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PRIME MINISTER

E. & O.E. - PROOF ONLY

MIKE CARLTON - 2GB - TUESDAY, 9 OCTOBER, 1984

CARLTON: ...elections whenever it suits them and their Party.

PRIME MINISTER: Well it may be if you want to come to that conclusion. It is inaccurate because I made it clear from fairly early in the peace that what I wanted to do was to bring an end to unnecessary elections in this country. So distinct to any other Prime Minister I am going to the electorate now to save an election. There would have to be a half Senate election by April of next year. Then there would have had to have been a House of Representatives within a relatively short time after that. So I'm having the House of Representatives and the half Senate together which will be the 23rd time that that's happened in the history of this country. It's the normal practice, but what distinguishes this situation from all that's gone before is that I will be going to the people with a referendum at the same time and saying please vote to ensure that in future there must be simultaneous elections so that no Prime Minister will be able to do what my predecessors have done and deliberately create unnecessary early and duplicated elections.

CARLTON: Will you be campaigning strongly on that apart from the normal?

PRIME MINISTER: Indeed I will because I think that the people don't like unnecessary elections and I am giving the opportunity through the referendum to ensure that can never be done again.

CARLTON: Alright. Why do you need a fresh mandate?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't need a fresh mandate, I am simply saying that I believe it is appropriate in the circumstances of having this poll that the opportunity be given to the Government of an endorsement for a renewal of their mandate. I have explained why it is necessary to go now and I have also said in explanation to the Parliament that this will be an opportunity to give a fresh mandate because what we have done is to turn the country around through the operation of the Prices and Incomes Accord. We have changed it from no growth to the fastest growing economy in the world. Now the Opposition are saying to the people we will destroy the whole Accord, the whole basis of consensus, all the mechanisms which have brought trade unions and business and government working effectively to produce this economic revolution - they want to abandon that. So I am saying that this will be an opportunity for

the people to say if they want the continuation of the approach which I have brought to this country, or a reversion to the disasters of the past.

CARLTON: Yes but you see you are going six months early or so and you are still asking for this fresh mandate when all the polls show that the world is yours, you know, Australia is yours.

PRIME MINISTER: Well you put it that way but what I'm saying is that the basic reasons I put for going to the election are there - that we have got to get this duplication of elections out of the way. There must be a half Senate election by April of next year - early next year - and the tradition in the past is where you have got to have that half Senate election is to have it at the end of the preceding year. I am doing that but we must do it too to get the elections back into kilter and to prevent the possibility of unnecessary elections in the future. Now I am saying quite clearly it is opportune in those circumstances that the people of Australia refresh the mandate for change that we have brought - the creation of a new spirit in Australia and I believe that the Australian public will want to do that.

CARLTON: Was there a worry, a consideration, that things might come unstuck in New South Wales? Your support for Neville Wran yesterday in the Parliament seemed pretty lukewarm.

PRIME MINISTER: I don't think it was lukewarm. Listen what you have got to distinguish is that Neville Wran made a statement overseas and then around that statement - and in respect of that there could be various interpretations I concede as to whether it was wise or not.

CARLTON: Possibly contemptuous?

PRIME MINISTER: No it was certainly not intended to be contemptuous in my judgement. But wrapped around the fact of Neville Wran's statement people wanted to put the whole question of whether I was repudiating Neville Wran in general. Now I have made it clear that it has never been my practice in life, whether it's Neville Wran or anyone else, to abandon friends - colleagues - on the basis of smear and innuendo and unsubstantiated allegation. That has never been my way. It is often the easy way but it is not my way. So I was making the point that until - and I don't believe there can be - but until and unless there was some evidence which went to the integrity of Neville Wran as a man, rather than questions about whether it was wise of him to make a statement or not, until that's done he has my support, and I don't believe there is any evidence. There is certainly none, Mike, that has been brought to my attention. I don't think you are aware of any which established any questionmark about the integrity of the man.

CARLTON: Would you rather he hadn't said what he said yesterday?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I think it could have been perhaps better left unsaid but I have made it clear that I am not going to make judgements about a man in those circumstances where a statement made in particular circumstances are then used to try and denigrate a man generally. They have latched on to that particular statement which may have been unwise - but that's not the point.

CARLTON: No it probably didn't help you at the timing of an election announcement does it?

PRIME MINISTER: It had nothing to do with the timing of the election announcement. If there is one ill-kept secret in Australian political life if you like it is that I have been going to have an election for the reasons that I have put. I came to a conclusion a short while ago definitely about the date and I awaited the return of the Governor-General of Australia. He arrived back at 3.30 yesterday afternoon. I went and saw him at 4.30 and that was it. Mr. Wran's statement had absolutely and demonstrably had nothing to do with that time.

CARLTON: No, no, but it didn't help you a lot.

PRIME MINISTER: Well I don't think it helped or didn't help. The people of Australia, in my judgement, seem very, very much more sensible than a lot of you commentators are prone to think. You people in the gallery and the commentators, you latch onto a statement by Mr. Wran on the other side of the world, you latch onto some particular thing and you say that's what the Australian people are thinking about, that's the big issue. Now I just want to tell you I have been studying politics for a very, very long time - I think pretty successfully - and I know what the Australian people are concerned about. They are concerned about jobs, they are concerned about inflation, they are concerned about interest rates, they are concerned about housing and on all these things which are uppermost in the daily thinking of ordinary Australians we have delivered the goods and it is an exercise in, if I may say so, in periphery politics to suggest that a statement by the Premier of New South Wales on the other side of the world has anything to do with people's reaction to an election.

CARLTON: Alright, one last question on this subject: does the grand partnership still exist?

PRIME MINISTER: What grand partnership are you talking about?

CARLTON: Hawke and Wran - it was very much in the news at the last election.

PRIME MINISTER: And at this election you will have Neville Wran, the Federal President of the Australian Labor Party, he will be on the platform when we launch the campaign. He will introduce me, I will then take over the delivery of the policy speech and

CARLTON: Yes but beyond that I mean there was talk about that grand coalition between Wran and Hawke. That was very big here in New South Wales.

PRIME MINISTER: Well the coalition obviously still exists. He is still the National President of the Party; by one of the most overwhelming votes of the New South Wales public earlier this year, he is Premier of New South Wales.

CARLTON: And still your closest ally?

PRIME MINISTER: And I am the Prime Minister of Australia. Those are facts.

CARLTON: Alright, and still your closest ally in the political scene?

PRIME MINISTER: Who has ever said that Neville Wran is my closest ally on the political scene. I mean I can't recall having seen that said.

CARLTON: I think it was in the last election campaign.

PRIME MINISTER: Well you might point that out to me.

CARLTON: I mean the photographs were there for a start of the two you.

PRIME MINISTER: Well I'll just remind you of the fact, Neville Wran was then the national president of the Labor Party. As such he introduced me as the leader of the Labor Party in the Sydney Town Hall. There was the odd photograph.

CARLTON: Yes and you said I need Wran.

PRIME MINISTER: Well of course one needs to have the Premier of the largest state in Australia. New South Wales is the largest, most significant state in Australia. It is very important that you have the leadership of that state within the Labor Party. Now you can try as much as you like to get me into the mode of my opponents of denigrating a man because people are smearing and casting unproven allegations. You can try that until election day and you won't find me falling into that trap. Can I just make the point Mike, that if there is one thing that has been clear in recent weeks it is the judgement of the Australian people about the tactics of the Leader of the Opposition of trying to use this smear and unfounded allegation. People don't like it.

CARLTON: Can I ask you - this is the broad bucket question - what are you going to be doing in the next four years? Is there going to be a big review of taxation? Is there going to be a capital gains tax?

PRIME MINISTER: That's a quite silly question - is there going to be a capital gains tax. You're talking about a broad question and then you say - I am asking a broad question, is there going to be a capital gains tax. Look I have made it quite clear in the area of tax reform, and indeed I think there is no difference between the Opposition and ourselves on this, and that is that there needs to be a thoroughgoing review of the tax base in this country. I have started the process by discussions in the Economic Planning Advisory Council with business, the trade unions, and community organisations. After the election we will expand that process of consultation and amongst issues that will be looked at will be the one you mentioned. In the same way as the Liberal Party in New South Wales recently, it's economic committee, said that capital gains tax would inevitably from their point of view be looked at in a thoroughgoing tax review.

CARLTON: Well the Opposition is going to throw that at you. Peacock will throw it at you.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE DEBATE
PRIME MINISTER: Well I tell you what, I'll catch it and throw it right back at him because he knows that as far as his own Party is concerned they believe that's something that will have to be looked at in an overall tax review. They have said it themselves.

CARLTON: So it's part of the review, you are not going to rule it out?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't rule it out at all. And I say directly to the Australian people that there needs to be a review of the tax system to see if we can get a more efficient and a more equitable tax base. That's common ground across the political spectrum. The difference between the Liberal/National Party and ourselves is that we believe in the approach of consultation and attempted consensus and that approach is what has turned this country around from the economic disaster that we inherited to making it the fastest growing economy in the world - that is on the basis of the approach that we adopt. We will adopt the same approach to reviewing the whole question of tax.

CARLTON: Prime Minister can we keep talking through our news and drop the news and keep talking?

PRIME MINISTER: You can if you like.

CARLTON: Alright, terrific. The grave question that still worries many people, and you must concede this, I know you do, is unemployment and particularly youth unemployment. What have you got in mind there?

PRIME MINISTER: Well we will continue the attack on unemployment in a way which has produced a turn-around. In the last twelve months of our opponents rule unemployment increased by a quarter of a million. We have brought unemployment down and created a quarter of a million new jobs and we have done that by adopting sensible economic policies which produced growth. As I say, the fastest growth in the world. Now that's what produces jobs and we will continue the policies which do that.

CARLTON: It is still too high though, isn't it?

PRIME MINISTER: Of course it's too high but can I suggest to you that it is better to be bringing unemployment down than to having it growing to record levels as it did under the economic policies of our opponents. I mean for God's sake are you going to say it is still too high and not recognise there is a difference between bringing it down and having it shooting upwards.

CARLTON: Yes, I am just wondering how far you are going to go - what are you going to do to keep it coming down?

PRIME MINISTER: Well we will continue the economic policies which we have put into place which have produced the fastest growth in the world, which have produced a quarter of a million new jobs in a year. Do you think that's the sensible thing to do?

CARLTON: Yes. Will there be a special effort for youth unemployment, and that is still very high.

PRIME MINISTER: Well of course it is high but young people have benefitted from the growth we've brought in in creating general jobs. We will continue the Community Employment Program to look after those who have the longest periods of unemployment. But more fundamentally what we are doing is to review the whole education system to try and make our education system more relevant so that it will provide our kids with the sort of training in the skills which are going to equip them better for jobs. It's no good just increasing funding for education as we have, you have got to make their education system more relevant so they are better able to offer themselves for jobs which we are needing, and we are also reviewing the whole area of training and re-training programs to make sure that the money that we spend on programs that we've inherited and some of our own new ones are the most relevant to equip young people for the changing structure of the economy. So we're not just having general macro-economic policies. Our policies in the sphere of education, training and re-training will gradually improve this situation.

CARLTON: I read the other day BHP is going to heave out most of its apprentices at the end of the year, that sort of thing. How do you get over lumps like that?

PRIME MINISTER: Well let me go to the steel industry, and we have made it infinitely better for the steel industry than it was before. When we came to office the steel industry was going to be abolished in this country. They were going to give it away. Now we brought in the Steel Industry Plan which has saved the steel industry and made jobs there existent which were going to be destroyed. So those are the sorts of things you do to gradually improve the position.

CARLTON: Alright. The Cabinet, the Ministry - would you see any changes after the election?

PRIME MINISTER: Well Mike what you appreciate is that the Caucus after the election elects those who will be in the Ministry. Now my judgement is Mike that they will elect substantially the same people because I think the Caucus makes the same judgement as does the electorate generally that the Ministers have done a good job. So I think I will have basically the same people to be appointing.

CARLTON: To the same portfolios?

PRIME MINISTER: As to portfolio I would think there would be very little change - some but not a great deal because they have done well.

CARLTON: Would you indicate where those changes might come?

PRIME MINISTER: I wouldn't.

CARLTON: Would they come within senior ranks of the Cabinet or more minor changes lower down?

PRIME MINISTER: I think basically at the relatively lower levels - I mean looking at the senior portfolios all the Ministers there have done very well - as by the way has the Ministry generally.

CARLTON: Yes, alright. Immigration: is it going to be an issue - the whole race thing - the Professor Geoffrey Blainey argument - all that?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't think it will be the sort of issue people feared some time ago because I think the facts have emerged quite clearly and that is that there has been no change in policy, that we have done what we did when we were in Opposition - followed the policies of our predecessors and that is that the criteria of family reunion and it has meant that as a result of the number of refugees that came into this country under the deliberate policy of the previous government, which we supported, well those people who have recently come are entitled to bring close members of their families in, and that together with the unsolicited relative run-down in applicants which started at the latter years of our predecessors from European sources, has given a temporary lift in the proportion coming from the Asian region. - But that is on the basis of the policies of our predecessors and we are not criticising them for them. We join them in those policies. Now the saner heads in the Liberal Party have recognised to their credit that those are the facts and I don't believe it will be a basic issue of the campaign.

CARLTON: Alright. Prime Minister I know you have got to go now but one last quickie that is going to be hurled at you every day -- how much are you going to win by and will you have control of the Senate?

PRIME MINISTER: I am not saying how much we will win by. I think the Australian people will give us a convincing victory. We will earn it, we will not take the campaign for granted. The Senate will be tough, we will be trying to win it but let me say this: if we don't - well I hope to - but if we don't then we will work with the elements in the Senate to try and ensure that the program that the Australian people want is implemented.

CARLTON: Prime Minister thanks for your time.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you Mike.

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