



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP,
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOLLOWING ADDRESS TO BUSINESS
LUNCH, ERAWAN HOTEL, BANGKOK, THURSDAY, 7 APRIL 1994**

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- Q:** Mr Prime Minister, my name is Bruce Crampton, Gold Corporation, Thailand. Is it your Government's policy to continue with projects such as the Friendship Bridge, it's unbelievable the amount of good will that it has created in this area?
- PM:** Thank you. Well the answer to that is yes it is. Australia each year commits a substantial proportion of its natural resources, or certainly its fiscal resources, its budget resources to foreign aid, that is development and program aid. And we try and maintain a reasonable share of our budgetary appropriations to this task. We think in well-judged, well-researched projects that we can undertake some which are often beyond the capacity of national governments to do, particularly in public infrastructure of the variety of this bridge across the Mekong. And just yesterday I announced in Vientiane that we are now providing that country, Laos, with a four year rolling program of aid which will be devoted to public infrastructure, to education and to health. So, I think, we see a role for ourselves in the region doing things like the Friendship Bridge. Things which often are difficult for some national governments to do, to find resources and do. The main thing is that we pick the right projects. There are always many on offer, but some better than others to be taken up. It is certainly our intention to keep doing the sorts of things we are doing with the Bridge.
- Q:** ... (inaudible) from the National Newspaper ... (inaudible)
- PM:** I was looking for business people rather than journalists, but anyway I often travel down market.
- Q:** As you talking about the GATT, it has to be reported that the ... (inaudible) ... will try to push human rights cause in the next meeting in ... (inaudible) ... what is Australia's position in this issue?

PM: In the issue of?

Q: Human rights and ... (Inaudible) ...

PM: Well, Australia is a true liberal democracy. Australia is a very deep rooted democracy and that democracy has expressed itself in a respect for human values and human endeavour and human rights which I think I could say few in the world have, if not emulated, done better or are more committed to those ideals. As you know, Australia has been in a number of international conflicts over this last century, never for one square centimetre of territory. Always out of indignation at the actions of others against the liberties of other people. So Australia regards its concern for human rights as very much a natural offspring of its society, of its sense of culture and democracy and tolerance and it will put its views forthrightly and strongly where ever we think human rights are being violated. Now, we have put these views often and consistently in places where, often in foreign policy and trade terms, has not been entirely convenient for us to put them but we have put them nevertheless. And will continue to put them. And I don't believe, and never have believed for a second, that Australia's democracy or values need be compromised or that it is a burden for Australia to share these views in various parts of the world. But, by the same token, Australia does see national relationships in the broad and the important thing is to be effective in trying to improve human rights in some countries. We believe one can be most effective doing this in a broader relationship of many parts. So that, therefore, the cost to countries of losing parts of this relationship become more expensive. And I think we have been more effective in making our voice heard in human rights by maintaining a broad relationship with a nation that we are dealing with. And, I think, in terms of our own debate about this subject, it's a matter whether one wants to be heard ineffectively or whether one wants to be effective. If one wants to be effective, one does not have to compromise values of the kind which you have asked me and to which I have referred.

Q: If I may, Bruce Clark, Avacor Company. Mr Keating, you have built a fantastic bridge in Non Khai. I have seen it and it is great. I would like to ask you whether AIDAB is contemplating anything as regards a coordinated computer controlled motor traffic system here rather than a rail traffic system.

PM: Well, I think that, I am quite sure that a number of members of the government of Thailand will know by now and if they don't I will tell them that one of the things that Australia has developed is a sophisticated city traffic computerised traffic system which spirals traffic around a number of Australian cities on the basis of a central control. And this has worked very effectively because it provides a monitoring role, as well as a computerised dispersion role and so good is the system we think it has got international market ability. We don't think that we've actually sold it to a number of countries. So while I'm not exactly a travelling salesman for these things I am quite happy to give them a kind reference on the way through. Thank you very much

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