



## PRIME MINISTER

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH BERT NEWTON - 3DB - 30 JUNE 1986

- N Of course the big political news over the weekend is that Don Chipp is retiring from politics, I had him on this morning and he spoke very glowingly of you as he always has done. How do you think history will remember him?
- H. I think they will remember him well for a number of reasons. Firstly it's a very remarkable achievement to have resigned from a party and established another one which <sup>within</sup> a relatively short time assumed the balance of power. It's been accurate in a sense for Don to say as he said recently that he's got the second most powerful position to the Prime Minister because when you hold the balance of power from the Senate that means that whether the legislation of the Govt. of the day passes or not was very much in his hands, the hands of his party, and he was his party, to all intents and purposes. That's a very big achievement. The second thing is I think that he exercised that power fairly responsibly. There are times I'd like to give him a kick up his backside but basically he exercised it responsibly, so that's a very large achievement. And as a person, I've been talking about him as a politician, but as a person I always found him an honest, intelligent bloke to deal with.
- N Since last speaking to you lots of things have happened federally and also at political levels generally in Australia. How much harder do you find it now Bob to run the country in comparison now to say two years ago.
- H. Well it's a good question, and paradoxically it is in some senses easier and some senses harder. Let me say why it's easier. Obviously if you're a reasonably intelligent bloke and I'm immodest enough to think I'm that. Once you've been doing something for a period of time you get to know I believe how to do it better. You get to know the people around you better the strengths and weaknesses of your Ministers, you know the strengths and weaknesses of your public service of people people in the business community and the trade union movement. So in that sense it's easier now than it was. But it's harder in this sense that while we've turned the Aust. economy around and got it growing very strongly and got the high levels of unemployment down that we inherited and got record employment growth, we <sup>re</sup> now in a situation where because of the dramatic decline in prices that we get paid for so much of what we export that we've had

our National Income cut by 3%, that's created a new set of difficulties that we've not had so dramatically before. so that requires tough decisions Bert, but we'll take them because they're necessary.

N. The relationship between yourself and Mr Keating?

H. I can honestly say that it has never been better, we had a little period there a very short period where it could be said perhaps there were a few points of differences. There were, but our friendship is strong enough and deep enough to enable us to sit down together as we did, talk through those things and I think Paul would say as I personally do that our relationship has not been better than it is now and it's been very strong in the past.

N. But it's simply a case though, you were overseas and he decided to look like the commander of the ship?

H. No when I was in Japan and China it looked as though there might be some sort of meeting between groups that could have offered the opportunity for doing certain things and through basically no fault of Paul's but rather I think some hyping up by the media that began to be given a stature which it never had the legs to carry and you know I had to deal with that but that wasn't really dealing with Paul it was dealing with an issue.

N. One story that has been given enormous <sup>media</sup> coverage for the last couple of weeks is the impending hanging of Chambers and Barlow, will nothing make the Govt intervene?

H. Well the Govt. has made very strong representations, the Foreign Min. Mr Bill Hayden has done that consistently, let me make it clear, we as a Govt. certainly I as an individual are appalled at the trade in drugs but we are equally as a matter of conscience against capital punishment. So what we've had to say has had nothing to do with the facts of the case but with the question of capital punishment. I still hope that the sentences can be commuted to life imprisonment. But there is nothing more as a Govt. we can do, Bert.

N. What would happen do you believe, if Malcolm Fraser, regardless of what he said in recent times, came back into politics and led the Liberals?

H. Well the Liberal Party would be even more in tatters and internal dissent

H. and division if he came back. I mean they are quite hopeless at the moment. The divisions there and the bitterness between people is unbelievable, if Malcolm were to come back that would add another ingredient to it. But I think to be fair to Malcolm he has no intention of doing it.

N. One final question, Federal Cabinet looking at sanctions against South Africa?

H. Yes we've got that on the agenda today. We'll examine the issue but whether we'll actually bring anything into effect before I go to London in a few weeks time, we're there, the meeting is I think from 3rd to the 5th of August. I think what we'll be wanting to do is position ourselves so that we'll be able to identify immediately with what will be the mood of the Commonwealth, and I want to be in a position where I have the authority of Cabinet decisions on this.

N. Nice to talk to you Mr Prime Minister and I hope we can get together on a number of occasions as I plough through.

H. I'd like to talk to you whenever that's your wish.....

ENDS