



PRIME MINISTER

INTERVIEW WITH DEREK BALLANTYNE (3AW) - 5 December 1985

- B. Priority One off and running, is it going to have some really concrete worth when it's all over and done with?
- H. There's no question about that, Priority One is not going to be over and done with, this is not something that we've just conceived for IYY 1985. It is a continuing program, which emphasises as it says the priority which this Gov't gives to the issues of youth. And it has a number of elements, perhaps the most significant in a sense is the new concept of traineeships which introduces a quite revolutionary new idea of vocational training in this country, Derek, which is directed towards those young people who have been leaving the education system early. If they get employment they're going into dead end jobs with no training provided. Now we'll be moving to have a situation where by 1988 we'll have 75,000 of these traineeships which will mean that young people will go in for jobs and not simply do the particular jobs that they are recruited for but on the job will get training for a wider range of responsibilities and for a quarter of the year will be offered full time training in TAFE institutions or their equivalent. So that we will gradually change the situation where so many of our young people have moved into dead end positions, where the community has ceased it's obligations to them in terms of education and training and their continuation of the responsibility of the community so that we will gradually create a stronger, more skill - based young workforce which will be good for the Australian economy but most importantly will be good for young people themselves. Also as part of Priority One we're undertaking a rationalisation of youth income support payments so that in two or three years we will have eliminated the existing financial disincentives that has built over the years for people to go on unemployment benefits rather than to remain in education on education allowances. And we will also be consolidating a number of youth training programs, which will be community based programs, and also giving added emphasis within the CES to have youth centres within the CES so that young people when they leave school and are looking at what is available to them in the workforce and in terms of training opportunities will have a centralised focus within the CES centres to be able to be informed of services available to them. In all these ways we can see that this is a continuing program, already the evidence is that the

concept is being warmly embraced by the young people themselves and by the community.

- B. Now Mr. Hawke there were a number of temporary job schemes ^{for youth} in the past, but you seem to be moving away from those, because they did not offer in the long term any real hope for the young?
- H. When we came to Government we inherited a situation where there was a whole hotch-potch of unrelated unco-ordinated programs in the area of temporary job schemes, training programs. What we've done as a result of having the Kirby inquiry and the OECD group coming here is to ^{be} then making a series of decisions which co-ordinate the programs. And there will be more emphasis on trying to have programs which create a capacity within young people to be better equipped to take on full time employment, or if not full time employment a combination of employment and training and education.
- B. I was addressing a school ^{group} yesterday about careers as a matter of fact, and talking to some of those kids afterwards they did appear still to have a little bit of bitterness, of disillusionment there about their life and times. They felt that staying at school, leaving in the next year or two, they still didn't have any great confidence that there was much out there waiting for them.
- H. There's still some of that but if you make a comparison Derek with the beginning of '83 when we came to Office there was almost total black despair amongst youth. That has been very largely removed. And the evidence ^{is there} as to why there should be more optimism with significantly reduced unemployment in this country, including unemployment amongst young people. There's been a significant increase in the number of jobs available for them. And they see that with this co-ordinated program we're going to be making it more worthwhile for young people to stay in education. We're not only just spending money on these things to lift allowances and to make more places, there will be 20,000 additional places in this coming training (?) in tertiary institutions. Something like an additional 75-85,000 places in TAFE, but we are also giving effect to the recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry headed by Prof. Karmel to look at the quality of our primary and secondary education system, because one of the problems of the past has been the education system hasn't been intirely relevant to the needs of young people and the needs of industry. And in the resource agreement that we're negotiating with the State we are sure that in the coming years there will be an

improvement in the quality of the output of our education system.

- B. In your phone-in program I'm sure you're going to relieve a lot of frustration because the young do have ideas and very bright ideas, what they didn't have, and what they didn't have up till now, is anyone to listen to them.
- H. Well that's right Derek. I mean I've been fairly close to young people right through my public life, and one of the things that became increasingly clear to me was that they did have this feeling that we oldies were standing off and saying, we know what the problems were and practically what the answers were and tending to impose solutions upon them without involving them in our consideration of what should happen. So that's why I promised in my address to the Nation in August that while we would accept our responsibility to start these new moves, I then wanted to be able to listen to the young people of Aus. to get their ideas, and we will. This is not some cosmetic exercise, the whole of the phone-in program is computerised, we will have then at the end of it, in addition to my direct opportunity of listening to young people, all the phone-in ideas will as I say be computerised and brought together and to the extent that we see things out of that which lead us to the conclusion that certain aspects of what we're doing should be modified, those modifications will be made.
- B. Given that you're sure to get many ideas good ones and bad ones, who in fact will have the final responsibility in ^{determining} which ones will be taken up?
- H. Well, it won't be just our responsibility we will arrange to have consultations with the representative Council of Youth, we'll be talking with them and they will have access to the results of the phone-in and so we here in Gov't in consultation with the representatives of youth will then consider all the material.
- B. Now you're not going to be able to please everyone I guess it's a fact of political life that you can never achieve that result, but I wonder if you feel that the other end of the scale, I'm talking about the unemployed in their 50's for instance. A lot of those people feel a bit worthless they feel they've been dumped on the scrap heap and there is no future for them. I wonder if there'd be a tinge of bitterness at that end of the scale about what you're doing for youth?
- H. I don't think so at all for two reasons, the older people in this country are parents and they take the view that the most important asset of this country is our young people they want us to have

a priority for addressing the needs of young people. The second point of course is that while this is priority One that doesn't mean there aren't other priorities; and programs in the area of re-training and job creation, are relevant for that older age sector as well so we are very substantially increasing both the number of jobs available in the community which will ^{be of} benefit to older people as well, but also having relevance to training and re-training programs which are going to assist them.

B. I did hear a discussion the other day, somebody arguing that we should get politics off the front page, well they'd be very disappointed today, because I noticed in all the Melbourne papers the name Hawke crops up in the Headlines. You've "Go softly on super" and you're supposed to be jumping on the ACTU over super. Is this a matter of that much concern to you?

H. I want the community to understand, business and trade unions, that we have, in co-operation with the trade unions, over the past two and three quarter years, through the processes of the Accord, turned this economy around from one of being in the worst recession for 50 years to one where it's now having very significant economic growth and record employment creation. Now there is nothing to be done which is going to jeopardise that, and the Accord provides ways in which the productivity increase that is available will be implemented by way of superannuation. And that should be done by negotiation, unions and employers. And I have Mr Keating today meeting with the ACTU and next week going to be meeting with representatives of the employers, after those discussions with Unions and Employers we will then establish the guidelines for the implementation of the new occupational superannuation. It's important that this great benefit, the benefit not only for employees but it's going to be very beneficial for industry as well. Because it's going to mean that we'll get a greater degree of mobility in our work force. Up till now there would have been a hesitation in many areas of the workforce about moving to other jobs because they would have thought they 'd lose the benefit of existing superannuation which didn't encourage portability with it. Well under this development that we have now and the extension of superannuation we'll have a more mobile workforce which is going to be of benefit to industry.

B. The Headline in the Australian for instance has Hawke, Keating, Willis jumping on the ACTU, that sort of smacks of confrontation looming over this issue?

H. No not confrontation, there's no confrontation looming in any sense.

What has been accepted very very generally by the trade union movement is that there will be negotiation, that there won't be any implementation of this before July 1 of 1986, it will be spread over two years and that is overwhelmingly accepted by the trade union movement.

- B. Do your views differ from those of Mr. Keating on the how the ACTU should handle this situation?
- H. No. It's very interesting on that point to see that Mr. Noakes of the CAI concedes that if you look fully at what Mr Keating said, you can't assert that he was supporting Industrial Action and indeed as Mr Keating made it perfectly clear yesterday he is not supporting or condoning industrial action in support of super claims.
- B. And finally Mr. Hawke in the Age I noticed that Michelle Grattan talks about you winding down after a tough year, has it been tough?
- H. Oh yes, you couldn't have had it tougher first half of the year than I had, I was, as I put it, incarcerated here in Canberra on the preparation of the May Statement which was a hell of a lot of hard work in that. We were cutting through expenditure programs, saving about 1½ Billion dollars. Then there was the whole tax package that ^{was} working on it, and then preparation for the Budget. So the first half of this year was a murderous period and I couldn't ^{I'm} except that there'd ever had a harder six months or so than that, but ^{I'm} not any in sense complaining about that, it's true that I'm glad the end of the year is coming, we're in excellent shape and I'm looking forward to a bit of a break to do some reading, swimming, perhaps a bit of fishing, some golf.
- B. So Priority One the Youth of Aus. and maybe Priority One and Half a bit of a rest eh?
- H. That's fairly put Derek yeah.

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