



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, NEW ZEALAND HIGH
COMMISSION RESIDENCE, CANBERRA - 6 FEBRUARY 1990

E & OE - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: The Democrat preferences in Thomastown don't seem to be going, or aren't going your way. Does this worry you?

PM: Look, if there's any worry about the votes of the Democrats in Thomastown it should be by the Liberals. To have themselves being outvoted by the Democrats is a very real concern for them. We haven't disguised the fact, before the Thomastown election, that there'd be a swing and that there would be dissatisfaction down there amongst the voters in that electorate. I said that would be so before the election and I've said it since. Predominantly, not exclusively, but predominantly they have been state issues. The Liberals are the ones who need to worry about what's happened to the vote in Thomastown.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, when will the Government work out its position on foreign ownership of television networks?

PM: Well the Minister has had some discussions about it and he will be considering this again in the next week or so. The Government will make its position clear when he's concluded his considerations and recommendations to us.

JOURNALIST: Does it concern you that the delay favours Kerry Packer rather than Alan Bond?

PM: Well what would concern me if we were to take any particular decision which manifestly was seen to or would in fact favour one player rather than the other. It's in that sense almost a no-win situation. But we don't intend to make our decisions in terms of favouring one player or the other either in regard to that network or anyone else.

JOURNALIST: ... trip to Western Australia, will you be attempting to diffuse the issue of WA Inc in regard to a federal election.

PM: WA Inc is a state issue there. I'll be going over there to talk about those issues which will determine the welfare of West Australians in the period ahead as far as federal government is concerned. It's who's in government in Canberra which will determine whether the people of Western Australia will be devastated by changes to Medicare and the abolition of Medicare which the coalition parties propose at the federal level. These are the sorts of issues that I'll be talking about. The question of WA Inc as you say is a matter of state politics and to be worked out over there. There is nothing that we've done to create WA Inc. That is entirely a West Australian matter and will be seen by the electorate as such.

JOURNALIST: Does Mr Dowding enjoy your unqualified support as leader in the West?

PM: All the leaders of my Party wherever they are enjoy my unqualified confidence.

JOURNALIST: Senator Button is suggesting that a deal has been done between yourself and Mr Keating for the leadership after the next election.

PM: Not so.

JOURNALIST: Mr Peacock said this morning that your Government Prime Minister is practising the politics of the big lie, that key groups are not supporting the ACTU wage structure. The National Farmers Federation dissociated themselves and small business is not happy with it.

PM: Yes but he really couldn't do much better than the National Farmers Federation. ... did it with a bit of a flip ... Earlier in the day they were part of... The simple indisputable fact is that the major employer organisations in Australia have said to the Opposition's wages policy what any intelligent person would've expected them to say. And that is you can stick your wages policy because it is a recipe for industrial disaster. That is the judgement of everyone in Australia that has any significance, including the major employer organisations. They have no support from any section of the trade union movement. They have no support now from the major employer organisations. And this is not surprising because no intelligent person concerned in the Australian industrial and economic scene wants to see a return to the disaster of '81-'82 when you had your wages explosion. And the employers and the trade unions understand that what Mr Peacock is proposing is precisely such a recipe. So it's not surprising that as in most other areas of policy intelligent people and relevant organisations are saying to the Opposition you are pathetic, you are irrelevant.

ends