



PRIME MINISTER

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JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, have you been briefed on the Grafton bus crash?

PM: I've been told about the ... I understand that 22 people have lost their lives and I'm asking for full information when I get back. I was trying to find out whether there was one particular group of people that were in it so that if there's any group that I can send some message to. But I just simply want to take this opportunity - and I thank you very much for giving it to me - to express my sense of grief to all families who have lost loved ones in this tragedy. It's an enormous dimension, 22 people, and I simply express my grief to everyone concerned.

JOURNALIST: This morning's session on the environment. How did that go?

PM: Well unfortunately I couldn't be there for the whole of it because I had my meeting with Her Majesty just after 10 o'clock but I think I can say these things. Firstly, as I've said in my own intervention, one compares the situation with 2 years ago because 2 years ago there was no separate item on the agenda and we in fact had the contribution 2 years ago at Vancouver by the President of the Maldives, President Gayoom, and he talked there about the threat to his country of the rising sea levels associated with the warming of the atmosphere. I think for a lot of people around the table then this was the first dramatic illustration to them of the dimension of this problem and so of course on this occasion, as distinct from 1987, we have a separate and important item on the agenda and I think that is significant. In other words in two years there's been a sea change, if I can put it that way, in the importance attached to environmental issues and to the understanding on the part of people represented at this Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting of the responsibility that they have not only within their own countries but in terms of co-operation to do what we can to meet these issues. It's in that framework that I was able

(PM cont) to make some suggestions in there and may I say just by way of background, we're very fortunate to have Professor Slayter, my Chief Scientist, who has put in a lot of work on this and we were able to indicate that in Australia we have developed certain expertise in the number of areas that we are prepared to share with other countries of the Commonwealth. I referred to our experience in the management of rainforests and let me say I've had some bilateral discussions with Dr Mahathir in this respect and I think we'll be able to provide some expertise from Australia to come up here to Malaysia and help them in this area and I think that's going to be particularly important. I also referred to the way in which our Australian scientists have pioneered bio-climatic techniques, developed actual models which enable the assessment of the likely effects of climate change on the distribution and productivity of crops and pastures; and forests and these sorts of techniques I'm informed, which are useful and valuable in planning land utilisation are able to be undertaken on small readily available computers. Now these are techniques and models and simulations which have been developed by Australian scientists and what I offered today at the meeting was that we would be prepared to help the training of agronomists and meteorologists and foresters from other countries in the Commonwealth including a preparedness to establish a research training centre in Australia. I indicated that I'll be writing to all the countries and if we get sufficient responses - and I think we will - then we will go ahead and make these training facilities available. Now I think that's an indication of the way in which there is an understanding not just on Australia's part, but of everyone that the issues that we're talking about now are global in their dimension and the thing that the Commonwealth is uniquely able to do from its experience is to share these techniques that perhaps the more developed countries have now, to share them with the less developed countries. I think that's something that uniquely the Commonwealth can do. We've sought to give a lead to it.

JOURNALIST: Have any of those lesser developed nations shown a lax attitude on the environmental issues?

PM: No, I don't think it's right to say that they've shown a lax attitude. It's very easy for those of us who've had the good fortune to be earlier in the economic development cycle, to say now you less developed countries, you must be very careful what you do, because naturally enough they say: "wait a minute, mate, you've been there, you've had the advantage of developing your economies when there was not a great deal of environmental consciousness". If you want to look at the greatest contribution to the greenhouse gases, of

(PM cont) course it's the use of fossil fuel and they are right in saying - I think, they haven't put it this way - but I think the logic is very simple. In fact these are issues of global concern, of global impact, then they are global responsibilities. I think that one of the issues that we will be discussing most particularly over the weekend at the Retreat is what the sort of terminology in the Declaration, the Environmental Declaration, will be which will pick up this sense of responsibility that there is amongst the developed nations to the developing nations. I think it's a core issue.

JOURNALIST: Is there any specific Commonwealth initiative being considered to address these ...?

PM: In these discussions that have taken place so far Milton, there have been, at the officials level, there are three or four different sorts or formulations on this issue from different countries in the Commonwealth which go directly to it and so one of the things that we'll have to do at the Retreat is to get an agreed formulation. I think we'll be able to do that.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, does this mean that Australia's aid budget for overseas countries now or developing countries might be increased?

PM: Well it doesn't necessarily follow because we have a very significant aid budget now and there are categories there under which we'll be able to do these things. For instance, in the offer that I've made that I've just outlined, that could involve in this first year something like perhaps \$1M but I think that's capable of being absorbed within the existing aid program.

JOURNALIST: Given the developing countries concerned that have been expressed and you've reiterated them here, do you think it's fair to tie aid to developing countries to environmental moves on their part?

PM: I don't think it would be fair if you did this; say you knew that they needed aid, economic assistance, and you've known that for some time and then said now you don't get that aid unless you do a, b, & c in environmental terms. But I do think that they would regard it as appropriate that those of us who are in the relatively fortunate position to be giving economic assistance should be pointing out our concern with environmental matters and that they should also have a concern with this. Provided that we are prepared to do the sorts of things for instance that I've talked about, to share our technologies which are environmentally relevant, then I think it's appropriate in discussions with them to say to

(PM cont) them, well this particular sort of development may need to have this sort of qualification attached to it or this sort of process attached to it. But provided that we are prepared to share the technologies that will help them to do it then that's reasonable, it seems to me.

JOURNALIST: Have you had any further advice from the Embassy in Pretoria about the significance of yesterday's announcement, whether in fact it still leaves the major problem for South Africa or have they largely escaped the issue of rescheduling their debt?

PM: No, I haven't had any further advice. I've really got nothing to add to what I said before and that is that quite obviously we would have preferred two things. That is that the decision hadn't been made so quickly. And secondly, instead of having the multi-year rescheduling consideration, that it could've been annual. Now both Joe Clark and I said that, said it quite specifically. But having said that, it's quite clear that there are still very significant constraints upon South Africa as a result of the decisions that have been taken. Not least you have the situation that they will be having to be running current account surplus' to cover their commitments and there is no provision for new loans. The South Africans themselves have apparently indicated that they are going to be operating under very severe constraints. So I believe that in that context the decisions that the Commonwealth will make I think on the basis of the five steps I put forward yesterday will be able to constitute a continuing pressure in the financial area.

JOURNALIST: Back on the environment briefly, given the number of proposals that are around on the environment, is there any danger that you won't actually be able to come up with a satisfactory formula?

PM: No, I think not. I've got to be advised by the discussions that have been going on at the officials levels. I've had my officials in with the others of other countries. The impression I'm given from my people is that they will be able to reach a consensus position.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher at Langkawi - other than your inestimable personal charm - what strategies are you developing to bring her into line?

PM: My charm? Who were you talking about there?

JOURNALIST: Yours. Inestimable charm.

PM: Hey, what's happened here?

JOURNALIST: Who won the golf?

PM: Apart from my incalculable charm, what was that?

JOURNALIST: What strategies are you developing in your own mind to bring her into line with Commonwealth thinking on sanctions?

PM: Now I am by nature, as you know, an optimist. I've demonstrated that in some 30 years of public life. But there are limits, bounds to my optimism and I've never thought that I was capable of bringing - to use your language - Mrs Thatcher into line. I mean one has to have limits to one's optimism. I think what will happen at Langkawi is that there will be a clear exposition on the part of all the other members of the Commonwealth of the intensity with which they hold their views as to why the steps that I have proposed ought to be followed through. I don't really believe that we will be able to persuade Margaret to agree but perhaps something will happen that will bring her somewhat closer to our position, I don't know. But it's quite clear from everything that's been said during the session and since that, everyone else is committed to supporting those five steps.

JOURNALIST: Rabbie Namaliu is confident Fiji will be back in the Commonwealth in a matter of time. Could it come back in under the present Constitution?

PM: Well I would guess that the - when you say the present Constitution, there's no such thing as a present Constitution. There's the one that's been proposed and they are now going through the processes as you know, of public consultation then it will go to the Council of the Chiefs. But if you refer to those proposals I wouldn't imagine that for instance, those proposals would be acceptable to India, and the way the Commonwealth operates there needs to be a consensus view. And more importantly, as far as I understand it, there has been no move, on any information I have from Fiji that they are anticipating that in the present situation that they would be making an application to rejoin.

JOURNALIST: On green issues, how was your game of golf this morning, Mr Hawke?

PM: Well we now stand at one all. I beat Geoffrey in New Zealand, he triumphed today, he won today so we've got to have the shoot-out at the Retreat.

JOURNALIST: Will you miss the Caulfield Cup at the Retreat?

PM: I'll do my best not to miss it. I can assure you that I will have made an investment at any rate.

JOURNALIST: And the tip?

PM: A tip? I've got to study the form later this afternoon. But on the runs of last week which are fairly significant, I think Nayrizi is the one, isn't it, that is shaping up as ... think's. Four to one, isn't it?

(REPLY: Nine to two.)

PM: Nine to two, I'm told by my Economic Adviser. And on the run last week I think it's entitled to be favourite. It was an enormous run. I think some of the computer calculators have put it as the best run in the last ten years or something. Now you shouldn't live by the computers but sometimes you'll die if you don't take them into account.

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