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PRIME MINISTER

E. & O.E. - PROOF ONLY

JOHN LAWS SHOW - 2UE - 9 OCTOBER 1984

P.M.: Good morning John. I feel good John.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Well, it is a great day here in Canberra.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Yes, and 28 here. Things are warm.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Yes John.

QUESTION:

P.M.: It is as far as I am concerned John. It is going to be one in which I concentrate on the issues and explaining what this Government has done and what the alternative is. I want it to be a good clean constructive campaign. It will be as far as I am concerned.

QUESTION:

P.M.: I'll stick to it. I can't speak for my opponents John.

QUESTION:

P.M. Well, I hope not. There is some evidence John, that the Leader of the Opposition and those around him might have slowly got the message that their smear tactics have been counter-productive. And if they have got that message perhaps we will see a clean campaign.

QUESTION:

P.M.: No, I agree with you. It has been the case I think that for some time now that the anti-Labor Parties really make a low assessment of the intelligence of the electorate. I said during the last Federal Campaign that I thought that they were insulting the intelligence of the electorate. It was done in a number of ways. I suppose most spectacularly - it was put your money under the bed type-of-thing. But there were others-not just Mr Fraser, and I am not about attacking him. In fact, I believe that Mr Peacock has

P.M. cont: made Mr Fraser look very good. But, there is a general tendency to try and get onto issues which are about raising fear and that type of thing. I really believe that the Australian electorate, which I think is pretty well represented by your listening audience. I think they are interested in basic issues which concern their welfare, employment opportunities, inflation, interest rates, what's happening to housing, and those sorts of things. That's what people are concerned about.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Well, there's a number of reasons John. For a long time now I have been saying to the people of Australia that I want to get a position where we can get an unnecessary number of elections out of the way, and that I want to clear the uncertainty. My predecessors always played around and were not coming clean and saying whether there would be an election or not. So I wanted it to be established fairly early in the piece that we would have the House Representatives election with the half Senate, which under the Constitution we must have. The practice has been to have the half Senate election at the end of the preceding year. We would have to have had it by April, so you should have it at the end of '84, have the House of Representatives with it, save the people an unnecessary extra election. It will be 30 million to have the two together rather than 49 million having two separate ones. But, as you know John, as I have said to you before very importantly, having the referendum with the elections so that they will give the people the opportunity to say there shall in the future be simultaneous elections for the Reps and the Senate. So that, Prime Ministers in the future won't be able to go calling unnecessary early elections.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Yes, and if the people will pass the referendum that will mean that in future Parliaments will run their term, because Prime Ministers are not going to call unnecessary early elections -which mean they will have to have the Reps and the Senate separately, or call double dissolutions and put the whole thing out of kilter.

QUESTION:

P.M.: I believe so, and I think people don't want unnecessary extra elections. So, I am saving them one by having these two together and trying to create the circumstances that we won't in the future have a repetition of all these unnecessary elections.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Yes John.

QUESTION:

P.M.: I believe not John. Two or three things I would like to say about it. Firstly of course, again I think that our opponents insult the intelligence of the electorate. If they think they are going to mix up NSW and Federal. People know that they are voting for a Federal election. They are deciding whether they want a Hawke/Bowen Government or a Peacock/Sinclair Government.

P.M. cont: They understand that. Secondly, I believe that as we were saying together a little earlier - I don't think people like this smear business and this crucifying of people on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations. Let me go specifically to the question of Neville Wran. I have been asked about it. I simply want to say this - that whether Neville was wise or not wise in making a statement overseas about Mr Briese, there can be arguments about that. But there has been an attempt continuously to smear Wran, suggest that he is crook. I want to say this, and I have said it before and I say it again on your program. I have never had put before me one single piece of evidence which suggests that there is something going to the integrity of Mr Wran or his propriety at all. And I am not in the business of running away from friends and colleagues because they might be going through a bit of a rough, trot because there are smears and allegations and innuendos. Until I, until or unless, and I don't believe it would happen. I simply say, until or unless I get evidence in regard to Mr Wran, or anyone else for that matter, that there is something improper about their behaviour I am not running away from them. It has never been my behaviour and I am not going to start doing it now.

QUESTION:

P.M.: There may have been some untidiness in some areas, and all I am saying in respect of any inquiries that are going on John, whether they be the Costigan inquiry or if it becomes the National Crimes Authority investigation or Senate investigation - I have said and I repeat, let the cards fall where they may. I am not in the business of protecting anyone and never will be. If evidence emerges that some action needs to be taken on the basis of admissible evidence, we'll let that happen wherever it leads.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Well, I think basically colleagues support him, but I think over a period of time you can make some assessments about some people as to whether they are as strong in support as they might be. You know when Neville was riding the crest of the wave, everyone wanted to be there on his coat-tails. When you get into the more difficult periods when mud is slung and some sticks. You don't find the exuberance and the desire for association on the part of some people that may have exhibited it earlier. I think that is significant. Let me say this, there's very few politicians that have subjected themselves to a royal commission, as Mr Wran did. And it is very important to understand that he came through that royal commission, where he was subject to cross-examination and searching and probing - he came through totally honourably.

QUESTION:

P.M.: There have been, now all I am saying about that, the Senate inquiry is there. It is for the Senate inquiry to conduct it's investigation listen to the evidence, have it's examination cross-examination, and for it to make it's findings. And I am not going in any way to seek to interfere with its processes.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Yes, there have been.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Well, I think as I said earlier in the program John, we've had a classic illustration of it in the Federal Parliament over recent weeks. The violence of allegations that were made against me I can't think of a more vile allegation and that I would protect people involved in the drug traffic. I can't think of anything more viler than that. Now those allegations and smears and innuendos were made. Now, the people have repudiated that approach in that it's justified the continuing faith that I have always had in politics, in the good sense of the Australian people.

QUESTION:

P.M.: They accept that it's on, and Hazel who played a magnificent part in the last election, will I believe be there shoulder to shoulder with me in this one.

QUESTION:

P.M.: I don't want to predict those sorts of things. I believe John that we will win, and that we will win well. I believe that the Australian people by a clear majority think that Australia at the end of 1984 is a much better place than the economically stagnant, socially divisive and confrontationist Australia at the beginning of 1983. And I think that they will confirm this Government in office and myself as Prime Minister. Now, I will fight the election strongly, and I believe we will get a good majority, but I don't want to predict what it will be.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Well, I hope that one of the characteristics I have demonstrated in public life is a degree of charity, and I have still got reserves of that. I can assure I am not getting personal pleasure out of his difficulties. They are self created to a very large extent. What the Liberal Party does about its Leadership John, is a matter for it. I would simply make this observation that in the circumstances which you postulate I would hope that whoever leads the Liberal Party in the future will come to understand that the Australian people want constructive oppositions.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Well, it would be and this may in a sense be acting against my own best interests. But, it would be to concentrate on the basic issues of concern to the Australian people because that's what the people want. As I say, in a sense I am probably talking against my own best interests, because if they were to continue on the path they have been on, there is nothing more certain and it would be a totally devastating result, but that's not what I want the quality of Australian politics to be lifted. And I think an Opposition has always got its part to play in that process.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Well, let me just go to both those points John. The assets test I think, will become a plus for us, because the closer we get to the election, the more clear it will be to the 98% of pensioners that they are not going to be adversely affected, because the forms will go out and they will see that they are not going to be affected. There is only about 2% of all pensioners who could be in a position where they will have their pension affected. Now, that factual situation will emerge as will the fact, that leading figures in the Liberal Party believe in it. I mean I have lost count of the number of times that John Howard has either said or it has been reported to me of him saying to other people, that he supports that assets test. Now, he is looked at as the next leader of the Liberal Party, and he supports the assets test. Mr Peacock when he was on the back-bench in Government, he indicated his support for it. Mr John Elliot, who is talked about as a future leader of the Liberal Party has congratulated the Government on it. Senator Chaney, when he was the opposition spokesman for Social Welfare, he supported it. It is quite clear that right across the spectrum people would understand the great burden that is imposed upon any Government and the whole area of social welfare realises that they have to be means tested, And they will try and distort, but as I get back to the point I make that ultimately I have faith in the good judgement of the people. You've had this terrible situation - resulted in some of the suburbs of Sydney I understand, that because of the totally unjustified and misrepresentation of campaign that the Liberals have waged saying that there will be inspectors coming into homes to look at your assets, which won't happen, can't possibly happen under our assets test. You are having people going around posing as inspectors and causing great inconvenience to pensioners. Now, that sort of thing is despicable, and I just believe that the people will react against that sort of misrepresentation.

QUESTION:

P.M.: It will be one of the jobs that we will have to do John, I don't think it will be the main one. It will be something that I am quite confident that we will be able to do.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Well, the interesting thing there John, is that I have been saying for some time now that we want to start a debate in the community about what's the best sort of taxation base to have. We've started that discussion in the Economic Planning Advisory Council with contributions from the business community, who in a very comprehensive statement have now said they believe there is a place for capital gains tax. But, what I want to do is not pre-judge the elements of a reform tax system, but I want to really open up the community discussion and debate upon it. And in the same way that we have produced the economic results since we have been in office on the basis of using the strengths of the community, consulting with them to do the same thing in the area of tax. Not to pre-judge it, to impose something on it. It is interesting to note that the NSW Liberal Party apparatus recently produced their economic committee report. Well, they said that in their

P.M. cont: judgement that a capital gains tax would inevitably be part of a reform tax system. Now, I think that the debate has just got to go on, and in the end we will get, as we have in our general economic policy an overall consensus approach of what's the best way of going about these things.

QUESTION:

P.M.: Well, not just of itself. I think that there is an argument in principle for it. But, it is part of an overall approach, but only out of a process whereby you can get a general community understanding of it as part of a general system. This is exactly what the Liberal Party said in its approach.

QUESTION:

P.M.: John, could I say two things, - thank you very much. I have been reading a bit in the papers about perhaps we mightn't still be having you on the sound waves during this period. Could I just say this that not just in the last election campaign, but in many that I have been aware of, you've played a very important role in helping community understanding of issues, in - I think - an impartial way. I hope that you are going to play that part for the community in these next few weeks.

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