there has been no suggestion to this point that this Government of mine would follow anything other than that course. And it will not happen while I'm Prime Minister.

JOURNALIST: In the NSW election campaign you stood 100%, if it was possible 110%, behind Neville Wran. Do you have any reservations about that now?

HAWKE: I have no reason whatsoever to qualify my support for Neville Wran. I am not aware of one single piece of evidence which questions the integrity of Neville Wran. I am in no possession of any such evidence. If I had any evidence then of course I would not have adopted that position, nor would Neville Wran have expected me to. But let me make this clear - and I have made it clear in the Parliament, I have made it clear throughout my public life - I am not going to be a party to assassination by innuendo or guilt by association. I have never been part of that and I am not going to be. Now that doesn't mean that if evidence emerges about anyone whoever it may be, whatever my associations with them may be, that they will receive any protection from me. But it is terribly important, not merely in regard to Neville Wran, who you mention, but I suggest in regard to anyone that we have in this country to avoid the processes of condemnation and guilt by smear and innuendo. What we must have is the proper processes of trial.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, we have come to quite a pass in the smear and innuendo department with the person code-named as the goanna in the press. Mr Kerry Packer has now come forward and issued a statement in which he answers those allegations. In this statement he says - and I have it here - "we face a situation where public figures be they in politics, the judiciary, the public service, or like myself in the business community, are regularly being accused of every imaginable crime without any evidence being proffered for those allegations." Do you accept that as a reasonable and fair summary of the situation and how can this particular state of affairs concerning Mr Packer be resolved?

HAWKE: Well let me say this, and I think you have made it clear, or will do that this is a Friday afternoon interview. I haven't yet had the opportunity of seeing the statement released by Mr Packer. But addressing myself to that question - I think yes, that it is a problem where people are being found guilty by smear and innuendo. Let me just give you two examples from the recent events of the Federal Parliament which will give you some indication of how this can be done. Mr Steel Hall was involved in both occasions and with the full connivance of Mr Peacock. He got up in the Parliament and made an innuendo that I had attempted to muzzle the Age newspaper - that I had sent Mr Barron from my personal staff to muzzle the Age newspaper and stop a story. Now that is a terrible thing to say, but it was put there on the Parliament without any basis at all and fortunately it didn't just depend upon my repudiation, but within a matter of hours Mr Creighton Burns - to his credit - the editor of the Age, completely demolished that. Now, there is a situation in which with the editor the Age being the one alleged to be involved in this, he was able to demolish it. Now that sort of thing is terrible. It was putting out without any justification whatsoever a proposition that I was trying to use my Prime Ministerial influence to stop the Age publishing a story. Now it just wasn't done. Now the second thing in which the two same people were involved in - Mr Steel Hall and Mr Peacock - putting a smear into the Parliament on Mr Keating, insinuating that he was prepared to accept some terrible offer from Nugan Hand. Now that will be dealt with and will be shown to be in the same category. Now may I just make this point and it is important that I do so at a little length, but I have nearly come to the end of this part of my answer, Robert. I mean, I want to make the point - why is it that your opposition - your Peacocks, your Steel Halls and so on - are engaging in this totally unfounded sewer sort of politics which is baseless. It is because they know that under my government we have rescued Australia from the economic disaster which we inherited at the end of seven years of administration, from a point where this economy had stalled, where unemployment had risen by a quarter of a million in the last year, where inflation was at 11 1/2 per cent, where interest rates had risen to record high levels.

We have reversed all that and then just in terms of the economy in our first year we have produced Australia as the highest rate of economic growth in the world. Now on these things that matter to the Australian people, turning the economy round to the highest growing in the world, substituting a growth of unemployment of a quarter of a million under them to an increase of a quarter of a million new jobs under us, halving the inflation rate, bringing down interest rates - they can't bear to talk about these issues which really concern the well-being of the Australian people, so they get down into the sewer.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, you are not suggesting though, are you that over the years that the Labor Party has spent in office that it wasn't also guilty of the same kind of politics of innuendo and insinuation that you are referring to now.

HAWKE: Let me say that there were some things that the Labor Party did when in Opposition of which I didn't approve. And I don't have to say that after the event. I made it clear at the time, before I was in the Parliament and while I was in there. I have never believed that you should find someone guilty by association or that you should make charges if you haven't got the evidence and certainly I believe that when the processes of the law are underway in respect of anyone then those processes should be left to go ahead unimpeded. Of course in the past the Labor Party has not been guiltless, but what I am saying is that - that while I am Prime Minister, I am not getting down in the sewer with these people.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, no doubt with the best motives, over the last few days or a week or so, you and Mrs Hawke have rightly or wrongly turned your own family affairs into a political issue. Do you see that as being the case?

HAWKE: Well that is your assertion, that we have turned our family into a political issue. Now I want to make it clear, and very very clear, that what Hazel did earlier this week was at the specific request of my daughter and my son-in-law and there was a family agreement that they having asked that that be done, for reasons that they found compelling and for reasons that I admire them beyond measure, that that would be it. Hazel would make the statement on their behalf and that is the end of it.

JOURNALIST: Is it the case that even though it is a family affair from your point of view, that the media are going to continue discussing it, the Opposition is going to continue discussing it, and the electorate, no doubt, is discussing it. So even though you saw it as a family matter, it has become very public and political.

HAWKE: It became a public issue when the family, at the request of the children, for what - as I say - were courageous reasons on their part, once Hazel made the public statement it follows as a matter of logic that that issues became public. I mean that is a truism. But what I am saying is that I can't stop, Hazel can't stop, and my children can't stop now what speculation will be. But let me say this, George - that on the basis of reaction that there has been, there has been an overwhelming respect amongst the public that that is it. People don't want to talk any further with me or with Hazel about it. I have had an overwhelming response of respect. Now if you, and I don't say this rudely to you, or others want to pursue it, or attempt to pursue it, that is your decision, George. But you will not get any support from Hazel or myself or my children.

JOURNALIST: What Hazel has done, Prime Minister, is to acknowledge in a very brave way that your daughter and son-in-law were for a lengthy period of time in breach of the law. As a concerned parent you would have wanted to know two things. How were they getting the money for this expensive habit and where were the drugs coming from? Have you enquired as to that?

HAWKE: The situation in regard to the time of my knowledge about the extent of this problem is something that has been canvassed by Hazel. I am not going in to the private aspects of this at all. If there is anyone within the law who wants to speak to me or to Hazel or to the children, I would expect them to do that. Those are the proper processes. If those in authority wish to ask questions which they regard as relevant, that is what they should do. I will not break the compact with my family about entering into no further public discussion, Robert.

JOURNALIST: But is it a fact though, Mr Hawke, that if there is information available to the law officers of this country that could come from your family, that that should be offered rather than asked for?

HAWKE: I don't know how many times I have to say this, George. I have found in previous interviews with you that you find it difficult to accept an answer given straight and for proper reasons. I say it again in the hope that you will understand it. And that is this - that if the relevant law authorities wish to direct any questions to my children or to me, then I hope they will. There will be no attempt to deflect that. It would be the last thing. But I simply want to say this, that as I understand the situation in this country where you have institutions like Odyssey and other institutions which are dealing compassionately and constructively with the victims of this abomination of drugs, that what the society concentrates on is trying to save the lives of those people. Now I believe that that is what is important. But, and I repeat, if there are any questions that need to be asked, I hope they will be asked. Now I say to you again, George, I object strongly if I having made those things clear, abundantly and without equivocation, you seek to pursue the matter because I will not say anything more than I have said and I have said it very clearly.

JOURNALIST: Can I ask you this and I understand if you don't want to answer it. Do you think that getting to the roots of the problems faced by you daughter and her husband - in other words the source of the drug involved - that we would also be getting close to the source and cause of the problems that so many people

HAWKE: That is a matter, George. You do test one's patience, but I have to accept that you have difficulties. I repeat again that if those whose responsibility it is within the law to follow these matters, if they believe there would be help in this matter by speaking to my children or to myself and my wife, then I hope they will do that. That is a matter for them. I am not going publicly in any way to pursue this matter further. Now I hope, George, that you will understand that.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, we will take a short break and we will be back in a moment.

JOURNALIST: And with us is the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, during your ACTU, your political and Prime Ministerial careers you've found that that put great stress on your family and on yourself. If the price is that high, why do it?

HAWKE: It's a fair question Robert, and at times I've had to address it and I hope you will understand the answer. It is that I believe that I have been blessed with certain capacities, I don't want to list them. I think my public record allows others to make a judgement about those capacities. And I deeply believe that I have been given through life the opportunity to help my fellow Australians. I deeply believe that as Prime Minister of this country I've been given the opportunity to produce a better Australia in co-operation with my fellow Australians, not just in the Government, but in the business community and in the trade unions and in organisations around this country. And I am confirmed in that belief by the remarkable transformation that's taken place in Australia in the period since March 1983. This is not only a country now which has reversed the economic disaster that we inherited where we, as I say, have the fastest growing economy in the world with a quarter of a million more of our fellow Australians in new jobs and with inflation halved, and so on. But it's not those things. The important thing is that we've been able to get that economic transformation because I have delivered the promise that I made to the people of Australia in the election of February and March. I said to them that I was going to end the divisions in this country, to end the hatreds, to end the confrontation where Australian was pitted against Australian, where group was pitted against group. And it's on the basis of that national reconciliation that we've been able to achieve the economic transformation. Australia at the end of 1984 is a better country. There is a better spirit in this place. We are much closer to beginning to be able to take the great advantages that we as Australians have of this incomparably good country.

JOURNALIST: And yet the price is high, the personal price. Is it too high?

HAWKE: Well at times I suppose you feel it might be, but never do I have that feeling in any lasting sense. There are obviously moments in your life, as there were in 1971, for instance, Robert, when I led this country in its opposition to the Springbok tour, perhaps ahead of public opinion. But I give thanks that now that is a well accepted position. At that time when my children were made to suffer grievously in their school because of their father's position it certainly made you wonder. In my early days in the ACTU presidency, and again recently, I mean, you get a little bit depressed, but at the end I feel that I have been given in life capacities which I am morally bound to use and if in the use of those and the development of those in high office there are times of unhappiness for my family, I deeply regret that. No-one could more deeply regret it, but I have the belief that - I don't want to overstate myself personally, but as leader of this country I do believe I have the opportunity of making it a better Australia for millions and millions of Australians and I believe it would be a dereliction of my opportunities. It would be a repudiation of my capacities if for the sake of personal unhappiness at times I was to say alright, I am going to deny for purposes of my own satisfaction or the satisfaction or happiness of my family, that I was going to deny the opportunity of doing those things which my whole belief through life, Robert, has been that you have a responsibility to use your talents and to use them to make for a happier and better life for others. That is what has motivated me all my life and that is what I am going to continue to do.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, would you say, as you acknowledge that you have put yourself and your family through a lot for those political objectives that you have. Would you say that the last couple of weeks have been the roughest of your adult life?

HAWKE: In some senses, yes, George, in some senses. But let me say this and I know that Hazel and my kids would want me to say this - because they have always said it themselves - there have been the tough times, George, some very tough ones as you have nominated. There have also been some great times for us that wouldn't have arisen other than through my involvement in public life. We have had an opportunity - all of us, myself, my wife, my children - to grow in many ways, to have experiences that we wouldn't otherwise have been able to have. So we have in many ways as a family and as individuals been enriched and enlarged. So it is not just a one-sided balance sheet, George.

JOURNALIST: But you have in the past also, as I say, denigrated yourself as a parent because of the other responsibilities you have taken upon yourself.

HAWKE: Yes.

JOURNALIST: Do you in the ultimate analysis, for instance, blame yourself for some of the predicaments that your family has found themselves in, including the present one?

HAWKE: Of course I have an element of blame. Of course if I had been a nine to five worker, had been able to spend more time, perhaps life would in some respects have been better for my children. Of course I have, as an honest human being, some sense of guilt. I mean I hope that in all of my life, even if people haven't agreed with all I have done, they have never questioned my honesty and sincerity of purpose and I must honestly say that of course I have some sense of guilt, but I also want to enter the observation, if I may, and my family have been good enough themselves even at some of the darker moment, if I can put it that way, have been honest enough to say - well, Dad, there have been a lot of good things too.

JOURNALIST: They would have seen the emotional side of Bob Hawke probably more often than the rest of us. The question of this fine line between the person expressing their emotions as openly as you do and emotional instability has been raised recently again. What do you see the fine line as being between an emotional person and an emotionally unstable person?

HAWKE: Well I don't think it exists in my case. I have always thought, right from the time I have been in public life, of issues not in desiccated terms where you are making a decision about taxes or if you are making a decision about a resolution of an industrial dispute that there it is just to be looked at as a set of numbers or figures. I have always at the end thought of it as dealing with people, as with human beings, and so I tend in my vision of an issue to see people there and that means perhaps on some occasions and some aspects that the feelings I have come through. I have expressed the fact that I would like - it would be more comfortable for me, George, if I were physiologically manufactured in a way which meant that perhaps at time there wasn't so obvious emotion that I feel, but I have also continuously through my life had the view that one of the greatest wastes that a person can engage in is to try and change something that is not capable of change. It is much better to concentrate your time and your talents, George, on trying to change those things in this world that you may be able to change for the better and go about doing it.

JOURNALIST: What, you don't see your emotionalism as being a politically disadvantage?

HAWKE: Well look, let me put it this way. Since I have been President of the ACTU, but let's put that behind us - since I have been Prime Minister of this country, since March of '83, day after day I have been faced with having to make hard decisions, some of which I would rather have not to have to take, but I have never flinched from taking those decisions and may I say, and I believe that the overwhelming majority of your viewers, whether they happen to have voted for me or not in the past, would recognise that in the period since 5 March 1983 that if you try and make the judgement, George, about looking at Australia now at the end of '84 and asking is it a better country since the change of government - not merely in economic terms but in the spirit that is abroad in this country. I think they would say yes, it is a much better country. Now that hasn't happened by accident. Obviously there are a lot of things which have happened since then for which we don't claim credit - the breaking of the drought and so on, but the fundamentals of economic policy which have transformed this country, which have placed the concept of consensus and co-operation and consultation at the forefront of government, rather than confrontation - I have been involved in those. They have been my ideas. I have

brought them to fruition. I have made them work and in the process there and in the process of our international relationships day after day I have to make hard decisions. There are pressure groups that you cannot satisfy and who get upset. I don't flinch from hard decisions. I never have and I never will.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, one decision that you will have to take fairly soon is the election date. When will you announce it and will the Parliament sit the full two weeks coming up as scheduled?

HAWKE: I would expect they would, Robert. I adhere to what I said some time before that I will announce the election date earlier than any of my predecessors have done. I am not going to play around up to the last minute like my predecessors. And there are very good reasons for that. People in the business community who have urged me to go to an election and to go early have made the point that it can be de-stabilising for the business community if this issue is played around with up to the last moment. It won't be. People in Australia will have more notice from me than they have had from my predecessors. And most importantly, Robert, as I think you appreciate, we will be having a situation where as a result of the decision I take we will be having one less election than we otherwise would have to do.

JOURNALIST: You are a betting man, Prime Minister. Can I get a bet on for December 1?

HAWKE: Not with me. I'm not a bookmaker, but that is a very cunning way of trying to get a scoop for Sunday.

JOURNALIST: You can't blame us.

HAWKE: I can't. I don't blame you Robert. I think, as you know, I have a profound admiration for this program, but as profound as it is, I'm not going to give you that scoop.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, thanks very much for joining us.

HAWKE: Thank you. Thank you very much.
