



PRIME MINISTER

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Journalist: Should Simon Crean step down as leader of the ACTU?

Prime Minister: I don't believe so and I can speak with a certain amount of experience on this I don't think that there has to be the sort of gap that would be available if you step down now because the election as I have said could be as far away as the middle of next year. I have said the election will be from the latter part of this year until May or June of next year. I think it will be appropriate that there are certain activities of the ACTU from which Simon would disassociate himself and it is quite clear already for instance that he would not be involved in the wage/tax negotiations that we will be having and he and Kelty have an appropriate sense of understanding in those matters but there is still many duties in the ACTU presidency which he will be able to continue to fulfil with great competency and authority as he has up to this point.

Journalist: Mr Hawke, is Simon Crean good enough to eventually fill your shoes?

Prime Minister: I have said, yes, that I think he would make a good Prime Minister. No one ever fills anyone else's shoes they are different. I mean Simon didn't fill my shoes as the President of the ACTU but that doesn't mean he hasn't been as good a President. I mean different people do the job in different ways and I think that Simon has the capacity to make an immediate contribution to the good Government of this country once he comes into the Parliament and ultimately yes he can be a Prime Minister.

Journalist: Do you think he will replace Mr Keating as the man most likely to attempt to fill your shoes?

Prime Minister: I have answered that on last Sunday I said I believe that Paul Keating is still the front runner but it is going to be good to have a situation and I am sure Paul agrees with me it is going to be good, that when the time comes that I do retire, that the Party will have a range of people to choose from within the immediate sense and to have a spectrum from whom to think about for a longer period.

Journalist: Mr Hawke what is your reaction on the Indonesian courts decision on the Blenkinsop shooting?

Prime Minister: Let me say these things about that. I can understand that the family of Mr Blenkinsop would have a feeling that perhaps the sentence is too lenient, I can understand that feeling. But let me say this, that on all the evidence that we have had the Indonesians have conducted this trial strictly in accordance with the Indonesian legal processes. You will recall that at the time I made a very very strong statement that this sort of action that has taken place can not be accepted and tolerated. And the Indonesians to their credit have made sure that the processes normally followed should be followed and indeed in this case two things can be said. They made sure that a representative of the Australian Embassy was able to be present at all times and indeed the proceedings were open to foreign reporters beyond the way in which they normally would be. So I think that there is no basis upon which we are able to argue that the processes, the Indonesian processes, haven't been followed and having said that I can understand some feeling on the part of the Blenkinsop family but Australia is not in a position where we tell other countries how to run their judicial processes. All I can say is that their normal processes seem to have been followed.

Journalist: So you won't be seeking any sort of an appeal?

Prime Minister: Well, it is not for the Australian Government to be seeking any sort of appeal. I mean, that is not the role of Government.

Journalist: Mr Hawke what do you think of the decision to start work on the pulp mill in Tasmania?

Prime Minister: Well let's get it clear they haven't started work on the mill. As I understand how they have rationalised what they are doing, they say they have a very tight timetable to meet what they see as their deadline of completion by the middle of 1991. And so they have decided to do some preliminary sort of ... road work in this period. Because they say that a sort of period of 3 weeks or so which will be involved before we would make a decision is something that ought to be used. Whether they have done anything or not will not affect our decision. The position is we have a longstanding agreement with Mr Gray, very simply says the Tasmanian Parliament will make its decision. When they have made its decision it will be transmitted to us then my Ministers involved will make recommendations and submissions and the Cabinet will consider those and make a decision and we will make it expeditiously.

Journalist: So you don't think it improper that the preliminary work ...?

Prime Minister: There is nothing improper, it is their property. They own the property on which they are working it is a matter for them to make that decision that doesn't involve any irreversible sort of outcome and it certainly will be not something we will take into account because they decided to spend some money on preparing a road. That will have no bearing on our decision.

Journalist: In other words the risk is on their heads?

Prime Minister: Well yes it is their expenditure. It is a decision they made, they are perfectly entitled. If you own an area and you want to start to build a road, well okay start to build a road. But that won't influence our decision.

Journalist: Mr Hawke how do you feel about the number of places that haven't lowered their flags today?

Prime Minister: Well I am glad you asked me that question, I was very surprised to read my papers this morning that Hawke had backed down. Now let me make it quite clear that when you are Prime Minister of this country you don't involve yourself in every decision made by every minister and every department. A decision was taken and was taken by the minister and the department according to normal practices. When it was brought to my attention I took the view that I could understand that in respect of places like the War Memorial, repatriation hospitals and gardens of remembrance, that in places like that I could understand the feeling of concern so while it was appropriate that on normal government buildings the conventions should be followed and I insist that they should be. In those places I see no reason for not giving them the discretion. I can understand the feelings of people that they wouldn't want in those places to have the flag at have mast and it was appropriate that they be given that discretion. So there was no question of backing down on my part once the issue was before me I made the decision which I thought and think is appropriate. Let me make it clear that in doing that I don't in any way retract from the position which the Australian community knows full well is my position. And that is in terms of Australia's welfare now and for future generations we must understand the reality that Japan is a major trading partner and it would be a gross dereliction of duty on the part of anyone in Australia to (A) not understand that fact and (B) not to do everything we can to ensure that Australia's opportunities of trade and investment with Japan should be increased because that is going to be to the benefit of this country and may I say to the benefit of the region. Within that framework, however, on this particular issue in regard to those buildings and places I don't see any reason why the sensitivities of some Australians should be upset.

Journalist: Will you be working with the Opposition to reduce the poverty of youth in Australia ...?

Prime Minister: Well as I have said, I am often very critical of the Opposition and Mr Howard and I will continue to be on many things and I must say unequivocally I welcome the reaction of Mr Howard that this was not a matter for party political point scoring and I welcome that and that will be my attitude as I had cause to say inside here. The position is one where the whole of Australia must share a sense of tragedy that there are so many young people who are in this condition. Let me just make the point in regard to what I said in the election campaign in 1987 that statement was made sincerely and is being sincerely fulfilled and it will be the case that by 1990 there will be no financial need for any child in Australia to live in poverty. But as I say you can't by Government see it stop the interaction of social and personal forces which mean that kids leave home or are thrown out of home. So what Governments, the community and the Australian families together have to do to face up[^] this problem. Let me remind you as I said yesterday that we have had a 507% increase in the money that we have made available for refuges in this country since we have been in office. There has never been an increase in funding like we have made. Last October with a Minister I made an offer of another \$40 million to the States for additional funding to help the homeless and those in crisis. So we will do the sorts of things in a financial way that are necessary. After we have considered the report in detail I will then meet and talk with the Premiers, and I hope that the attitude expressed by Mr Howard will be reflected by the Governments of either political persuasions and I hope that together and together with community organisations we can make some in-road to helping those in this present position and also if we can to creating a better attitude in the community so that families where ultimately this responsibility rests will be in a better situation that we won't have so many kids in this tragic situation.

Journalist: So what is the forecast for 1990 now?

Prime Minister: The forecast for 1990 is as I have put it and that is, that as a result of the outlays of well over half a billion dollars additional money which is a result from my promise of 1987 there will be no financial need for any child to live in poverty as I have said right from '87. And it really is a very uncomplicated matter and I can't understand why, and it seems to be a Melbourne problem more than any other, I don't know whether you have your mental processes ... a bit coagulated here, but it is a very uncomplex situation and I am surprised now that after two years you can't quite understand it. A Government can make a promise that it will outlay over half a billion dollars by increased family allowance supplements so that that money will be made available into families and there will be no financial need as a result of that decision for any child to live in poverty because we would have provided the money to eliminate that financial need. There was never any situation in a democratic country where you can say now having provided that money that there won't be operating in

families either stupidity on the part of parents who are going to spend it on grog or the races rather than on the kid or any capacity on the Government to say that the kid is not going to run away from home or the parents are not going to throw them out. No Government in a democracy can affect that situation. I made a promise, which will be delivered, that there is no financial need for any child to live in poverty.