



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF JOINT NEWS CONFERENCE WITH PREMIER WAYNE GOSS, BARRON FALLS, CAIRNS, 10 MARCH 1990

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, two weeks today the Liberals are apparently gearing up for a fairly major offensive. The coalition has a series of plans underway for a ... attack advertising. Are you worried that they're going to start zeroing in on capital gains tax?

PM: No, I'm not worried. As always the conservatives campaign is based upon an insult to the intelligence of the Australian electorate. We've had a dry run of it in the last week with Mr Peacock conjuring up this \$14 billion hole from the forward estimates. It's been dismissed as ludicrous by every commentator because he said inflation and growth applies to one side of the national account but not to the other. I mean, it's been dismissed as a pathetic and dishonest attempt by a rattled leader of the conservatives to divert attention from his own incapacity to answer the real issues. And the major issue is where the money is coming from. Now I understand that they're going to run up a scare campaign on superannuation. The facts there are quite simple. He started off by misrepresenting the position of the Australian electorate as to the number of people covered by capital gains. The facts are very simple - something like 64,000 people paying capital gains, significantly less than one percent of Australian taxpayers and the simple and indisputable truth that he's trying to hide from the Australian people with this scare campaign that is allegedly coming up, is this - that billions of dollars that would otherwise go into the public revenue for spending on education, health, roads, defence and all the needs of the Australian people, those billions of dollars would be deliberately taken out of the public revenue by the conservatives and shovelled into the pockets of less than one percent of the wealthiest taxpayers in Australia. Now in their desperate attempt to disguise that fact they will go on this scare campaign. It will do them no good - it's about time the conservatives understood that the Australian electorate is intelligent and they won't buy this deception.

JOURNALIST: ... a number of people still haven't decided which way they're going to vote.

PM: Well, I don't either worry about that, nor am I surprised by it. I think that for people to wait and until election day and sum up all the considerations that will be put forward is, is quite an acceptable approach and I may say that I'm very content to allow those who are thinking about the electorate to wait up until election day and ask themselves some questions. Ask themselves the questions about interest rates, because now it's accepted that under the policies of my Government, interest rates are coming down. The banks have said so and it's equally clear that interest rates must rise under the conservatives because if you have a wages explosion and you bust the budget surplus, with a blowout of at least \$6 billion, it's inevitable that interest rates must rise. So let them ask themselves that question. In this sort of environment where I'm so pleased to be with my friend and colleague, Wayne Goss, in this beautiful natural environment of Australia, let them ask themselves the question - what is it that Wayne Goss and I are going to be doing today? Answer - we are going to be signing an agreement between two Labor Governments, both committed to the preservation of the natural heritage of Australia. What was the alternative? The alternative was at the Federal level, the conservative parties who opposed my decision and the decision of Labor to save the wet tropics of Queensland, the rainforests of this area. They opposed it, they wanted the logging to go ahead. They were hand in glove with Wayne Goss' opponents here in Queensland and before Wayne came in I had to not only defeat the conservatives at the national level which we did, but then we had to fight with the conservatives here who wanted to challenge us in the High Court and when Wayne won on the 2nd of December he was in tune with the national feeling and the feeling of the people of Queensland they've withdrawn that challenge and today we are going to be signing this historic arrangements for the joint management of this great and priceless heritage of Australia. So let the people ask themselves these questions.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister why is it that your letter to Mr Goss about this is dated today and Mr Goss' reply is dated yesterday?

PM: Well that's a good question we'd better get a synchronisation of the dates I guess. The important thing is that the past of confrontation between the conservative government of Queensland and the environmentally conscious government of Australia is brought to an end and the interchange of letters constitutes an agreement between us, between two governments committed to what the overwhelming majority of Australians want and that is the protection of our priceless national heritage.

JOURNALIST: Are these agreements aimed at helping people decide how to vote?

PM: No these agreements will perhaps have a bonus result of indicating to people where the commitment to protecting the heritage is but what we are doing is giving effect to what we said we would do, that is to replace the antagonism of the conservative government in Queensland in the past to protecting the environment to an agreement which sets out the management plan for the future in which we will co-operate jointly to ensure the management and protection of this area.

GOSS: I just want to say something in response to this point over here and that's that the Prime Minister and I ... just ... settle it, that we would get it out of the courts and that there would be a good compensation package for Queensland ... negotiating that. There was a breakdown in those negotiations. Now for the last two weeks we've been trying to put this agreement together and I asked, I asked earlier this week, for a draft of the letter, the proposals ... forthcoming from the Commonwealth. That draft of the letter that we could expect to be forthcoming was faxed to my office at Parliament House yesterday afternoon. When I got that I drafted our response. Now my response was drafted yesterday on the basis of the, the draft fax I got from the Prime Minister's office about what I could expect today. Nothing in the dates at all. It's taken two weeks to knock that out.

JOURNALIST: What caused the breakdown?

GOSS: No breakdown at all. We'd agreed, the Prime Minister and I had agreed on the broad compensation arrangement in terms of capital works ... and ongoing funding arrangements. I think there might have been some tight bugger in the bowels down there in Canberra somewhere but, as a result of that, their \$7 million became \$10 million, our \$12 million came down to \$10 million. We have dollar for dollar on the ongoing funding arrangements. Bob said before people should be asking themselves what the question is, the supplementary question is are the people of Queensland getting a good deal for the wet tropics? The supplementary answer is yes.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, Mr Peacock says your Government's attitude to the ethnic vote is sickening and sanctimonious. What's your view about that?

PM: Well, what we're hearing now increasingly are the utterances of a very desperate leader of the Liberal Party. I notice him parading around there saying he's won the first three weeks of the campaign. Just as after the Great Debate he trotted out and said he'd won the debate. I mean, for someone to have to be getting up and saying these things - he won the debate, he'd won the first three weeks and now to attack us on the question about the ethnic vote. I mean, it's a very sad

reflection on the state of a very, very rattled Leader of the Opposition. The facts are very, very simple. It is this Prime Minister who from day one of his Prime Ministership has recognised the multicultural nature of Australia, has recognised the enormous contribution that is being made from people who have come from 130 different homelands to make Australia their own. I've said, and I emphasised it particularly in the Bicentennial year, that there was only one thing which determined whether you're an Australian and that is do you have a commitment to Australia? And I have, in all my public life before I went into the Parliament, I've had an identification with the people who've come to this country because I know that this is the biggest decision that any person from another country can make. They can't make a bigger decision than to leave their own country of origin and come here and make this their own. And these people who've given so much to enlarging and enriching Australia deserve, not the cynicism of a rattled Leader of the Opposition, they deserve what they have consistently received from me before I went into public life and since I've been in the Parliament and since I've been Prime Minister - that is encouragement and support, so that they can at one and the same time remember with pride the best of the traditions and cultures of the countries from which they come and to make a contribution to the growing and broadening and deepening and enriching of the Australia of which they are part.

JOURNALIST: Do you think this is an echo of the debate involving Mr Howard over multiculturalism?

PM: I don't want to go to that because you will notice that I have eschewed very deliberately since that time trying to do or say anything which would arouse those fires again. I believe that that was an aberration on the part of the then Leader of the Opposition and I don't want to go to those elements of the Opposition who may still embrace that sort of position. I rather take the view that this country overwhelmingly understands its multicultural nature. The fact that some 40 percent of Australians this very day were either themselves born in another country or have a parent who was born in another country. Those are the realities and intelligent and responsible leadership demands that we recognise those facts and draw on the strengths of those facts.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister ... will you be raising with the Thai Government the proposals to turn the Burma death railway into a tourist ride? Apparently they are going to have actors playing Australian POWs ... the story is on the front page of the Courier Mail, you may not have seen it.

PM: I haven't seen it, Peter. When I get myself acquainted with it, we'll see what the appropriate response should be.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, given your comments about the intelligence of the Australian electorate and the fact that particularly in Western Australia and Victoria voters will distinguish between State and Federal issues, do you believe voters and Queensland should make the same distinction?

PM: Well, in Queensland you've got this position that there were many reasons why I'm standing next to Wayne Goss, the Labor Premier now of Queensland, many reasons. The most important ones are the intrinsic ... and qualities of Wayne Goss and of Labor, but also part of the reason why he's Premier is that you had corruption, corruption in Queensland. No suggestion that you had corruption when you talk about the other States, no suggestion of venality or corruption in Victoria ... no suggestion, there has been no suggestion on the part of politicians of venality or corruption. None. None at all. Incompetence perhaps, yes, bad decisions but no suggestion of corruption. Here in this State and one of the reasons why Goss is Premier is not only his own intrinsic merits, but because the people were sick of the corruption of conservatism and the National Party which is seeking the support of people here in Queensland is the same National Party which inflicted corruption as well as incompetence on this State for some 30 years.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, the metal workers, do you ... managed to intervene in that yet at all or -

PM: No, no, I may over the weekend make a phone call, I ... yet.

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Beg your pardon?

JOURNALIST: What do you think of Mr Campbell's actions?

PM: I've got no comment to make upon them. I've made the general point about the fact that the Accord has delivered to this country, despite the predictions of its imminent demise which have been going on for seven years, the Accord has delivered 1.6 million new jobs, five times faster than the conservatives could ever or did deliver, twice as fast as the rest of the world, a 60 percent reduction in industrial disputes, a record level

(train whistle sounds, toot toot)

PM (cont): That's a supporting hoot - a record level of profits which has gone into a record level of investment. That is the achievement of the Accord and it is a, a silliness in the extreme to say, look there might be a stoppage for a day in one industry. What does that mean about the respective industrial relations policies of the