

16 July 1997

10

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON. JOHN HOWARD MP  
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW - NEWCASTLE**

**E & OE**.....

**JOURNALIST:**

Prime Minister, what do you make of former Prime Minister Bob Hawke's endorsement of your mandate?

**PRIME MINISTER:** I think he speaks common sense. We did get a thumping majority. The Labor Party and the unions may not like our industrial relations policy but they should in the national interest take Mr Hawke's advice.

**JOURNALIST:**

Do you see it as a specific intervention in terms of the Rio Tinto dispute?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

It has general application. It certainly applies to Rio Tinto but it also applies more broadly than that. We have changed the law with the authority of the Australian people and as a result the industrial relations climate is better for jobs, better for exports and better for good relations between employers and employees.

**JOURNALIST:**

Do you think that the ACTU and the Labor Party will take notice of a man who once led them both?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

They ought to. I mean, he, after all, is the most successful Labor Party leader this century. He may not have the icon status of the failed Prime Minister between 1972 and 1975. When it comes to a resonance with the Australian people he was rather more successful than any other Labor leader I have known and quite frankly, they ought to take his advice.

**JOURNALIST:**

Mr Howard, would you accept his offer to mediate in the dispute?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I think mediation is not something that arises. I think what arises is the two parties dealing with each other on the basis of the existing law. What the unions and the Labor Party will not accept is that the law has changed and that Rio Tinto has a perfect right to exercise the management prerogatives that all other Australian companies exercise. This is not a fight over basic working conditions. This is not a fight over the intimidation of the union movement. It is a fight over the right of Rio Tinto to manage a mine. They are offering large pay increases. They are offering workplace agreements. They are acting in accordance with the law and the unions and the Labor Party are doing Australia in the eye by perpetuating this dispute.

Thank you.