



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF COMMENTS AT AUSTRALIAN ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF COLLEGE,
MT ELIZA, SUNDAY 15 FEBRUARY 1987

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, Sir Joh said this morning that at the National Party meeting this week the issue of his leadership of that Party would come up. Do you think he has got the numbers to topple Sinclair?

PM: I don't know, I have got no idea. He doesn't ring me up and tell me what is happening - Ian doesn't. I would be surprised if he had.

JOURNALIST: You referred to Don Grimes in your speech ... are you sad to be losing Don Grimes?

PM: Yes, I am. He has played an enormously constructive and compassionate role but Don has thought in terms of his health - he had a very severe heart attack, a bypass operation - he came to the conclusion that it was probably appropriate for him to retire. And if that is his judgement about what is best for him then, of course, I entirely endorse it. But he has made an enormous contribution and I think he has left many memorials to his imagination and great administration that will last forever.

JOURNALIST: Will Mr Scholes still be in the Ministry tomorrow?

PM: I would think so, as I understand it.

JOURNALIST: So you have resolved your differences with him?

PM: It is clear that I had conversations with him but I don't conduct those conversations in public. That is a matter between Mr Scholes and myself.

JOURNALIST: ... plant variety rights legislation. How important is that legislation for your Government?

PM: It doesn't loom as number one on our priority list.

JOURNALIST: Do you expect the Left to get a place in the reshuffle tomorrow?

PM: We will see when tomorrow comes. I don't canvass these things in public. The Party Room and the Cabinet Room are the appropriate place for that. We know how to handle ourselves as distinct from other people in politics.

JOURNALIST: If you were John Howard would you get rid of Joh the same way that Bob Hawke got rid of Bill Hartley?

PM: I don't want to make odious comparisons but the terror that is right across the Liberal Party and the National Party as a result of many things is for them to deal with. You might have noticed I have not spent a great deal of time talking about it. Temptation has been put in my way to try and gloat and talk at length about them. I don't. I think it is a matter for them to resolve. Conservative politics in this country are in a hopeless mess and it is not just because of Joh. You have got to understand that it is not just because of Joh. They have no policies. They have no vision for the future of this country. They are status quo people who have never really had to think about where is Australia going. They hate one another, they are fighting another. In a sense that is a pity. We would be better off in this country with a reasonable Opposition. I am reconciled with myself to the fact that we haven't got that but we will go on doing the job that people want - providing solid, cautious, stable government.

JOURNALIST: Do you think Joh and Andrew Peacock would make a reasonable Opposition?

PM: I have said I would welcome the double P - Petersen and Peacock.

JOURNALIST: ... plans to get involved in the State by-election?

PM: A State Upper House by-election? No. If there was any suggestion that that would be desirable but I can't remember since I have been Prime Minister that I have been in an Upper House by-election anywhere. Why would I do that.

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