



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH TERRY WILLESEE - 11 JUNE 1986

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WILLESEE: Mr Hawke thanks for your time.

PM: My pleasure Terry.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke, you addressed the nation earlier tonight in your shirt sleeves. Was that symbolic?

PM: No, it is the way I usually am in my office.

WILLESEE: It wasn't preplanned?

PM: No, I feel more comfortable that way in my office. That is the way I always am there and it seemed the most appropriate way of doing it.

WILLESEE: I just thought, given with your pep-talk, to get us all going that might have been a down to work ...

PM: If that is a bonus of the way I appeared so much the better Terry.

WILLESEE: Right. You called for, amongst other things and we will come to those hopefully, you called for us all to buy Australian. How far should we take that?

PM: As far as it is absolutely possible. I think one of the problems about some of us in Australia is that we don't realise how good we are. We tend, some of us I think, to assume that because it is made overseas it is better. And that generally is not the case. What we have got to understand is that if we are going to give our Australian industry the best chance of competing overseas we have got to give them as big a base as possible. And certainly by buying Australian goods, we are going to help our current account problems. And we are going to help our employment situation.

WILLESEE: - Mr Hawke, what would you say to people who can afford it, perhaps executives across Australia who are driving foreign cars?

PM: I would say "Buy Australian". We make great cars. Let me give you an example. The quality of Australian cars has improved so much that we are now having decisions made by the multi-national companies that they want to export the Australian product back into their home area. Ford for instance, is now going to be exporting its car into America. From Japan, they are importing now, more components made in Australia. The quality of the Australian product has improved that much that that is the judgement that these corporations are making about Australian products.

WILLESEE: Are things so serious that perhaps those executives should trade their imported cars in right now, or should they wait?

PM: I would much prefer to see them, with the rest of the community, making immediate decisions to buy Australians.

WILLESEE: Have you considered how you will go about buying more Australian products?

PM: Since I have been in, I have had an Australian car and I will continue to do that. And I will be trying to set an example. Where I have got the choice between buying Australian and buying overseas I will be going Australian.

WILLESEE: With a government department, will they be instructed to buy Australian?

PM: If you look at the complete statement that I have put out tonight, we go to that. We are going to be looking at the whole question of government purchasing so that we can do as much as we can. As a Federal Government, we will be asking the States to do the same - to buy Australian where they possibly can. Obviously, in some areas, particularly in the defence area, there are some things that are simply not available, not made in Australia. But as far as possible, government will be doing what we are asking Australian citizens to do.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke, we are starting to get reaction to your speech tonight and we have a recorded interview with Mr Bob Ansett, the business leader. And we would like to have a look at his reaction to your speech earlier this evening.

ANSETT: We have a system that has slowed down because, the economic system has slowed because there are no longer the rewards for people to invest and to build businesses and to manufacture so that we can export. And no matter what we want to exhort about buying Australian, there are less and less Australian goods to buy. The only solution is to provide the rewards for business to invest. And I am not talking just large business. I am talking about the 600,000 small businesses who really are our future in this country. And I am afraid that the prescription that we heard tonight is not going to help in this regard.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke, what is your reaction?

PM: First of all, I would say to Bob to look at the record. Under this Government the profitability of Australian business has been restored to the highest level since the end of the sixties. And that has been because of a combination of the policy decisions made by my Government and by the co-operation that has been given by the Australian community, including the Australian business community and the Australian trade unions. You can't ignore the facts, that is the very, very significant increase in profitability. That is what has happened. What we want to do is to help Australian business by the macro-economic environment, what we are saying about wages. And we also want to help Australian business by arranging particular decisions in the investment area, which we have made - 150 per cent tax deduction in regard to research and development, one of the most generous systems in the world that we have brought in. And particularly, I want to help Mr Ansett and the Australian business community by getting my fellow Australians to say, before they made a decision, let's buy Australian.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke, you gave us in part a pep-talk, that is the impression I got, I may be wrong but that is the feeling I got from it, that it was in part a pep-talk?

PM: In part it was, yes.

WILLESEE: And once again the workers were asked to tighten their belts. But Mr Hawke, some don't have any notches left on their belts?

PM: Let me say this - there are 700,000 more with a belt, if I can put it that way. 700,000 new jobs as a result of the policies of this Government since we have been in office. The highest rate of employment growth in the history of this country. So that is the first thing I say, there are more people in work. And what I want to make sure is that as a result of the policies of my Government and the co-operation of the Australian business and trade union community, that we are going to continue to put more people into work. We have got a very simple choice, Terry, in regard to what the world has done in terms of what they are paying for our exports. The Australian economy will adjust in one way or another. It can adjust by a co-operative approach of the sort I am talking which will mean that we can keep growth going, keep creating jobs, or we can refuse to exercise the restraint and the economy will adjust then by rapidly declining exchange, rate burgeoning interest rates, lower employment and stagnant growth. And what we are saying as a Government, it is much more sensible that we exercise restraint, recognise the fact that the world by what it is giving us for our export products has marked our national capacity down by three per cent. We can't ignore that, it is a fact.

WILLESEE: But what about those who can't tighten that belt anymore?

PM: As far as our social welfare policies are concerned, we will attempt to ensure that the most needy in this community are not disadvantaged. I think that is what society recognises as reasonable and certainly what the Government recognises as reasonable.

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WILLESEE: Welcome back to TWT and with us live from Canberra is the Prime Minister Mr Hawke. Mr Hawke, I would like to get your reaction, you mentioned in your speech tonight about putting the unemployed to work in a part-time capacity in the community, community programs. We have the reaction of Colleen Chesterton from the Australian Council of Social Services.

CHESTERTON: I don't think it is workable for the unemployed. Let's face it, unemployed people whether old or young, want a full-time job. The Government has moved in this direction by introducing things like traineeships, like the Community Employment Program. Those, at least, were trying to give people some structured employment and training experience. But now we are told that they can get this sort of experience by just working for a couple of days a week unpaid. Now, I believe that unemployed people will feel that if they are good enough to be employed, they are good enough to be paid for it.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke?

PM: Let me say this to Colleen and to your viewers. We are still spending more money, Terry, on the sort of programs to which Colleen refers - the traineeships program, a whole range of training programs to try and give that experience to which she refers. I say again that we have created 700,000 new jobs - record growth - and we are going to continue to create jobs. Unfortunately, that still leaves a large number of people who are not employed or can't participate in these programs. And all I can is that if my experience in Priority One earlier this year and the end of last was that these people are saying - sure, if we can't get jobs and we know that there can't be jobs for everyone at this stage, we would like to do something for, and with, and in the community rather than just getting the unemployment benefit. So that is what we are about. I think they want to be able to do something than just receive the unemployment benefit. I think the community wants it, so in a co-operative way, that is the situation we are going to try and bring about. But I want to assure Colleen that there is not only no diminution of what we are doing in the other areas, there is an increase.

WILLESEE: Prime Minister, we have a reaction also from the Queensland Premier, Sir Joh Bjekle-Petersen, so let's have a look at that.

PETERSEN: He gave no hope and I feel sorry for the people of this nation. No incentive, no encouragement as far as he and his Government was concerned. You know, the massive spending, the high taxes, the high interest rates. And then to have the hide and the audacity plus the other things to say to people you have got to work harder, you have got to produce more, you have got to give us more money. He talked in terms of cutting the Public Service. He is the one that has created 400 times more public servants in his time than we have in Queensland, for example. And so he has gone from catastrophe to catastrophe. And he expects and says that the people are responsible. We are all in it, we have all got to do something. He and his Government and their policies have created this situation and now he is asking you and me to bear the burden of their mistakes, and it is just not on.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke?

PM: Just two things about Sir Joh. Firstly, Sir Joh should really come and talk to the people of Australia about economic performance because the economic statistics which have been put out in fact by the Liberal Party in Queensland, not by the Labor Party, show that the worst economic performance of any State in Australia is the Queensland performance under Sir John. Don't rely on me saying that. The Liberal Party in Queensland is saying it is the worst performance. So he is not the one to talk. Secondly, I am glad that Sir Joh talked about massive government spending. We will give him the opportunity on Friday of this week, in Canberra at the Premiers' Conference to participate in the reduction in government spending. And I am sure now from his observations that he will co-operate.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke you mentioned, just finally we are running out of time, the spirit. Were you trying to capture the spirit that we had in the times of the America's Cup by naming those ...

PM: What I was trying to say was that I think one of the beautiful features of Australia is the way in which, right across the board, we do take great pride properly, not only of our international prominent sportsmen and women, but also I mentioned Joan Sutherland - right at the top of the tree. Now, all I am saying is that I want us to get the same sense of excitement and shared participation when Australian firms, doing as many of them are doing, competing against the best in the world and winning. That is the sort of same spirit that we have got to get because we can do it there.

WILLESEE: Mr Hawke thank you very much for your time this evening.

PM: Thank you Terry.

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