



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP,
PRESS CONFERENCE, IMPERIAL HOTEL, TOKYO
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J: Prime Minister, can we ask you some questions in relation to the shooting overnight in Sydney first up, if you don't mind?

PM: Well, that's what I was going to say something about. Well, I was very - naturally I knew John Newman. I was very depressed about it and, you know, somewhat at a loss for words, I think, about the sort of impact of this on someone in public life who had served the community there very well. Of course, he was quite committed to the community in Cabramatta and was involved in all facets of it. And as you know, often quite fearlessly. So, it's a bad day for life in New South Wales when this sort of thing happens.

We don't know what the motives are yet, of this, and we don't have any details of what happened other than the sketchy ones. We know, that is, the circumstances, but not any of the background, and the Australian Federal Police will be co-operating with the New South Wales police in the investigation.

J: Are you concerned that this may be a case of politically motivated killing?

PM: Well, I would be concerned if it was politically motivated, yes. But it may not be. One doesn't know, and I don't think it is really useful to speculate about it.

J: Mr Newman has been campaigning for more police..(inaudible)..and an Asian Taskforce, will you move to see if any of those things are now put in place, given this shooting?

PM: Well, it's not a matter of me moving. This is a matter for New South Wales government, and the New South Wales Police force, and it's their investigation - it's essentially their matter. But we will certainly co-operate with them.

J: He was also campaigning for tougher deportation laws, Mr Keating, do you think that's something that...

PM: All that begs the question about the crime being a political one, and I just don't think one should add any credence to that at this point.

J: Do you sympathise, though, with his arguments that there was a great...

PM: Well, there's no point in speculating - I'm not speculating about it at all.

J: Have you communicated with Premier Fahey today?

PM: No, I haven't, no.

J: There's some report going around back home that you have been in contact with the police in New South Wales...

PM: No, no. But the AFP have identified liaison officers in Sydney to co-operate as a conduit for the NSW investigations, and of course, naturally any intelligence holdings which the AFP have, which may be useful to the NSW police, they are welcome to.

J: Are you at all concerned that there might be a backlash against the Vietnamese community?

PM: No, I think this is a very mature society in Australia, and I think Australians will see this killing for what it is - that is an unacceptable act of criminal violence, whatever it's motivations.

Well as you know I've still got a day of meetings to go, but I was very pleased with discussions I had yesterday with Prime Minister Murayama and his colleagues. They covered issues of importance to Australia-Japan relations, such as changes in the Japanese political system, social policy in each country, resource issues in the South Pacific, and Japan's global role, including membership of the (UN) Security Council. But the main focus was on regional development, especially on APEC.

I was able to explain to the Prime Minister why I thought APEC was so important to Australia, and we think the rest of the region, including Japan. It was a very encouraging conversation in all. Japan is a great supporter of both APEC and trade liberalisation in the region, so I'm sure this will help - our discussions will help - in the run up to Bogor. It will for me to know the Prime Minister, to have run across these issues with him so that when I see him in Bogor of course, we'll know one another and have some solid background in the issues before us. I think I'll leave it at that and invite questions.

- J: Prime Minister, last night we were told that you were pleased to see that the Japanese Prime Minister was committed to a "good outcome" in Bogor - can you explain what that means? What's a good outcome?
- PM: Well, I think they want to see a commitment to trade liberalisation in the region. But, I didn't have a technical discussion with the Prime Minister, I mean, I have been in and out of the APEC issue now for so long and all the little nuances and eddy currents and the rest, one can't expect a Prime Minister just appointed to have an infrastructure of knowledge meetings past and all the events and the nuances of it, and I didn't press him on it. Just the general political issues - I mean, what we're looking for in Bogor is political authority - there are enough people - particularly after the Uruguay Round experience just behind them - there are enough people now quite expert in trade matters and in trade liberalisation matters. As always, as in Uruguay, the problem was political authority and it was that which I was speaking of, and seeking, rather than any other, if you like, detailed response.
- J: Did you hear anything from the Japanese Prime Minister that might discourage you from pursuing any agenda that you have in mind for Bogor?
- PM: No, no. I mean, I think that the Prime Minister was quite remarkably cross all the principle issues. I say quite remarkably, I mean, with a fair degree of sophistication.
- J: Did he put the traditional Japanese position for preference for some sort of MFN process?
- PM: No. The acronym MFN was never mentioned.
- J: Were timetables mentioned, Prime Minister?
- PM: No.
- J: So did you seek in any way to get some sort of commitment from him to a specific date?
- PM: No.
- J: Without debating the actual date?
- PM: No. No, because these things are all about starts, they're not about finishes. They're all about starts, and it's like our own tariff changes in Australia. I mean, we started the tariff reduction program in 1988 and we put the second phase in 1991 and 1997..but by 1991,

everyone understood what the game was. And most people have adjusted to it much earlier than 1997.

J: Did he indicate he's prepared to look at an earlier start than perhaps the EPG group...

PM: I didn't press him on those sorts of details. I mean, I had the chance to go to those sort of details with other people.

J: Mr Keating, APEC has been described as a potential catalyst for a fresh round of International trade negotiations - did you get any sense of the Prime Minister of Japan's..(inaudible)...arguments?

PM: Oh, I think that the Japanese see...I mean, remember this that the Prime Minister was at the Naples Summit - the G-7 - the open markets 2000 initiative didn't travel so well there, and I think he understood right up close what the trade liberalisation international discussion is like. I'm sure Japan understands very clearly that APEC is half the world's production and half the world's population. So, what APEC does matters simply because of its size.

J: Did he indicate that the Japanese have preference for negotiating the details of how free trade will continue before committing to a date of some sort?

PM: I don't think so. Japan is worldly wise about this stuff. I mean, they have been in the Uruguay debate now for years, and they see, I think, the value of APEC. The G-7 is very much an elite thing, trying to sort of, you know, kick off or direct some sort of trade liberalisation beyond the GATT, whereas APEC is a broadly based bottom-up thing. I mean, it's something where the countries all understand the debate, they all talk to one another, you get that sense of a community view being brought to it. Which is not the case with the G-7, and I think Japan understands that well.

J: Are there any countries in APEC that you feel might be...not want to join any consensus on moving it forward?

PM: Not that I know of.

J: Are you confident that you can win China's support to some sort of specific timetable?

PM: Well, the Chinese are pragmatists. I mean, there was always some doubt that they would come to Seattle. There was no doubt in my mind that they would come. I mean, they are pragmatic, and they do see the value, I think, in opening up markets in the Asia-Pacific for their products.

- J: On the domestic side, are you confident that you could win support for an export tariff regime in Australia by the year 2000, for example?
- PM: Well, we're almost there ourselves. That's the point. I mean, one of the things in the EPG report about staggering the stuff is for the developing countries first, and the developed countries later, is that we will be down to a level of 5% of general manufacturing protection by 1997, and the plant areas are around 15% in terms of tariffs - but this is going to be more than about tariffs. It's going to be about non-tariff barriers, and it's going to be about services. I mean, it's going to be about trade in the broader sense, not simply tariffs.
- J: For example, on the auto makers - have they been consulted at all on this question of bringing their 15% tariff further down?
- PM: No, but we haven't said either that it would necessarily come below that. See again, what happens in any of these rounds is that countries give offers - you remember the Uruguay Round offers - people try and look at their sectors which are difficult for them and they provide offers. They have got to be acceptable in the general round and we're a long way from any of that.
- J: Did the Prime Minister last night outline what Japan actually wants from the Bogor meetings? Any specific outcomes?
- PM: No, only in the sense in agreeing with me that it's a great opportunity to advance the velocity of trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific, and it shouldn't be missed.
- J: Mr Keating, on security - did the Prime Minister outline Japan's current thinking on UN Security Council seats - there seems to have been a bit of movement on that recently?
- PM: Well yes. I said Australia maintains the position we have had that we thought it was an anachronism that Japan - the second largest economy in the world, a large nation of 130 million people - were not represented in the Security Council, and you couldn't adequately reflect on world opinion without that being represented, and I put the view to him that I thought there was a consistency between Security Council membership and, well certainly, let me put it in the negative - no inconsistency in Security Council membership and Japan needing to play a military role. I didn't think these things...one necessarily followed the other, and that Japan could play a role in this world body because it's consulted always on major issues even if it isn't part of the security council.
- J: What was his view?

PM: Well, I think he was probably a bit more interested in my view at the time and there has obviously been a difference of view in Japan about this, obviously coming from it's long constitutional history, and the impediments to military engagement, and military involvement. But I think Japan is sorting its way through this. I mean, it's a very great change going on in Japan at the moment - I mean, you can see that with the changes at the last election, and the Hosakawa Government, the rise of Shinseito - these things are, I think, straws in the wind of a greater change, and that change has been about Japan playing a role commensurate with its size. This is just another manifestation of that debate.

J: Did he give any indication of his assessment of security issues on the Korean peninsula?

PM: No.

J: Just one last question - what did he say about the South Pacific issues?

PM: Well, I raised these issues with him. I said that I thought that, as Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, I should tell the Prime Minister what had transpired. I thanked him for Japan's continuing interest in the Forum, and where Vice Minister Yanagisawa came, and for it's aid to the region, but said there were specific difficulties in forestry and fisheries, and particularly in fisheries where the Pacific fishery is the principal source of fish stocks to Japan, that it had an interest in seeing that the fishery was well conducted, that there was adequate research about replenishment and that the member states were assisted, at least, in the first instance by getting an adequate return, and the returns historically have been low. And that in everyone's long-term interests, we should try and make the fishery a viable thing, over a long period of time, and that Australia would play its role in fisheries research and I look forward to Japan playing a collaborative role with us.

J: Finally Prime Minister, would you clarify - there's been some confusion back in Australia in regards to your comments yesterday about an early election?

PM: I gave you the answer. I gave it as soon as I was asked, so if you're confused, you're easily confused.

J: Is an early election on the timetable?

PM: No. No. With a capital 'n' and a big nought behind it.

ends.