



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF DOORSTOP, RAAF BASE FAIRBAIRN, 24 AUGUST 1989

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JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, what do you think of the pilots resigning?

PM: Well, it's a tactic that they're using. All I am saying is that we will continue in cooperation with airlines to do everything we can to provide the best available service while this matter is resolved.

JOURNALIST: And that's got to be a considerable payout by the airlines, do you think that will create an economic problem for them?

PM: Well, it may create some problems, but there are going to be, as a result of the action of the pilots, a lot of problems for a lot of people. But the important thing is there would be infinitely greater and longer lasting problems if we were to succumb to this absolutely untenable demand by the pilots. So when you are confronted with a situation of an unacceptable demand which would create, as I say, longterm and unsustainable difficulties for the Australian economy then you have to take action which, in turn, will involve some difficulties but not of such a long lasting nature. It's as simple as that.

JOURNALIST: Did you expect this to happen?

PM: Well, we have contemplated it as a possibility, yes.

JOURNALIST: Should Qantas be carrying more domestic passengers?

PM: They are going to be carrying a great number of passengers, passengers that would normally be carried by the domestic airliners interlining passengers coming in from overseas or about to go overseas from other ports, passengers in that category, I understand, will be carried by Qantas.

JOURNALIST: The pilots say that they'll be looking for work overseas. Would you be sanctioning pilots coming in from overseas to work on our planes?

PM: If these Australian pilots have such a commitment to their country that they want to leave their country, that's their decision. In those circumstances, if we could get pilots from overseas it would be appropriate if that could be done. But you've got to understand that we haven't gone into this thinking that it was some simple issue, easily resolved. The simple and undisputable fact is that if Australia was to cop a 30 percent increase to pilots, then the whole wage system would break down and the economy would be fractured and I believe irreparably. I'm not going to allow that to happen.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, the Opposition says

PM: Who says?

JOURNALIST: The Opposition says -

PM: Which part of the Opposition because, you see -

JOURNALIST: Mr Blunt -

PM: Mr Blunt says, but what you've got to understand on this issue as in just about everything on which they open their respective mouths, there are different Opposition positions. One says we've inflamed it, one says we should have drastic legislation to almost incarcerate them. So I'm afraid when we're talking about the Opposition, as on most things, you're talking about an uncoordinated collection of people who just can't make up their mind, a unified position about anything. Now this country would be in a mess if it took notice of the ravings of the Opposition about anything and they would be on this.

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