

**POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2017**

**PM:** All right. Well, good afternoon, everyone. Sorry to hold you up. We had a visit between the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs with the Secretary for Trade, Liam Fox, which we didn't want to cut short.

I want to start off today by giving an update on where this coalition Government currently stands on our ambitious 100-day plan. Cabinet today focused on furthering key elements of that agenda. After being sworn in, just over four weeks ago now, we did say that we would make a priority of issues that mattered most to this Government, and we've done that.

On Thursday, we will pass legislation extending paid parental leave, lifting it to 26 weeks by July 2020. The Healthy Homes Guarantee Bill, given our focus on housing and quality housing, will be passed by the House in the next two weeks.

On Friday, finance Minister, Grant Robertson, in a major speech as finance Minister, will announce the date of the half-year fiscal update and the Budget Policy Statement, and this is part of our focus on delivering other elements of our package. And we will be shortly introducing legislation to give effect to the families package. That includes Best Start, the winter energy payment, and also increases to Working for Families.

Finally, we promised to make post-secondary education more accessible, both for those who are leaving school and entering into that next phase of education, but also those who are in existing jobs who may never have accessed post-secondary training or education. We're making good progress on that commitment, and it will be available to those eligible from 1 January 2018. We're proud of the progress that we're making. It has been an ambitious work programme. We, of course, are working that through whilst maintaining the work of Government, including bilaterals with secretaries of trade. We're open for questions.

**Media:** What did you talk about with Mr Fox?

**PM:** Minister.

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** Who're you asking?

**PM:** Well, you, ha, ha! Mine was a very brief conversation, so I'll hand over to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

**Media:** Yeah, well, if you did more of the talks than Mr Peters, what sort of things did you talk about with Mr Fox?

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** Oh, we talked about the need for the interests of New Zealand to be foremost in their consideration, for a lot of reasons to do with their leaving the European Union, not to delay their negotiations with us until they've completed that departure, but work at it at the same time, and looking at the multifaceted interests we've got, including all the way to "Five Eyes" and security with the UK, and he seriously appreciates that.

**Media:** Did he bring up any concerns about some of the UK's sheep meat lobbies and things like that, in terms of New Zealand's sending lamb over there?

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** Not with me, he didn't, no.

**Media:** But that is a concern that the UK has, right?

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** Well, he didn't raise it with me, but he could've raised it with others. You'd have to ask David Parker or you'd have to ask Damien O'Connor, the Minister for Agriculture. He may well have.

**Media:** Because the reason I ask is: back in February in the UK House of Commons, I think it was, he actually specifically told the UK Labour Party that he would be raising it when he came here. So there was no talks of it whatsoever?

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** No, I didn't say that. I said with me he did not raise it.

**PM:** Ha, ha!

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** I'm sorry, Prime Minister, but words do mean things. If you're asking me as to whether he raised it with me—no. Did he raise it with David Parker? He may well have, but you'd have to ask the Hon David Parker, and the Hon Damien O'Connor when it comes to agriculture. But with me specifically, on the big foreign picture, no.

**Media:** Were you able to make any progress with him on New Zealand's reference to the WTO and the tariff quota arrangement that Britain and the EU have entered into, which New Zealand opposes?

**PM:** It's not been raised with me, but my expectation would be that the issue of quotas in the post-Brexit environment will, of course, be probably one of the main points of discussion.

**Media:** So is New Zealand still prepared to go as far as to block Britain from joining the WTO if that issue is not resolved?

**PM:** Look, at the moment, it's about advocating New Zealand's position. That's what I think our focus is on, using diplomatic channels to do that. We've made the case very clearly that currently the way that the split has been proposed to us it would disadvantage New Zealand. It's up to us to use diplomatic channels to raise that directly, and that's what we're doing.

**Media:** Prime Minister, why—

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** So suffice to say, Mr Harman, that he would not have to go back to the UK with the same level of pessimism that's mirrored in the political article this morning. I can say we're making some serious progress on him having a better understanding of our needs.

**Media:** Prime Minister, why are you not releasing the coalition agreement between yourself—

**PM:** We did release the coalition agreement, and we were very clear in that agreement—both, actually, on the ways that we would work together but also the agenda items that we as two parties have formally committed to. So in our minds, we absolutely have made public those things that we've made formal commitments to.

**Media:** But on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, Mr Peters, you said, in response to a question about whether the 38-page addendum would be released—you said, and I quote, "Yes. It's going to be released at some point, but the reality is these are projects the Prime Minister will explain better than I. It's her responsibility to explain it." When is that going to be released?

**PM:** Can I, as a starting point, given that the Deputy Prime Minister made reference to me in that response—yes, of course we made notes during the course of those discussions, including further areas that we may undertake some work. Where those things that we formally signed up to—they made it into the coalition agreement and they were released. Where we've committed ourselves to a piece of work and a policy piece of work, we've released that. Where there's more work to be done, that will be released at the time when we've reached a conclusion. Some issues will see the light of day, and, at that point, we'll make sure that people are absolutely clear that that was part of our conversation with New Zealand First, but others may not. There are constraints on us as a Government, not least the financial constraints we've been left by this Government, so there is still a lot of work to be done.

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** Even as I was saying that, those 38 pages were being abbreviated down to 33 pages, and 33 pages is a more accurate expression, actually. But the reality is, there's a lot of work to be done on some of those things. If I could give just one example, or two examples: we believe that an issue put in your budgets, the per capita measurement of GDP, is meaningless. People don't know whether they're going forward, whether they're beating Australia, whether they're beating the first seven or eight countries in the world, or whether, as we have been the last six years, are being totally static in terms of our personal economic growth. So we agreed to put that in our future, ah, in the Budget, and that's being worked on.

And we also agreed that the measurement on unemployment—that the idea of saying a person getting one hours' work a week means they're employed is, how shall I say it, without any sympathy. It's without any sense of reality. It's without any sense of their personal circumstances. And we know we can do better than that, so we've agreed to actually work on those things. And when we've completed the work, we'll tell you what the outcome is.

**Media:** So is there a 33-page documented draft arrangement between Labour and New Zealand First that you're working from?

**PM:** As I've made clear, and as the Deputy Prime Minister is making clear, those things that we have formally committed ourselves to, those things that we have budgeted for and included space within our fiscal programme for, have been publicly released and are publicly available. There are other areas that we may explore together that may be found to be unworkable, that may be found to just be fiscally irresponsible, that may never be progressed. There is always—every Government has a work programme, things that they look into. At the moment that we see some benefit and that it's something that we'll progress, that's the point at which it will be made public.

**Media:** Does the document contain directions to Ministers?

**PM:** Sorry?

**Media:** Does the document contain directions to Ministers—

**PM:** As I've said, it is not a formal document. It is not a Government document. It's a document of elements that we may progress and that we may not.

**Media:** So the Deputy Prime Minister was wrong to say that it included directives to Ministers?

**PM:** There are areas, as I've said, that we're exploring.

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** Can I just say, can we have the full quote?

**Media:** "There are directives to Ministers"—

**PM:** No, no, no, I've read that quote. I mean the full interview, when I explained what I was talking about. The rest of it I don't see there. So writing articles of convenience to fit a certain line—like, "this is a secret agreement"—is demonstrably and palpably false. I was just talking about how we will compartmentalise work of the type I've just discussed, send it off to Ministers, ask them to do some work on it, see what the outcome is, and what the result is. That's what I meant by that. And the full quote, if you'd like to go and see what I said on that day, as opposed to the very selective vignette you've given, would explain that.

**PM:** Further questions?

**Media:** So correct me if I'm wrong, but I understand that the response from the PMO to *Newsroom* was that the document was not included because the official information was not in existence, and we've kind of just established that it is. Is it more—are you saying that it's under active—

**PM:** I don't consider it to be a formal document. I have not had it in front of me since I was leader of the Labour Party in Opposition. It has not been distributed to Ministers. So

under that classification, I do not consider it to be a formal document for the purposes of the OIA. But in terms of transparency, yes, the moment that we pursue a piece of work that looks like it will become formally part of our agenda, then it will be made public and it will be made known.

**Media:** But what's the harm in releasing the 33-page document?

**PM:** Sorry?

**Media:** I mean, if you're clear that it's a work in progress, what's the harm in releasing it to the public? Why are you leaving it in the shadows?

**PM:** Because I, as—no, we're certainly not leaving it in the shadows. Every Government, before they release anything that is something that is still being discussed, if it's a policy that's under development—that may not ever formally see the light of day because it's found to be, for instance, simply unaffordable. Every Government maintains the right to keep that back until that work's been done. We are not unusual in that regard.

**Media:** Does this document contain any advice to Ministers about areas in their portfolios that they may wish to—

**PM:** Nothing has been distributed to Ministers.

**Media:** But does the document contain any advice that could be dealing—

**PM:** As I say, nothing has been distributed to Ministers.

**Media:** Who's seen the document?

**PM:** Oh, we've had conversations about it. Again, neither of us sat down, signed off an official document that then became a formation of the Government. That document was released. It's in the public domain. Everything else is an annotation around our discussion. Some of it will be worked on; some of it will not.

**Media:** So why did the Deputy Prime Minister say this document would be made public? Because he did.

**PM:** And as he's explained, at the time that those elements are worked through and found to be workable options and ideas, then they will be released.

**Media:** *Inaudible*

**PM:** Yes, indeed, in the same way that any Government often pursues policy areas that never see the light of day.

**Media:** But Mr Peters has said the document would be released, not elements of the document as we expected.

**PM:** The things that we pursue as a Government will absolutely be transparent.

**Media:** So is he wrong to say that in the first place?

**PM:** No, I don't believe so.

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** Well, I mean, Moses came down from the mountain and he only had 10 commandments, right? But there's a lot in the Old Testament as well. Get it?

**Media:** This is a 33-page document—

**PM:** You're not likening me to Moses, are you?

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** I'm only here because the Prime Minister asked me to be here to explain this, but this is not Zimbabwe all over again.

**PM:** Right, any other questions, folks? I'm mindful that I do have a flight.

**Media:** National has lodged a member's bill to put their—

**PM:** Ah, paid parental leave?

**Media:** Yeah. Will the Government be objecting to that when they raise submission—

**PM:** Yeah, one of the issues with the document that's been put forward—the SOP that's been put forward—by the member is that there are some issues that won't necessarily make that bill workable. So what we've done instead is taken the idea. Minister Lees-Galloway's getting advice on it as we speak, and with the view of pursuing, as we've said, work in that area.

**Media:** But you don't want it to happen under National's name, because—

**PM:** No, no, it's certainly—look, I have no doubt that at the time we are in a position to pursue it, there will be a given due credit to the Opposition for that. I have no trouble with that. They certainly raised the idea with us, so credit where credit's due. The issue is that the SOP, as I understand, currently has some issues with it—the member's bill. I'd rather make sure that if we do this and when we do it we do it properly.

**Media:** Could that not be ironed out at select committee?

**PM:** Oh, certainly, but that's what we're looking at at the moment—actually, what shape does that amendment need to take in order for it to actually be workable? My advice currently is, in the current form, it wouldn't necessarily achieve the outcomes that the member wants.

**Media:** Will he be progressing the waka-jumping bill in the next four weeks?

**PM:** Oh, we've made it one of our priorities. Certainly it's part of our 100-day agenda. I haven't checked in with the Leader of the House as to when he's scheduled that.

**Media:** Do you have the Green Party's support for that?

**PM:** Oh, look, I have an expectation that we'll have the support from our coalition and our support partners on that. And one of the reasons for that is that there's a lot of responsibility for the way that leaders themselves choose to organise their own parties. So there is some discretion there as to how they choose to manage their own members. So there is discretion there.

**Media:** There was a listing on the dark web last week for a painting that was alleging to be one of the Lindauer paintings. Given that it is a national treasure, if the listing is in fact true, would the Government look at buying that painting back?

**PM:** That's something at the moment I've referred queries to the Ministry for Arts, Culture and Heritage because I'm sure that there'd be some way that they choose to respond to these kinds of issues, a policy on the way that they respond to stolen goods. So I've left that for their advice. I haven't received official advice on that yet. It seems pretty bold for someone to list a stolen item and actually state that it's a stolen item the way that they have.

**Media:** When will you be releasing the BIMs?

**PM:** The BIMs? We're looking to release those next week.

**Media:** Mr Peters, going back to the Liam Fox visit, can you give us an example of those kind of issues that can be pursued in parallel with the Brexit negotiations that are going on between the UK and EU, just to flesh out what you mean by saying that those preparations for a deal with the UK can proceed in parallel?

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** Well, there's a massive preoccupation in the UK with respect to the departure from the European Union, and there is total concentration on that. All I'm saying is that we have got the skills in both countries, and probably more in our country because of our experience with free-trade arrangements, to get on with putting as much of the vehicle together as possible whilst this other matter is being finalised.

**Media:** That's what my question is: give me an example of what you can start to put on the rails before Brexit is concluded.

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** I would've thought the whole lot. That's the point.

**Media:** The whole lot of the deal with the UK can be negotiated before they have—

**Rt Hon Winston Peters:** I'm saying at the same time. That's my point. It's the point I made 6 months before the 23 June referendum to leave the EU in the first place. I was making that speech in January a year ago.

**PM:** Any other questions, folks? I've got to, unfortunately, depart for the airport. All right—thanks everyone.

**conclusion of press conference**

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