



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT - PRESS CONFERENCE - 8 October 1984

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

P.M.: Well ladies and gentlemen ... any questions?

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke why do you expect the Australian people to re-elect you on 1 December?

P.M.: Because we have delivered the promise that we made to the Australian people during the election campaign in February-March of 1983. We said to a sorely divided nation which had suffered the tragedy of confrontation that we would achieve national reconciliation. And on that basis of bringing Australians together again we would then bring economic recovery and reconstruction to this country. We have been spectacularly successful in doing that. We've changed this country from having zero economic growth to making the economy, which is growing faster than any other in the western world, and we've done that on the basis of reconciliation. We're at the lowest level of industrial disputation for 16 years. People now recognise in the business sector and in the trade unions that their legitimate aspirations for improving their profitability and their standards are best achieved by working together co-operatively with one another and with Government. That's the promise that we've delivered and I believe that the people are grateful for the change in this country. It's an infinitely better country now than it was at the beginning of 1983.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister after this one how long before the next election - another two years. Or are you going to try and run a full-term.

P.M.: No, well you see what I've been about is to say that with this election which is being held now to have the half Senate and the House of Representatives together, this will be the 23rd time in Australia's history that this has been done. We are running with the election campaign a referendum for simultaneous elections and I believe that in that situation, then Governments in the future will be in a position where they will be able to avoid the unnecessary elections that have occurred in the past. We'll have less elections and that would mean that with the election at the end of 1984 we'd be going up to the end of 1987 or early '88.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister what do you expect the result will be?

P.M.: Well I believe that we will win. Now I could if I wanted to be excessively optimistic and talk about margins on the basis of polls. But we will be going in to this election campaign hard and fair. We'll be putting two messages across. We'll be putting the message of our tremendous achievements in the economic and social field and in the field of international relations. We'll be putting that positively and we will be comparing our great records of achievement with both the record of our Opposition in the past in Government, which was deplorable, and with what they now offer to the Australian people. They offer the dismantling, totally, of all the apparatus which has been foundational to the recovery of Australia. They want to smash the Accord, they want to get rid of the Economic Planning Advisory Council, the Prices Surveillance Authority - all the mechanisms which have served to bring the great interests of Australia constructively together. We'll be pointing out to the people that that is a miserable alternative.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister what are the issues, what should be the issues and what should not be the issues.

P.M.: Well the issues should be basically economic performance because that is what the people of Australia are concerned about. They are concerned about jobs, and will make the judgement about the loss of about a quarter of a million jobs - the growth of a quarter of million in unemployment in the last twelve months of the previous government - with the creation of about a quarter of a million new jobs under us. They are concerned with inflation - the fact that we've halved the inflation rate from over 11% that we inherited down to less than half that. They are concerned, I believe, with interest rates - the fact that we have brought interest rates down from the record levels of the previous Government. These are the basic sorts of things. They are certainly concerned about housing, both in the private and the public sector - the fact that we've in the public housing sector in our first two years given an enormous increase in the funds available for public housing for those most in need, and under the First Home Owners' Scheme we've brought about a situation which the housing industry as a whole recognises has produced the best situation in memory - from where the housing industry was operating at less than 60% of capacity when we came to office to where it's now operating at full capacity and in a way which has brought the possibility of home ownership into the range of people who before were faced with hopelessness in this regard. Those are the basic sorts of things. But they will also be concerned with the way in which we have made Australia's name proud in the field of international relations. We are better regarded now in our region than Australia has ever been before as a result not only of the personal relationships that I've established with leaders in this region, but also of the work that's been done by my Foreign Minister and other relevant Ministers, including the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Bowen. Our relationship with the United States has

P.M. cont....: brought about a position where Australia's relations with the United States are better and more constant active than they've ever been before. So whether you look at these important domestic issues or our international relationships, these are the things of importance, these are the things we'll be campaigning on. The last part of your question was what shouldn't be the issues. Well I think it goes without saying that I believe that issues of race, racial intolerance, whether it be in regard to people outside Australia, or between black and white people in Australia - those should not be the issues. And I believe that the politics of smear and guilt by association should not be the issues. And I would have thought, as I indicated in the House today, that those on the opposite side of the Parliament should have learnt by now that that sort of thing is not what the Australian people want. The indications are crystal clear that in the attempt to go down those paths the Opposition have hurt themselves. And I sincerely hope that they will have learnt that lesson and they'll get back on to the sorts of issues that I've been talking about.

JOURNALIST: In that respect, Mr Hawke, it seems the Opposition is going to pursue organised crime regardless. What damage do you think that will do in the on-going Murphy inquiry.

P.M.: Well the fact - what damage will it do to the inquiry?

JOURNALIST: No, what damage do you think the Opposition can inflict upon you in respect of the organised crime debate and also how do you think the on-going Murphy inquiry will affect the conduct ...

P.M.: Well that's the other way around. Well, let me answer the first one on the basis of the evidence available. They couldn't have pursued the question of organised crime more vociferously than they have. And it's not working. And it's not working because the people of Australia know what is obvious in a crystal clear manner. And that is that I, as Prime Minister, and my Government have a total commitment to fighting organised crime in an effective way. No Australian would make the judgement that I would be other than in that position. There is no-one more committed than I am to ensuring that we pursue the processes of getting hard admissible evidence which is going to get criminals behind bars. That's what I'm about and what my Government's about and the people know that. So if the Opposition attempts to go further down that track they will suffer further the results that are already clear. Now in regard to the question of the Murphy inquiry - there the position is that the Senate Committee and its processes should proceed. And I had said in regard to the whole range of areas where criminal matters or other matters of the inquiry are being followed, I've said and I repeat again, and I know the Australian people accept it, let the cards fall where they may - I and my Government are not in the business of protecting anyone, whatever their position or station in life. Let proper inquiries be pursued and let the results then lead to

P.M. cont...: whatever prosecutions may be necessary. But let me say in all that, that we are never under the pressure of this McCarthyist smear tactic of the Opposition going to pre-judge individuals because it is an enormous price for a society to pay that in the legitimate pursuit of organised crime, or misbehaviour at any level of society, that in legitimately pursuing that course of action which I will in every way open to me at the federal level, that you should go to the next and unacceptable stage of pre-judging people on the basis of smear or innuendo or allegations that haven't had the chance of being tested. And I believe that overwhelmingly the people of Australia do not want that course to be followed. It is, in other words, necessary that we do the two things in this country - that we gather our resources in a way which is going to enable hard admissible evidence to be produced so that the courts of the land can in fact pursue those engaged in crime and organised crime, and at the same time as we're doing that in pursuing it without any equivocation - we must ensure that the proper processes are available which both ensure that those undertaking inquiries are not going to have them inhibited, but on the other hand ensure that the rights of individuals and civil liberties should be protected.

JOURNALIST: Do you believe Mr Wran pre-judged Mr Briese by his comments in London, Mr Hawke?

P.M.: I am not making any comment about Mr Wran's statement beyond what I've said in the Parliament. I've made it quite clear what my position is in regard to that matter. I'm not saying anything more about it.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, why do you feel it necessary to call the election now and not next year.

P.M.: Well do I need to go over the speech I've made in Parliament again?

JOURNALIST: Well let's get in on record here.

P.M.: What on your tape you mean? I see. Alright. Well let me make it as short as I can for your particular benefit. The Constitutional position is that there must be an election for half the Senate and that would have to be held by April of next year. And there would have to be, if we didn't have the House of Representatives election with the half Senate, then we'd have within a relatively short time after that - about the end of the year - have a House of Representatives election. Now that would cost an extra \$19 million - \$49 million if you had two elections rather than about \$30 million if you brought the two together. The other point is, of course, that this is the normal thing to do. It's normal to have the half Senate election at the end of the year preceding and in the special circumstance that we've got now with an enlarged Senate, where there are going to be two extra Senators from each State, then those two extra Senators cannot take their place in the Senate until the new House meets. Now if

P.M. cont...: we have the election of half Senate in April of 1985 and you didn't have the election of the House of Representatives until the end of that year or early in 1986, you could have these twelve Senators there in limbo for something up to 16 months. Now it's much more sensible, therefore, to do what's been done on 22 previous occasions in the history of this country, the most normal thing - that is, to have the House of Representatives and the half Senate together. And of course all of that has been done in the context of the election that's going to be held together with a referendum requiring simultaneous elections so that in the future we'll get rid of this business of putting elections out of kilter between the House of Representatives and the Senate.

JOURNALIST: During the campaign will you debate the Leader of the Opposition on television?

PM: I'm not making up my mind about that yet. I have indicated during the campaign before that that seemed to me to be an appropriate thing to do, but I simply say that the Leader of the Opposition by his behaviour over recent times has, I believe, put himself beyond the pale of ordinary and recent codes of behaviour. but I have not made up my mind about that.

JOURNALIST: In February '83, Mr Hawke, the Labor Party came pretty fast out of the blocks. Mr Peacock is talking now about a pre-campaign. What is the idea behind the Labor Party right now? Are you going to just have a traditional sort of start? Are you going to start now?

PM: Well, it won't be a full blown, if you like, total campaign, but it obviously would be quite dishonest to say that we are not going to be acting with a view to the election on 1 December. That will be in everyone's minds - every party's and every politicians' mind. But the formal campaign, the formal launching of the campaign, will not take place until into November.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, when did you take your decision to make the announcement this afternoon?

PM: I firmed it up really over the weekend and I obviously wanted to await the return of His Excellency the Governor-General today. It thought it appropriate that I should wait until his return.

JOURNALIST: In your speech to the House today you made the point that there is a need to deal a final blow to the tax avoidance industry in this country. It has been pointed out in the Senate by the Democrats that if you were fair dinkum about this you would have a double dissolution, thereby bringing those bills currently locked up there before a joint sitting of both Houses.

PM: I don't believe that a double dissolution is necessary or desirable. I mean, we want to limit this resort to unnecessary elections. I would hope that after the election when we are returned that it may be that the people in the Senate, and we may have a majority - we will certainly be trying to get a majority in the election - but even if we don't and the Democrats hold the balance of power, I would be hoping that what I believe would be a clear decision on the part of the electors about the question of tax avoidance - which will be very much an issue in the election, let me assure you, may lead them to support our legislation.

JOURNALIST: Having got the Senate and the Reps back in kilter, Mr Hawke, will you give a commitment now that the next term will be a full term and if you win that, there will be another full term after that - this is the last early election?

PM: Yes, that is what it is about. I mean, let's get the problem of the "out of kiltedness" - if I can use that rather clumsy phrase - behind us with the referendum being passed. And in that situation, yes, is the answer to your question.

JOURNALIST: Would it really be in the interests of Australia to have an Opposition where it is reduced to about a third membership of the House of Representatives?

PM: Well, it really depends, I suppose, on the quality of the Opposition, doesn't it. And we can only judge the product and what we have seen and it is pathetic. It is insulting to the intelligence of the electorate and I would think in those circumstances you don't want more of that. So we will be going in hard to win as big a majority as we possibly can. And I express this hope - that out of the election, however decimated they may be, that the Opposition parties will do two things. That they will try and get better quality people into their ranks. And secondly, that they will review the judgement of the Australian people, because the Australian people have repudiated their tactics and the concepts of what an Opposition should be about. And this, I hope, will be a learning process for them.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, as you know, a shipment of uranium to France is due this month. Does your Government intend to issue an export licence to allow the shipment to go ahead. If not, what sort of compensation does the Government intend ...

PM: The Minister for Resources and Energy, Senator Walsh, will be, I think, making an announcement in regard to this matter, but it will not involve an export licence to them to export to France.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, you say the overwhelming reason for an early election is your Government's need for a new and re-invigorating mandate. Does that mean that whenever a government in the future feels the need for a new and re-invigorating mandate, they can use this as an excuse for an early election?

PM: No, I think you ought to read the whole statement through a bit more closely and you will find the answer to your question.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, are you predicting an increased majority apart from any difference made by the extra seats?

PM: I believe we will improve our majority apart from that, yes.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, do you still believe there will be very little change in your Ministry after the election, if you win?

PM: What was that last bit.

JOURNALIST: He's Irish.

PM: Yes, I would think there would be not much change. I have to repeat. In this matter I am in the hands of the Caucus in the first step. They have to make a decision. I would think that the judgement of the Caucus would be that the Ministry had done an excellent job and therefore I would expect the Caucus to be re-endorsing overwhelmingly that Ministry. So the question really becomes would there be much of a re-shuffle. And I would think, not a great deal because I think it has been a very successful team.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, are you attracted to the idea of a larger Ministry?

PM: No.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, did the sort of headlines that Mr Wran was likely to get in tomorrow's press in any way influence your decision to announce the election today?

PM: No, it had absolutely nothing to do with it. And I would have thought that was quite clear.

JOURNALIST: Sir, in the light of the pressures and so on that have been on you personally in the last few weeks, how do you feel about a campaign?

PM: I feel great. I feel great, thank you. I hope it was asked solicitously, that is why I say thank you.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, would you be prepared to name a bottom line below which you would regard it as a bad result for the ALP?

PM: No, of course not.

JOURNALIST: Who do you think will be your opponent across the table after the next after the next election?

PM: I think the books have the Member for Bennelong at fairly short odds, but there is just one point I would make. He has got to win his seat first.

JOURNALIST: What role will Mr Wran be playing in the election?

PM: He is President of the Party. He will be there on the platform at the opening of the campaign, as he was on the last occasion and I would think it would be fairly similar to the last occasion. After the opening I think it fairly well rolled into my lap and I guess that will be much the same way again with support from my Minister.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, in your statement to the House today, you made the point there repeatedly of the vested interest in undermining the new spirit of national confidence and self-confidence. In the very next sentence you said "I believe the people of Australia have already realised the nature and purpose of this campaign of denigration". Are you referring to the denigration of yourself and identifying that as the prime cause of self-confidence in the nation.

PM: No, no.

JOURNALIST: What is the denigration you are referring to?

PM: Well I think there is a whole campaign that has been adopted by the Opposition of insinuating against everyone in government that there is something improper in what they do. I mean, you take the question of the decision that we have made to merge the work of the Costigan Commission in with the work of the National Crime Authority. As I said, there can be legitimate discussion about the timing and the process of doing that, but no room for questioning peoples' motives, but that is what they have done. And I would simply say, Max, that I believe the evidence is overwhelming that this sort of approach which questions the decencies and the motives of government to try and undermine confidence in government is something that has rebounded against the Opposition.

JOURNALIST: Have you any more idea when the Costigan Report is likely to be released?

PM: Commissioner Costigan has indicated that he would hope he would have it ready before the end of October and I have no reason to believe that won't be the case. Now, I have made it clear that I want to see the release of the report as soon as possible. Now, I have indicated, and I remind you, that we will not only have the recommendations of Commissioner Costigan as to what should or should not be published, but it will be referred in addition to the National Crime Authority, the Director of Public Prosecutions and to the AFP and to the Attorney-General's Department. Now, I am not sure that I can say with absolute precision what is the outside amount of time that those various authorities will want to

P.M. cont...look at it and to make their recommendations to it, but I wouldn't think it would be more than two or three days. So, I would be hoping that within two or three days of the receipt of the Report that we would be in a position to make the decision as to what parts - on the recommendation of those authorities - would not be released, for the same reasons as our predecessor government didn't do it and then we will take steps to see how that then can be released to the public by whatever mechanism is available to us.

JOURNALIST: Will you seek a resolution of the House before it rises to enable the powers of privilege of the Upper House to be extended for the Report, if that is necessary?

PM: No, there is one way in which it is suggested we may be able to do this, Mike, and that is a mechanism via the Speaker. There will be one of the ways that we will look at because it is quite important. We want it. We want it published as fully as we can and as soon as we can and we will just have to look at what mechanism will be available to do that. But I don't think it is a question of the resolution of the House in advance but I think there may be another mechanism of doing it. There are a range of opportunities that may be available to it. All I am saying - giving the commitment that we want it released as fully as it can be on the basis of the advice to us.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, given that you have had your differences with New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, does it surprise it that today he announced your election on November 24?

PM: Well, it is just another area in which he can have a mistaken view of things.
