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PRIME MINISTER

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JOURNALIST: Prime Minister what would you rate the chances of going ahead with the other two submarines?

PM: I can't make a statement on that now. I need to get briefing from Kim Beazley and the Departments. I hope of course, looking to the future that the excellence of the product that has come out of here will enable us to be attractive to a number of other countries.

JOURNALIST: On national issues Prime Minister, what is the purpose of the special Cabinet meeting?

PM: The special Cabinet meeting?

JOURNALIST: The special Cabinet meeting that's been called for -

PM: I notice reading the paper today there's some story that there's some special Cabinet meeting. Essentially what is happening is that I am going to be repeating what I often do and particularly as you come up towards, you know, some election period, you know not too far out. But we always have a political discussion about just how things are going and the general considerations that need to be taken into account and that's what's going to be done. There's nothing -

JOURNALIST: You don't think it'll be setting the agenda for next year?

PM: No. We don't suddenly set agendas like that. The agenda for 1990 will be a continuation of seeking the goals that we have been for many years, that is a stronger economy, a fairer society, a country which is enmeshed with this region and a nation which is a proud member of the international community. Those are our basic goals, basic agenda and you don't change those basic objectives just by some whim of an election.

JOURNALIST: Sir Ron Brierley's saying that big business is concerned that the Labor Government might be in disarray, there's no firm economic leadership.

PM: ... I would suggest that Sir Ron, for whom I have considerable respect and particularly I admire his love of cricket I might say, but you know he should concentrate on the affairs that he's involved in. I would simply suggest that the economic leadership that we have provided has done these things out of which the business community has been the beneficiary. Just remember them. When we came to office the profit share at its historically lowest debt point, some 11%.

JOURNALIST: inaudible

PM: Wait a minute. Let me finish please.

JOURNALIST: You just paused, that's all.

PM: Well yes, everyone's entitled to a pause.

JOURNALIST: We're just anxious, that's all.

PM: The profit share has under this Government gone from that low point now to over 16%. It's gone that way with the co-operation of the trade union movement. As a result of that you've had a move to profit, a move to investment with investment being at its highest level since statistics have been recorded and with employment creation at its highest rate. Now those are the things which have benefitted business and the economy and the community generally. If you want to compare that with the mess we inherited and the mess that's necessarily involved in the alternatives, well and good.

JOURNALIST: Has Mr Bannon spoken to you personally about high interest rates?

PM: Mr Bannon has spoken to me on a number of occasions over the years about the economy generally and what's happening in South Australia. We have quite regular conversations. We've been having them for years, nothing special now.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, during this election campaign the Premier, Mr Bannon, has offered great incentives for mortgage relief. Are you going to take that on board yourself?

PM: Now what we've had to say at the Federal level about this now a State Premier is able to look at these issues in terms of his own affairs and what we have in South Australia is a State economy which has been very, very well managed, you have the lowest level of debt of any State and within that framework Mr Bannon feels that he would be able to make these decisions to direct assistance to those most in need. That's appropriate for him to do that if he wishes.

JOURNALIST: A lot of people in Australia are saying that there is a lot more than those in South Australia. Would you see then that there are more people in this country that would need more mortgage relief?

PM: I've made my comments and the Government's made its decision in this area.

JOURNALIST: High interest rates has become an election issue in South Australia. Are you concerned that that has become an election issue?

PM: Well you're simply asserting that. I'm saying that as far as the State election is concerned this is an election about State issues and a decision as to whether they are going to have John Bannon as Premier or Mr Olsen, that's the essential issue and we'll be having a Federal election next year and it's at that election that people will be able to make their judgements as between the two groups that can do anything or offer policies about the Australian situation. That is the Australian Labor Party federally and the mismatch - you can hardly call it a marriage - but this alliance of the Liberals and the National Party in Canberra, that's where those issues will be decided at that federal election some time next year. Here the simple issue is South Australians need to make up their minds whether they want John Bannon and the good government he's provided or Olsen and that's as simple as it is.

JOURNALIST: It is unusual for you to be in South Australia for only three and a half hours during a State election.

PM: No, not at all -

JOURNALIST: Are you coming back?

PM: I wonder if I've got the opportunity of having a question, of even starting to answer it - could I do that please? Thanks. Since I've been Prime Minister I've made it clear that the involvement that I will have in State elections is a matter which should be judged by the States in terms of how they see the issues and positions, and I have done that here. I've happily agreed to be over here at this time - its had to be a rushed trip. I've got commitments in Melbourne tonight, I had commitments in Canberra yesterday and last night, but I was happy to come over here and to be associated with my friend and colleague, John Bannon, and that's it.

JOURNALIST: Will you be coming back before the election?

PM: I wouldn't think so, Parliament's sitting next week.

JOURNALIST: Just one more. Mr Olsen has talked about having a bill of ethics, or a code of ethics - what do you think about that? He's talking about no infidelity, no messing around outside of marriages?

PM: It's interesting isn't it? Two things are interesting about that. Firstly, if you haven't got much sensible to say about real issues of how you'd run an economy and things like that, you'll always try and get a diversion. I mean, the classic example of that at the moment in Australian politics is up in the State of Queensland. The most corrupt administration that we've had in the history of Australian politics. So what are they doing, they're talking about moral matters - the great diversions. And the second thing that's interesting, if you look at politics in this country and overseas, I give you a warning - where you have people getting up on the moral bandwagon, just start sniffing around a bit because its very remarkable how often you find the great hypocrisy amongst the moralists. Those who preach it, the sort of people they're with, they don't have the greatest record.....

JOURNALIST:....Can you tell me about John Olsen record?

PM: I'm not saying anything about him personally, I don't mean that. I mean its the people that I don't make a practice of getting into my opponents, political opponents, on personal terms. That's what they do. I don't do it. I'm simply saying that people who take up those sorts of issues when its made an issue you find groups who are associated with that are the ones that often have a lot to answer for. The most important thing to understand is that as far as this election campaign is concerned and what the

election is about in the end, is about do you want John Bannon and a proven team and a proven Government running the State or do they want to put John Olsen in, who wants to talk about these moral issues. I'm not going to get into those questions of people's personal habits, because I don't believe its relevant. I've never got into that sort of caper of trying to attack my opponents on the basis of their behaviour because I believe that its improper to do so, and in the end, may I say, I think its also counter-productive. I don't think the people of South Australia will buy that crap.

JOURNALIST: Do you agree with Brian Loton that we need an economic crisis to shake Australia out of its complacency?

PM: I've got nothing to say about what Mr Loton had to say.

JOURNALIST: Are you aware of a decision that was made by the Defence Force Development Committee last Wednesday on whether it thought we needed the extra two submarines?

PM: I'm not aware of it. Mr Beazley will be talking to me about these things at the appropriate time.

Ends