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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT

PROGRAMME : STATE AFFAIR (Channel 7 with Howard Sattler)  
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TOPIC : ELECTION CAMPAIGN - interview with the Prime Minister

SATTLER:

Why are you bothering to debate Andrew Peacock when you're so far ahead? You've got nothing to win.

PM:

Well it's true that the challenger in those circumstances has always had some advantage. But it seemed to me that I had said before that there should be a debate. And the only question that had arisen as to whether there would not be was because of the untenable behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition over recent months. But I believed then in the circumstances that it was appropriate to have the debate. I debate him all the time in parliament. I have no fear or worry about debating him.

SATTLER:

Ronald Reagan said that of a fellow called Walter Mondale.

PM:

Well he did. I'm 54.

SATTLER:

Ronald Reagan a bit older.

PM:

Another score of years. There was a differential against the

President because, I think, of his age. But there's another debate to go. I wouldn't write off President Reagan.

SATTLER:

A lot of people wonder why you're campaigning at all. I mean you're so far ahead and why not just say nothing?

PM:

Because I believe the people are entitled, Howard, to a full exposition and a continuous exposition from me. I don't think it would do justice to the Australian people for me to say to them well I know you support me and the Government and I take that for granted. I want to go to the people and do really two things: to explain what we've done to justify the trust they imposed in us, how together this Government and the people have changed Australia into a much better place now than it was before; and, to contrast our programme and what we offer for the future against the abysmal performance of the alternative government. I think they're entitled to a full programme from me and they'll get it.

SATTLER:

Well we thought we'd go out and ask some of the people what they'd like to ask you, rather than people like me hogging all the questions. So, here's the first one.

PM:

Righto Howard.

QUESTION:

Mr Hawke I would like to ask you one question. What would be your top priority as far as you're concerned? To me I think that a man or a girl having a job is the highest priority in their life?

PM:

I agree with you. And that's what we've made our top priority,

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Howard, in the period we've been in Government. I said, as you will recall during the last election campaign, that we would do these things: we would halt the enormous rise in unemployment. In the twelve months before came to office there was an increase of a quarter of a million in unemployment. We've done that. We've reduced unemployment from 10.3 per cent down to 8.6 per cent.

SATTLER:

From a senior citizen to a young man. Let's hear what he has to say.

PM:

Young man.

QUESTION:

I was just wondering, mate, how come you don't think of some ideas like putting unemployed people in houses and giving them food parcels instead of giving them dole cheques and them maybe they'd want to work a bit. You know, go out and get a job, instead of bumming around, you know, 'cause they need smokes and they need to go out every now and again.

PM:

Well we've, we have in fact increased the funding that's available for housing for the unemployed. But we think that the most important thing that we can do for the unemployed is to make work.

QUESTION:

My name's Joanna and I'd like to know if you think you're good looking?

PM:

(Laughter) I'm not as good looking at the moment as I was. I've got a bit of a shiner. Oh passing I think.

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SATTLER:

Let's talk about your job now and I think the next questioner wants to know a little bit about the money you get for it.

QUESTION:

Hi Mr Hawke, I'm Naomi. How do you justify your high salary?

PM:

Well I don't set it. All I can say is that as a result of the decisions that I've taken we've knocked back salary increases. If I'd left it to those whose independent job it is to determine what it is that I should be paid and others should be paid, it would be much more than it is. We've knocked back the increases they suggested.

SATTLER:

And I think you'll recognise the next questioner.

PM:

Who's this?

QUESTION: (Bill Hassell, WA Opposition Leader)

Prime Minister given that Western Australia's Aboriginal population, which is two per cent of the total population of the State, already owns eight per cent of the land area of Western Australia; and given that Labor policy is firmly committed to the granting of Aboriginal land rights in Western Australia: I ask you how much of Western Australia you believe should be open to claim by Aborigines on the basis of their race?

PM:

Well the position...

SATTLER:

You do recognise the questioner?

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PM:

Well I don't want to be rude. It is Mr Hassell is it?

SATTLER:

It is Mr Hassell.

PM:

Oh I see. I'm not being rude because I don't believe I've met him before as far as I understand. And he's not a well known figure in the Eastern States of Australia. The answer to that is quite clear. And indeed, today, Mr Burke and I have released a statement which makes the position of the Government of Western Australia and my Government at one. And may I say to Mr Hassell that that position has been endorsed by the miners and I believe that he is very much in a minority on this issue.

SATTLER:

Small business is said to be the backbone of Australia and we thought we'd ask one of Perth's growing businessmen, he certainly is, Alistair Norwood, to ask you a question as well.

PM:

Sure.

QUESTION:

Mr Prime Minister in these times of high unemployment, opportunities in the retail and service industries - particularly for school leavers - would be much greater if these industries could operate extended hours without the burden of penalty rates thereby allowing the use of additional staff. Has your Government considered the effects on unemployment by the introduction of a fixed hourly rate of pay, and is there any plan to introduce such a measure?

PM:

No I understand that there's been argument about the effect of penalty rates, but all I can say is that the research that's been

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conducted in Australia and overseas is not conclusive about the impact of relative rates of pay between juniors and seniors and penalty rates on the levels of employment. But clearly we would not do anything which is going to make more difficult the employment of more people, and particularly young people.

SATTLER:

So 1984 has been a year of giving, but what about 1985? Are you going to take so much of it back from us in taxes - maybe capital gains taxes?

PM:

No certainly not. The Liberal opponents that we've got are the masters of deceptive promises. 1977 in the election campaign - you'll remember the fist full of dollars, vote for us - as soon as they were re-elected they grabbed it all back and more. Now this is the first government for a very, very long period which have given the people of Australia real tax cuts. In a matter of days now, in the beginning of November all Australians will receive a real tax cut. And I say real because it's more than was necessary just to cover indexation. If we're just given indexation to cover wages moving into higher brackets that would have been a full year cost of \$1.3 billion. The real tax cuts that we're giving the people of Australia will cost in a full year \$2.1 billion. So they are the first real tax cuts. And they will stay and they'll not be taken back.

SATTLER:

(Introduces segment from Mike Carlton's puppets) He must have known something.

PM:

Yeah they're having a lot of fun these cartoonists and the puppeteers. I think it's all part of the political process. Most of it I enjoy.

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SATTLER:

You don't mind him at all?

PM:

No, no. I mean if you let that sort of thing get under your skin you shouldn't be in the business.

SATTLER:

Mr Hawke thanks for joining us.

PM:

Thank-you very much Howard.