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## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, LE SURF HOTEL, NOUMEA  
28 JULY 1990

E & OE - PROOF ONLY

PM: Perhaps if I could just make a brief statement and then be available for your questions.

I've had the opportunity last night and this morning to have extensive discussions with a range of representatives here in New Caledonia and I want, at the outset, to express my gratitude for the opportunity that's been given and the frankness of the views that have been put to me. I must say that I've come away from those discussions with a great sense of confidence about the future of New Caledonia.

The discussions I've had have been with the Minister, Monsieur Le Pensec, with Mr Jacques Le Lafleur and Mr Simon Loueckhote, with Mr Paul Neaoutyine and with Mr Leopold Joredie and Mr Richard Kaloi. As you will see from that that covers the range of those involved as well as, of course, with the Mayor of Noumea. So I have spoken with the representatives of the French Government of RPCR and of the FLNKS.

From these discussions I find a deep sense of commitment on the part of all those involved to making sure that the processes provided by the Matignon Accord are constructive and that they should lead to a situation where there is a maximisation of the chances of a peaceful resolution of the conflict which prior to 1988 had racked this country.

Most particularly there is an understanding of the need to ensure the maximum training of the Kanak population to ensure that they have an increased capacity to assume positions of responsibility in this country in the ranges of areas - administrative, professional, technical.

Australia has been pleased to offer its cooperation in this process and it is a matter of pride for us that we have now a number of people from New Caledonia undergoing training programs in Australia and I took this opportunity of reassuring all people with whom I spoke of the continuing commitment of Australia to assist in these processes.

I also indicated in these discussions the commitment of Australia to increasing the relationships between our two countries and I believe as a result of my visit that we will see a significant improvement in this respect.

I was also impressed by the commitment of all those to whom I spoke to not only improve the relationship with Australia but also importantly to see New Caledonia playing an important role in this region.

I repeat again in conclusion of these opening remarks the great pleasure that I've had in the warmth of the welcome, the constructive nature of the discussions that I've been able to have with this great cross-section of representatives of the New Caledonian community and to express once again the commitment of Australia to playing a constructive part in the processes that are underway in this country.

**JOURNALIST:** Mr Hawke, you touched on it in your opening statement. How important is it to you as Australian Prime Minister that the whole independence conflict, or whatever you like to call it, is resolved peacefully and in the best way possible?

**PM:** It's fundamentally important for two reasons. Firstly of course for the welfare of the people of New Caledonia. Really the people of New Caledonia by now as we go into 1990 have the opportunity of seeing two alternative avenues of resolution of conflict being followed. That is the pre-Matignon Accord which was characterised by conflict, bloodshed, death on the one hand, against that process which has been followed since 1988 in which there has now been created a process whereby the fundamentals of creating the new relationship are being followed. These fundamentals have been reflected in these ways. The creation of a new administrative political structure. Secondly, the commitment to the rapid training of a large number of Kanaks who are going to be able to take their place in New Caledonia. And thirdly, the creation of a better balance in the capacity to participate in the political, administrative and economic life of this country. Under this process there is, it seems to me, a growing commitment on the part of all those concerned to see a peaceful evolution to the point where in 1998 the decision in regard to the determination of the future of this country can be made. Now having said that and having said that they are able themselves to see the relative benefits of this new process, I am under no illusion that there is an identity of view about the end of that process. I understand that the RPCR adhere to their view about the future status of this country just as much as I understand that the FLNKS see the Matignon Accords as a process and a means to the end of achieving independence. It is my hope and of course let me preface what I have to say by the observation that the decisions to be made are for the people of New Caledonia and not

for Australia or for anyone else. Making that preface I express the hope that in the eight years that remain before 1998 that the experience of working together politically, and in a sense perhaps even more importantly economically, may lead to the possibility of the emergence of some consensus by 1998 as to the most appropriate decision to be made at the time. But clearly, if I could summarise that answer, the people of this country, as I say, have now had the opportunity of seeing the alternative method of process - that is strife and conflict, or cooperation. And I'm sure they understand that overwhelmingly the latter is the way to go.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, did any of the parties you met with today ask Australia to play a specific role in helping to solve the problems here?

PM: No. I think there's a very very mature understanding between us - that is between the two Governments, and between ourselves and the RPKK, and between ourselves and the FLNKS. Let me preface what will be a much briefer answer - not that I if I could talk for three hours and she'd get it all. I want to make it quite clear the profound respect that I and my Government have for the Government of France and the way they have handled these things. I think we all owe a great debt of gratitude to the imagination and the commitment of resources and time and energy that the Government of France has made. We have a relationship with them which I think is ideal in that we have made the offer to assist in any way that we can. We think most particularly the way in which we can help is by the offer of training opportunities in Australia. That has been welcomed and I have said that if there is any more that they think that we can do then we are prepared to do that. They have welcomed it. As far as the two major groupings are concerned, I think they also understand a) the commitment of myself and my Government to assist in the process in any way that they think that we can and if, as a result of my visit and discussions, they come to the conclusion that there are some other ways in which we can be of assistance, well we stand ready to do that. But we understand that these things must be worked out within this country. If there are other things like training that we can do well then we stand ready to help. But they haven't asked specifically for any other forms of assistance. One matter that did arise I might say, that was raised by representatives of the FLNKS, was the question of the recognition here of qualifications in Australia. So I raised that issue afterwards with the Minister and it is agreed that this is something that must be looked at. Because there is not going to be much point if we use a great deal of resources for training and as a result of that some of the qualifications in Australia that result from that training are not here recognised. So there is an agreement now that we will study that matter and try and resolve that issue.

**JOURNALIST:** Prime Minister, many of the Pacific Island nations appear likely at the Forum to oppose the incineration of chemical weapons at Johnston Island. Will Australia try and persuade them of the American view that this is safe and ...?

**PM:** I don't want to pre-empt by anything I say here the discussions I have with my colleagues at the Forum. I don't think that would be appropriate. But I don't want to avoid your question entirely. I mean we have had, our scientific experts have a very careful and detailed examination made of this issue. I understand the concern of some of the Pacific Island countries that I understand will be expressed at the Forum. I think as a result of the discussions that we will be able to have there that we may be able to reach a consensus. I hope so. But other than that I don't want to pre-empt the discussion I have there. It would not be, it wouldn't be courteous to my colleagues at the Forum.

**JOURNALIST:** Mr Hawke, did you urge the RPCR to send a representative to the South Pacific Forum?

**PM:** What I said there was this. That I believed that first of all as the constitution of the Forum stands that there was no provision really for observer status. But having said that, I made the point that I thought it would be useful if my fellow leaders at the Forum had the opportunity of discussion with leaders from here about developments in New Caledonia. So that I had the view that just as it would be useful for representatives for the FLNKS to be there and perhaps over a meal to meet with the leaders, so I thought it would be useful if representatives of the RPCR were to do that. Let me add to that that I understand that no specific invitation has been issued to either the FLNKS or the RPCR. It is a matter for decision by the Minister whether they are there at the time of the Forum. I merely expressed the belief that if they are there then the Forum would take the opportunity in the sort of context that I referred to to have discussions with them.

**JOURNALIST:** Mr Hawke, two questions.

**PM:** Two, yes.

**JOURNALIST:** Sarah Walls.

**PM:** What?

**JOURNALIST:** Were you after my name? The question, given that -

**PM:** Sorry, I thought you were nominating a subject and I was lost.

JOURNALIST: I was just wondering, given that you haven't met the man who succeeded Mr Tjibaou as leader of New Caledonia's largest pro-independence party, Mr Francois Burck and given that members of the FLNKS seem to have stayed away from social functions during this visit, I wonder whether you consider it a complete success from Australia's point of view? That's the first question. The second question is that last night in your speech you praised the Matignon Accords as a process for a peaceful transition to genuine self-determination and viable long-term provisional status. Mr Le Penec said in his speech that the aspirations that each of the communities should be reconciled, had to be reconciled through the recognition of equal dignity, irreducible identity and their right to social access to social and economic responsibilities. I'm wondering whether you feel that Australia and France have the same view of what the outcome of the Matignon Accords will be?

PM: Well as to the first question, I have met with all those with whom arrangements have been made for me to meet. I don't know the background to the organisation but I must say in regard to those with whom I have met who seem to me to have the capacity to speak for their respective constituencies, that I've found that most useful. As to the second question, I believe that the position of France and Australia is that the process is to provide a period up to 1998 when essential problems connected with the development of New Caledonia can be addressed so that when the time comes in 1998 for the decision to be taken that the country is going to be in the best possible condition to make that decision work. I think that both - as I said in my speech today at lunchtime - I said it is not for Australia to say what the outcome of the decision in 1998 will be. It's not for Australia to say. That is a matter for the people of New Caledonia to make that decision. I believe that that view that I expressed on behalf of Australia is the view of the French Government.

JOURNALIST: So it doesn't disturb you that you haven't met Mr Burck and that the FLNKS ... appears to have stayed away?

PM: Well, you have a look at me. I don't appear disturbed I hope, because I can assure you that I'm not disturbed. I operate on the basis that I try and meet with as many people who can, but overwhelmingly operate on the basis I meet with those who want to meet with me. It's not very wise to try and pursue in life some other philosophy. I've been very satisfied with the discussions I have had with the people who have wanted to meet with me.

JOURNALIST: Back to Johnston Island for the moment - Johnston Atoll - can you briefly summarise what the scientific report says?

PM: I could but I won't for the reasons I put before. It's most appropriate that I talk about those matters in the first instance with my colleagues at the Forum.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you'll be no doubt seeing Ratu Mara tomorrow at the Retreat in Vila. Will you be personally expressing to him Australia's unhappiness with the new constitution's lack of ... with the precondition that should be acceptable for ... main group ...?

PM: I've got essentially the same answer as I've just given. I have views about the constitution. I'll be conveying those to Ratu Mara. But I don't think it's courteous that I do that in advance of meeting him.

JOURNALIST: Did you raise the question of French nuclear testing today? If so, with who? Do you ever get the feeling that you're wasting your time with ...?

PM: I raised it last night at the first opportunity publicly. I made the point clear. I've done it before with my friend Michel Rocard, the Prime Minister and I did it last night. There's no point in doing it again.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you made the point yesterday that Australia would like greater access for Australian goods in New Caledonia and you referred to artificial barriers against Australian access to the markets. Have you been given any indications that that's the likely outcome ...?

PM: I've raised that matter and in terms that would be very well understood by my dear friends in the Australian press contingent, I said that when I came back from the function last night and my colleagues came up to the room with me, I said have a beer. They opened the fridge and they got out a Fosters can. But this was a can of Fosters which had come from London. I said to Monsiour Le Pensec, I said you were a professor of economics, I was a tutor of economics, I said as fellow economists we must know that it is uneconomic to consume Fosters beer in New Caledonia via London. That it is much more economic that you import the stuff - I believe it's still very good - directly from Australia. And not only the beer but the wine and dairy products. So I made the point in a rational sense as one economist to another and I think the point was well received. I hope that it will be followed up.

PM: And may I just say finally before I go, in case I am misrepresented as having come here as an agent of John Elliott -

INTERPRETER: ...?

PM: In case I am represented as coming here as an agent of John Elliott, that what I say of Fosters is true of XXXX or whatever.

PM: ... there are in Australia some association that has given some militant active help to the FLNKS in the previous year. What ... position of your Government towards ...?

PM: I'm not sure of the organisation ... I'm not aware of what organisations you refer to but let me make this quite definite point. As far as my Government is concerned, the processes which should be followed in this country are the peaceful processes of negotiation and of political and economic co-operation. As far as we are concerned, any organisation which was seeking in any way to subvert those processes would receive the most severe condemnation as far as the Government was concerned.

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