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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, SCHOOL OF ARTS, FAIRFIELD, 23
AUGUST 1989

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Can we ask about the pilots? Stand downs have begun. What's your view of the situation?

PM: Well I just hope that the pilots will understand that the airlines, supported by the Government, are not going to give in to these outrageous demands. As I say, I don't want confrontation, war or anything else with the pilots. All I want is that they should act as the overwhelming body of ordinary Australians. See the people around here, the ordinary Australians abide by the system. They put their own interest in the context of the interests of the nation as a whole. I ask of nothing more and nothing less of the pilots.

JOURNALIST: As far as contingency plans go, what can the public expect in terms of services if it continues?

PM: Arrangements are being made which will involve attempts to have international airlines providing some services and the RAAF providing some planes. As I've said all along, we'll never be able to have a complete substitution but we hope we'll have a position where we can both cover emergency situations and some services for the public.

JOURNALIST: Who makes the next move, Prime Minister? Is there any overture that you can make in all of this?

PM: I don't feel ... with absolute sincerity of the pilots, I simply say to them you are important members of our community and if you've got claims that you want to make, then make them within the system, you can have negotiations within the system. Within that negotiation, within the system there can be legitimate improvements in wages but we are not going to have a situation where you're going to break this economy. So let's think of the nation as a whole and not just of immediate self interest. That's all I ask of them.

JOURNALIST: Are you surprised some of the pilots didn't break away from their union and agree to those conditions set down by the companies?

PM: I expected in this initial stage that we'd get a reaction much of the order it's been.

JOURNALIST: Can I ask you briefly about the logging situation? Last night you made some strong statements to protect NSW forests. How far can you go though without infringing States rights?

PM: What's this question of infringing States rights? You don't exist as a NSW person and an Australia person. I mean you are an Australian who happens to live in NSW and the fact is that we are concerned with the rights of Australians, not only you, me, this generation, we're concerned with the rights of Australians as future generations and under the Constitution we have the opportunity, if it's necessary, of using Constitutional powers to protect the rights of this generation and future generations of Australians. I have always taken the view that I'd like to be able to do that in terms of cooperation with the States. That's what I'd prefer. But if Mr Causley is going to say, 'I don't give a damn about agreements, I don't give a damn about future generations', then Mr Causley will have to face up to the fact that I and my Government are prepared to act for all Australians now and into the future.

JOURNALIST: Do you see this looming as a potential Franklin issue in any forthcoming election?

PM: I don't look for looming confrontation. I mean that's never been my caper. I've always tried to say let's sit down and talk this thing through, let's try and get agreement. So I'm not looking for confrontation, this ... or otherwise. I simply say that we will not be diverted from our responsibility to present Australians, to future generations of Australians. My Government has shown, as I said in Sydney last night, that it's not a question of development and jobs on the one hand and the environment on the other. We have created one and a half million new jobs since we've been in office, five times faster than the conservatives did when they were in, more than twice as fast as the rest of the world. But at the same time as we've done that we've also got an environmental record second to none in the world. So you don't have to have one or the other, you can do both and we will.

JOURNALIST: ... tough line against the pilots. Do you think it might have stalled negotiations?

PM: We haven't stalled anything. It's a simple proposition that I as Prime Minister of this country have a responsibility for all Australians. I certainly have no responsibility to prop up greedy demands by a group of people who are already very well paid and are in a very privileged position. I would be absolutely derelict in my duty if I didn't take action which was going to ensure that this economy is protected. This economy would be devastated if the pilots won this dispute?

JOURNALIST: And considering ... financially, Prime Minister ...

PM: I've answered that question. What I've said is that when we started to have a discussion the question was raised that if the dispute went on for a long time it would be very costly to the airlines and would we look at the question of the fees and the charges which they paid. Well I said no, that we would deal with this dispute as it is. If it happened to go on for a very long time and you wanted to raise that with us, we'd look at that issue. But that's not on the immediate agenda.

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