



PRIME MINISTER

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JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, the Greiner Government's industrial package, do you see that as undermining the accord?

PM: Well it's based on a totally different philosophy to the accord and I guess the best thing in politics is not just to have an ideological harangue about you know, mine's better than yours, but to look at the record. I simply say that under the accord these things have happened. Firstly, we've reduced industrial disputation by 60%. We've had a rate of job creation which is five times faster than under the previous policy, which is a reflection of the Greiner type policy. So that difference is remarkable. We've created jobs five times faster than the conservatives did, we're creating jobs more than twice as fast as the rest of the world, we've increased our competitive position. After all, it's not surprising because if you have a policy which is based upon the concept of trying to get employees and employers to see their shared interests and work accordingly, it's much more likely to work than one which is essentially confrontationalist in its concept. So I'm prepared to rest on the record in these matters.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, you and Graham Richardson have had some big wins in terms of the environment vote recently. Has John Kerin undone all that in the last week?

PM: No. Let me take the premise of your question and then answer the question. It's not a point of saying that Bob Hawke and Graham Richardson have had big wins on the environment. I mean the winners out of the decisions that we've taken are Australians. They are the ones that have won. If you look at those decisions without being exhaustive about them, putting onto the world heritage list of the forests in Tasmania, the rainforests in northern Queensland, Kakadu, if you look at all those things they are not wins for Richardson or Hawke, what's it really meant is that our kids today and the kids of the next generations are being guaranteed by those decisions the opportunity of enjoying the marvels of our environment and not only our kids but for the people of the world because we are a world which is increasingly one where people move between countries. So the winners are the future generations. Now coming to the point about John Kerin, it would obviously be dishonest of me if I were to say, 'oh, that doesn't make any difference'. It was a bit unfortunate in the expression because that would give some sort of impression of some

(PM cont) basic division in the Government, there isn't. What you've got to understand is that one of the things that gets under John Kerin's goat a bit is the sort of thing we're witnessing at the moment. But there is a sort of extremism amongst some elements of the conservation movement and that rather upsets John Kerin. Let me say this about Kerin, I know him well, he is a man who is very much concerned with the environment, he is somewhat concerned that according to his perceptions some people in the conservation movement and perhaps some people in the Labor movement weren't looking, as he saw it, at all the considerations which must go into a decision, economic considerations as well as environmental. So the fact that John expressed things the way he did has probably upset a few people. But I've had a long yarn with John last night and it was a very cordial yarn and I think that we'll have no difficulty in maintaining a position of unity and comunity within the Government. Just to conclude what has been a fairly long answer, but it's an important question, I've said in the Parliament this; that I have always regarded the argument that development on the one hand, environment on the other, as being necessarily opposed to one another is not the right way of looking at it. Look at our record, we've done two things. One, we've had a rate of economic growth which is twice as fast as it was before, we've created jobs more than twice as fast as the rest of the world. So on the development side, we've shown what can happen. But at the same time as that we have the World Heritage Bureau coming out and saying that no government has done more to advance world heritage values than this government. So you can do both and that's what the secret of government is in this important area, to listen to the debate, to allow people to express their views and their concerns and in the end make the decisions which are going to give you ecologically sustainable development.

JOURNALIST: ... breaking one of the basic principles of Cabinet, though?

PM: No, Mr Kerin has accepted and does accept the decisions of Cabinet and he made that clear publicly and he said that he believes that his position has been misrepresented in the media, I'm not blaming the media about that, but he believes that they haven't got the balance correctly in their reporting of what he said. He accepts the Cabinet decisions, there's no question about that.

JOURNALIST: Did you tell him then to stop talking about Mr Richardson?

PM: No, I didn't need to say that. He said that he felt that he'd made the points he wanted to make and he's not going to be saying anything more.

JOURNALIST: What ... your Government's performance in the Parliament this week?

PM: Well let me say this, and I'm not avoiding that question, I can assure you. We've been in government now for nearly seven years. Everyone knows that for virtually the whole of that period we've dominated in the Parliament, we've dominated the political agenda. Now that's not a proud Prime Minister saying it, that is common knowledge. Now it is the case that we've had a less than glorious week and the fact that we have predominated for nearly seven years has made that sort of aberration the more obvious. Now we could've done very much better this week, all of us, and I include myself in that. We all could've done very much better. But let me say this; I'm in one sense not unhappy because it will show me, it will show my Ministers that we have to be on our toes all the time. We can't take for granted a permanent ineptitude on the part of the Opposition. It is a terminal condition for them, they are basically driven by internal hatred and divisions. As Mr Howard has said at the beginning of this week, Howard and Peacock can't trust one another. That's systematic of their divisions. But we can't just as a government assume that these fundamental hatreds and distrusts are going to be reflected in an easy path for us. So we didn't have a great week but I can tell you what, we'll murder them in the months ahead.

JOURNALIST: Are you worried about what the polls say?

PM: Now again, it would be quite dishonest if I were to say I don't look at the polls or watch them closely, I do. I would prefer to be in a position of being a little bit better off in the polls at the moment. But I remind you of 1986, we were in the polls in a much worse position than we are now and I tell you what, you watch us between now and where the election date is concerned. We're in the Spring Carnival period when everyone's interested in racing and punting and I'll tell you what, I'll tell you who to have your money on, mate.

JOURNALIST: Are you worried about your backbenchers comments though?

PM: Now am I worried about the backbenchers comments? What I am a little bit worried about is the standard of journalism. Now I may say that the Gallery in Canberra's a little bit upset about that performance. What you do is you ring up a number of people, you get one to make a comment and you make a headline out of that about Hawke being a liability. Well I tell you what, you do a check of my backbenchers -

JOURNALIST: As a member of the Gallery -

PM: And a very fine member too.

JOURNALIST: You're too kind. What about the Howe-Keating stuff?

PM: The Howe-Keating stuff?

JOURNALIST: On the possibility of a -

PM: Sure. OK well I'll try to make this as brief as possible. The question about the comment that was reported by Brian Howe earlier in the week about the possibility of a wage/tax trade off, I said in the Parliament yesterday that if you look at the period we've been in government, what we've done is to have as the basis of economic policy making an effective wages policy. An effective wages policy involves consultations with the trade union movement. The essential feature of that has been that the trade union movement has been prepared to exercise restraint in their money wage claims on the basis that the Government will increase and improve the social wage so that that is a compensation for excessive money wage increases. Now that's been essentially what's been done and at the appropriate time within each year we've sat down and talked with the trade union movement on that basis and that's produced the sort of results that I've been talking about. Remember them, a rate of economic growth, twice as fast under us as under the conservatives in their seven years. A rate of employment creation five times as fast and 60% reduction in industrial disputes. Now what will happen as we go into 1990 is that again we will sit down with the trade union movement and discuss the wages outcome for the following period and what actions by government are most likely to ensure a restrained wages outcome and benefits for the Australian community as a whole. We'll have those discussions at the appropriate time.

JOURNALIST: Maintaining the high standard of Sydney journalists, can I ask you a question about this campaign? How seriously can something like this turn around Australia's current account problem?

PM: It can make a contribution. As I said in there, I try to be absolutely honest about it, it's impossible to measure with precision the impact but the sorts of things that you can look ... 17 million people and if every purchaser in the course of a year makes a decision which involves say in the course of a year some \$300 for an Australian product rather than the imported product, it adds up to billions of dollars. That was the point I was trying to make at the end, I do really hope that Australians will say, 'well here is something which I can do'. ... this government making decision. But I as an individual can make a decision which is going to help Australia's external position. It can be very important.

JOURNALIST: ... backbenchers last night, Mr Hawke, concerned about some of the recent Government decisions.

PM: No, it's not true that I had a delegation of backbenchers last night concerned about Government decisions. What I did yesterday at one stage was to talk to some backbenchers at my invitation about the way we were going on dealing with the pharmacy issue. I hope, if I may say so, in respect of that that the Pharmacy Guild will see our proposal as a responsible and constructive one. It represents a very significant addition to the position which was left at the outcome of the Pharmacy Tribunal. It offers some \$60M to pharmacists which is not only relevant in money terms, income terms, but also recognising as it should be recognised, the importance to the community of their professional standing.

JOURNALIST: Can I have just a quick reaction to the Americans?

PM: These are the talks I had with the United States Secretary of State Baker and United States Secretary of Defense Cheney. They were very useful talks, I mean that's not just a cliché, we talked for about an hour and a half. I had the benefit of listening to their exposition about developments within the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc, China, we exchanged views which covered almost the globe, I think you can say. Again, what emerged from that is the strength, the underlying strength of the relationship between our two countries. They've been kind enough to say in recent times that the relationship between our two countries has never been stronger, and that was reflected this morning. It doesn't mean that on every issue that we have exactly identical views. But our relationship is so strong that where there are some differences of emphasis we're able to express them.

JOURNALIST: Did you raise the question of the Americans retaining 2% of their stockpile of chemical weapons after a convention?

PM: That is a particular matter which is going to be discussed in the talks today and tomorrow between Gareth Evans and Secretary of State Baker. See, we only had an hour and a half this morning and we were talking about developments between the superpowers in their own relations, the developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, China, Southern Africa, the Philippines, New Guinea. Just to mention some of the things we discussed, I mean you just can't go to every issue but that will be on the agenda.

JOURNALIST: Do you think they'll come around on the Antarctic?

PM: Again, that will be an issue that's going to be talked about. Just let me briefly say this about the Antarctic; I think it simply cannot be disputed that the distance we've travelled in just the last few months is truly phenomenal. When I said just a few months ago that Australia was going to launch the initiative to establish a wilderness reserve

(PM cont) in the Antarctic and that we would refuse to sign the Minerals Convention, I think it would be fair to say that there is a scepticism, cynicism, and pessimism amongst the rest of the community. They said; 'well what's Australia doing?' Now what's happened since then? Firstly and most importantly, we have a foundationally strong relationship between Australia and France. We have an identity of position which we were able to advance at the Paris meeting, we now have the support of a wide range of countries and without being exhaustive about it, it includes India, Belgium, a number of countries and many of them indicating their support for the idea. This is so great that at the meeting in Paris that was held at the same time as we were in Kuala Lumpur at CHOGM, there was an agreement reached there at the Paris meeting of the Antarctic consultative group to have a special meeting next year at which the Australia proposal will be considered in detail. So we've gone a long way. Now the United States at this point is not supportive at the administration level. But it's important to note that Senator Gore has tabled a resolution which is supportive of our position and I think the great strength that we have is that with each passing month world opinion, including of course within the United States, is going to become more and more supportive of the Australian position.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, on a lighter note what do you think of your singing Treasurer?

PM: I didn't see it but I'm told he put on a superb performance in the Bert Newton Show and I think I'll recommend to him that he does it once a month.

JOURNALIST: Are you going to take it up?

PM: Well I have always taken the view that I've got a fairly good vote winning capacity but if I had to name one thing that would guarantee a loss of votes it would be if I were to exhibit my singing prowess. I have a passionate love of music, an ear for it, but somewhere in the creation process the Almighty forget to give me a sense of tune and I don't sing very well.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, with the sponsorship for the campaign, do you think that there's more room for Australian manufacturers to get behind the campaign and perhaps chip in some money for it?

PM: You can always do a bit better in terms of support from manufacturers but I think that there has to this point been very considerable support, not just financially but when you have sixteen hundred manufacturers getting in behind it and ... sixteen hundred manufacturers covering some 30,000 products, that's very good. I mean you don't have 90%

(PM cont) awareness of the campaign unless there's been a great degree of cooperation from manufacturers as well. So sure, I would like them to do more, that would be good. But the important thing for government is that governments not walk away from it and this is where we have a fundamental disagreement with the Opposition. The Opposition say they would eliminate government funding for this great campaign and we're not, we're going to keep government support and we hope that the manufacturing industry will come in financially as well.

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