



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP,
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J: Prime Minister, how did the meeting with Mr Goh go?

PM: It was exceptionally warm and we had many things in common - the trade between Australia and Singapore which is growing now inexorably, all the time; the co-operative things we are doing, not just in Australia and Singapore, but with third countries particularly in south-east Asia and also our mutual interest in APEC which, of course, Prime Minister Goh will be attending the APEC leaders summit in Seattle next month and we were talking about that too.

J: Does he share your view of APEC becoming an economic community at this leaders summit?

PM: I think Singapore is very strong about APEC's prospects and the very nice coincidence of events which have brought it about and the fact that we the two largest economies in the world very interested and very keen to develop a multi-lateral structure - that is, of course, the US and Japan - so he is quite excited about APEC as I am.

J: Prime Minister, why did the Commonwealth squib the issue of human rights?

PM: I don't follow your 'squib' comment.

J: Well, they didn't issue the Paphos Declaration, it seems to be a very watered down statement.

PM: I see, you mean the humanitarian statement. Because, I think, basically that it was not possible to draft something which saw the Commonwealth taking on some crisis management, dispute settling role which is what some of the drafting had anticipated. That is not the Commonwealth's strength, it is not the Commonwealth's role. Some of us said that a day or so ago, I said it to you yesterday and I think that is the reason why it will be reflected though in the communique, but in more appropriate terms.

J: What was the thinking behind maintaining residual sanctions against South Africa until there is a democratically elected government in place?

- PM: I think there has been a consistency on the Commonwealth's part about these things, but again, we are very up beat about the prospects of the election of a democratically elected non-racially selected government and I indicated in this morning's session that Australia would be contributing financially, to the monitoring effort on the part of the Commonwealth.
- J: With the personnel that we would be expected, the election observers or whatever, that we would be expected to provide as well, is that in addition or in exchange for involvement in any United Nations forces?
- PM: No, that would be in addition to. I also said we would be inviting some of our staff to participate in the monitoring, that is some of our electoral staff, as well as the financial commitment by Australia, which was very well received.
- J: Prime Minister, how hard a job do you think it is going to be to get the situation in South Africa after the election sorted out, how long realistically do you think it is going to take, how long will Australia be involved?
- PM: I don't think I could say Peter (Harvey) exactly how long that would take. It depends on how much good will there is on the part of the South African community in general after the elections, but it will be a watershed for that country and watersheds to produce a change of sentiments, so it may well be that things run there as they did in Zimbabwe.
- J: Mr Keating, can you see Australia and the Commonwealth reaching the point where they might impose sanctions on Turkey over Cyprus?
- PM: Cyprus is essentially in the charge of the United Nations and I think what the communique will express today is a recitation of the Commonwealth's support for the UN resolutions which have been passed on this in 1974 and 1984, but I don't think the Commonwealth sees for itself, a role in taking primary carriage of the matter. It is properly with the UN, but we think it is a useful thing to support the UN's efforts.
- J: Do you think sanctions would work against Turkey?
- PM: I don't know, but that begs the question about who manages the dispute and it won't be the Commonwealth managing it.
- J: What have you really achieved here after five days?
- PM: I think getting a very firm statement of support for the conclusion of the GATT Round is a particularly important thing at this critical junction. I mean, the Commonwealth's meetings have been held coincidentally as it turns out with quite important epochs in the history of countries and communities - most particularly obvious was Rhodesia and South Africa. It happens also to be true this year for the GATT and getting such a firm statement of support and a delegation to visit the key players in the GATT Round at this key time would be a very useful

thing. If this meeting succeeded in doing that and that only it would have been well worth having and beyond that, of course, it has done other things.

J: Why do you feel it necessary to issue a statement in relation to Dr Hewson and Mabo?

PM: Because I think his position is becoming appalling, that is why. Dr Hewson is in a position now where Mr Court has called on his support ... and what Mr Court is saying he wants to extinguish, he want to actually abolish native title, he wants to wipe out the thing the High Court said Australia indigenes have. Now, where does Dr Hewson stand? For how long can he hide from these vital questions particularly at a time when Mr Reith is saying that the High Court is usurping the role of Parliament, that it needs to be reformed, to use his word, that a Coalition government would need to reform it, whatever that means, whatever threat that implies for the High Court and while there is great division in the Liberal party between the likes of Mr Woolridge Mr Reith and between other Liberals and Mr Court. And the implied threat that Western Australian parliamentary liberals who are supporting Dr Hewson's leadership won't support him if he doesn't toe Mr Court's line. I think it is time that Dr Hewson stood up on Mabo and said on this matter of great principle where he stands.

J: Prime Minister, is there anything in the legislation that we don't know about that might spring a surprise and cause great concern to some elements of the community like pastoralists?

PM: No, I don't think so. Let's not be trying to give Dr Hewson any outs - this is a very simple matter. The High Court has said that there is a native title flowing from Aboriginal tradition and custom in the common law of Australia - does he support that or does he support Richard Court and if he supports that he should put his shoulder to the wheel and support this legislation.

J: Who do you think is going to win the split then between the two factions in the party - who do you think will come to the ascendancy?

PM: The Liberal party on this key question is very divided and given the fact that since the election Dr Hewson has done nothing but play a spoiling role on the Budget and more laterally on Mabo, then I think it is time on a matter which is going to extend way beyond this Parliament. A matter that goes back to the actual genesis of our settlement to have a resolution of this is a matter of high policy in Australian public life. And for him to be ducking and weaving, or worse, conniving in any attempt by Richard Court to actually abolish native title would leave the Liberal party without any credibility on this key matter.

J: Prime Minister, what are hoping to achieve now in Indonesia with your talks with President Soeharto?

PM: Well, it is eighteen months since I have seen President Soeharto and I think given the fact that I have got to overfly or fly through Indonesian air space, it was a reasonable time to actually call in and say hello and just recap on the

eighteen months of events which have taken place and take the opportunity to have a talk about APEC which is now a month away - the Seattle meeting - what we see for APEC; how he is seeing the APEC matter unfolding and so we can compare notes ahead of the meeting.

J: Do you have any specific goals out of that meeting at all?

PM: No, I just think routine visits by neighbours should be more of the rule rather than the exception.

J: Are you expecting clear support from President Soeharto as opposed to Dr Mahathir's opposition to some aspects of APEC?

PM: Indonesia has had a very careful, but nevertheless pragmatic approach about the great opportunity which APEC opens. I mean, APEC opens the opportunity of seeing in a multi-lateral context the trading interests of the first and second largest economies in the world, along with those of the Asia-Pacific community. It is a great opportunity and, I think, Indonesia understand that and has seized upon that.

J: In your meeting with Mr Goh, you said that you talked about trade with third countries, the sort of joint venture trade into other areas, is there anything specifically that the two governments can do to promote that or is that going to happen within a wider context of APEC?

PM: It is happening now, it is happening at a ferocious speed now. There are so many joint ventures being entered between Australian companies and Singaporean companies for business, not just in Singapore, but for other countries of the region. I think that the collaboration between Singapore and Australia will just continue to grow and grow.

J: Prime Minister, Mr Howe has said that a jobs levy on higher income earners will be considered by the Government, is it a possible goer?

PM: We won't be anticipating any of that until I receive the report on employment which will be handed down in a month from now, so we will see what the Committee recommends and then we'll take a position about it.

J: Is there growing support for the idea in the Government?

PM: It is a fashionable idea at the moment, but whether the fashion will give up the solidity I think it would require will depend on what comes from the Report.

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