

MEET THE PRESS

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INTERVIEW WITH CLIVE PALMER

KATHRYN ROBINSON: Speculation is growing that the Australian Motoring Enthusiasts is going to expel Ricky Muir some time this week. When are you going to recruit him to the Palmer United Party?

CLIVE PALMER: We hadn't thought about that. Of course, that's just a press beat-up. The Australian executive of the Australian Motoring Party is the only person that can expel Mr Muir. These people themselves have been thrown out of the party and are just a dissident group and a dissident branch, same as though as if the Coogee branch of the Liberal Party expelled Tony Abbott. That would be a big story, wouldn't it?

KATHRYN ROBINSON: It would, but can you really say and honestly say that you haven't thought about it? Because if you did recruit him, you would have five members. You'd get legitimate party status, and then a whole lot more funds would come your way. And that's what you've been badgering Tony Abbott for.

CLIVE PALMER: No, we're not in politics for funds or for money. That's not something we want. All we've said all to Mr Abbott, and the press has beat it up, is that we have three or four senators that have to consider the weight of legislation from the entire House of Representatives, all the ministries, the whole Government, and if they have to read every bill, line by line, it'll slow the process down. We're suggesting that shouldn't happen. We're suggesting we want an orderly process, we want good Government. We don't want a Parliament like we had last time. So please, give us some resources so these people don't have to read all the bills themselves.

LAUREN WILSON: Mr Palmer-

CLIVE PALMER: I thought that's in Mr Abbott's interests.

LAUREN WILSON: Your deal with Ricky Muir - is it a deal with Ricky Muir or is it a deal with the Motoring Enthusiasts Party? And don't the public have a right to see it?

CLIVE PALMER: Well, it's a deal with the party, I guess, and also with Mr Muir. They've both endorsed it. Um, but I don't think the public have a right to-

PAUL BONGIORNO: So did you negotiate with – did you negotiate with Ricky Muir himself, or did you negotiate with the federal executive up in Queensland, of the party?

CLIVE PALMER: You know, he's a hard negotiator, that Ricky Muir. He decided that he wanted to get more senators supporting the motorists' policies. He badgered our senators time and time again to support the motorists' policies. There wasn't much I could do about it. He convinced them. So we thought we should all support him.

LAUREN WILSON: What does Mr Muir get in return? Does - is he allowed to travel on your jet? Does he get additional resources from you?

CLIVE PALMER: He doesn't get anything from me, other than the rights to be able to - that we're all supporting his policies. I'm not even in the Senate. I may not even be in Parliament. I'm just a normal party member trying to do my best for Australia.

PAUL BONGIORNO: Well, Dio Wang, your Senate candidate over in WA - you tweeted this week that you thought the recount was undemocratic. How is it undemocratic?

CLIVE PALMER: Well, I can only comment, Paul, in relation to what's happened to me in Fairfax - that's my personal experience. I've won the first count, I won the second count, and AEC - the senior AEC officer made a determination on all those ballots who they should go for. Now they're doing a third count with me, they've sent all the ballots to Brisbane, they've got a different AEC officer deciding whether the first AEC officer was right in his determinations.

PAUL BONGIORNO: Yeah, but can we-

CLIVE PALMER: I think it should be what the people say in Australia. They've got the right, not the AEC officer.

PAUL BONGIORNO: Well, coming to Western Australia. Your candidate there got almost 5% of the primary vote, whereas the Greens' Senator got almost 10%. It's hardly - the system itself, even though it's preferential, does look like it needs reform. Would you support some sort of reform?

CLIVE PALMER: Of course, that's not true. When the National Party preferences - our guy got more than 9%. It's just like the National Party across Australia - they got a total vote of 4%. We got 5.6%.

PAUL BONGIORNO: No, I accept - yeah, I accept the preferential system, but don't we have the micro-parties gaming the system? That's hardly transparently democratic, is it?

CLIVE PALMER: Well it just really means that, if you've won the election, you don't want other people to compete with, you don't want normal Australians to compete, you can legislate to exclude them. I don't think that's democracy, to be honest with you. You can't really complain about the system after you've lost the election. And as I said before, we got 5% - 5.6% across Australia. The National Party got 4%, but Warren Truss is Deputy Prime Minister. What's the justice in that?

LAUREN WILSON: If you do succeed in your bid for the seat of Fairfax, you've claimed when you get to Parliament, you won't be claiming any entitlements. Do you think that the system, as it currently stands, enables rorts, and would you support calls to change it?

CLIVE PALMER: I think we should do what we do in the United States Senate - they give every Senator a gross amount for his entitlements, and it's up to him how he spends it. That saves the taxpayer a lot of money because it eliminates all the finance gurus, all the investigations by the AAFP, holding up the courts with cases like the Slipper case and things like that. They're all trivial things. They take the distraction off what the national agenda should be - the economy and serious things which affect people's lives. So, we don't want to deal with trivia. We don't want our media running around about trivia. We want them to concentrate on the serious issues.

LAUREN WILSON: Tony Abbott has said this week that he believes the minor parties will support his mandate. Will you support the mandate that the Prime Minister claims he has?

CLIVE PALMER: Well, I don't know what a mandate is. I know what the result is, and the Australian people have voted to give us the balance of power. It's an awesome responsibility, and one we respect a lot. And of course, when a bill is presented to you, we'll have to look at it. You could have a bill that says something and does something else. So, we really can't say what our position is until we see the bill. And to determine that position, we'll need some help and support, like they do, in drafting the bill.

PAUL BONGIORNO: So you don't think this mandate argument has much weight?

CLIVE PALMER: Zero.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: So, can we assume that, if you've been on the record before, but it seems somewhat that you might be backing away from it now, that you would support the repeal of the carbon and the mining tax?

CLIVE PALMER: Well, we can't take anything for granted with us. We have to see what's in the bill. We've said that our policy, in relation to the mining tax, was to - is to get rid of it. In relation to the carbon tax, we've said that we want it abolished from the day it was introduced. Because if it's a bad tax, it's always been a bad tax. And I don't know whether that's Liberal Party policy. I don't think it is.

LAUREN WILSON: So there's no ambiguity there - you will allow for the repeal of both taxes?

CLIVE PALMER: There's an ambiguity, because we think it should be repealed from the date of introduction and the Liberal Party policy seems to be only to repeal it and not worry about the injustices that happened over the last year or two. So we'd want to get clarification on that, we'd want to get some advice, talk to people and have a friendly discussion with Mr Abbott.

PAUL BONGIORNO: So if that doesn't happen, which by the way does look like people who are by - in definition polluters being reimbursed for the carbon tax they've paid, I don't think that would be very politically saleable, would it?

CLIVE PALMER: I don't know. It's really, at the end of the day, you've got to think about the consumers, the people that have paid higher electricity prices in NSW,

Victoria and other states, and you've got to say about the future, whether that's justifiable. You've got to ensure, if they get rid of the carbon tax, for example, that electricity prices will come down, and it won't just be an excuse when they've brought the prices up. That causes the carbon taxes to continue to gouge poor pensioners that live in Australia that can't afford to pay electricity prices.

LAUREN WILSON: Do you support-

CLIVE PALMER: There's got to be some help for them.

LAUREN WILSON: Do you support Tony Abbott's direct action policy to curb emissions?

CLIVE PALMER: Well, I don't know what it is. You read the Liberal Party policy, and it talks in clichés and very general. We want to see specific details.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: What about Anthony Albanese's idea today that's been reported in the papers of cutting the carbon tax to 0% for an immediate transfer to the ETS. Would you support something like that, Mr Palmer?

CLIVE PALMER: I don't know. I'd have to consider it, you know? That's why we need more support and resources. We just haven't got the resources that Mr Abbott's got and Mr Albanese's got, yet we're expected to make decisions on things that are most important to the Australian public. And we just need more help.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: So what would you say to people listening to this interview right now, if you were to be asked what does the Palmer United Party stand for?

CLIVE PALMER: Well, it's pretty clear, if you go to our website - our policies are quite there in much more detail than the Liberal Party and the Labor Party, but of course not many journalists have gone there to read them. But we've had 7 million hits on our website. So a lot of Australians are interested about policy, about new ideas, and of course the last election was bereft of any policy or new ideas. There were photo opportunities with the Prime Minister, but he didn't answer any questions.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: So what's your policy on asylum seekers, say?

CLIVE PALMER: Well, our policy on asylum seekers is to allow asylum seekers to fly to our airports rather than pay \$20,000 in a people smuggler to come in on a \$400 ticket. As soon as they arrive, to have a hearing for a couple of hours to see if they can prove they've got right of entry. And if they're not genuine refugees, to send them back on the very next flight. And that's what happens in the United States when people flying from Cuba to Miami. They're given a hearing. It's - the onus is on them to prove whether or not they've got a legal right of entry. And if they haven't, they're returned to their country of departure.

LAUREN WILSON: Who funds the flights over?

CLIVE PALMER: In America, they're funded by the person. And they can't board the flight unless they've got a return ticket.

LAUREN WILSON: And what about on-

CLIVE PALMER: That saves a lot of money.

LAUREN WILSON: What about on foreign investment - the Government is wanting to lower the threshold to trigger an inquiry by the Foreign Investment Review Board. Would you support lowering that to \$15 million?

CLIVE PALMER: Well, if you did that in the United States - the United States citizens can invest in Australia up to \$1 billion without any supervision whatsoever. I think you've got to look at an equitable situation. You can't discriminate against countries. But there is a strong case to say that state-owned companies are a different category. They can come over here as state-owned companies, have a dispute with an Australian company, and go on the courts for five or six years and they don't really have to make a profit. There needs to be some quick way of resolving problems and ensuring they comply with any conditions that are issued by the FIRB.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: Okay, Mr Palmer we are out of time, but thank you for joining us today on Meet The Press.

CLIVE PALMER: A great pleasure. All the best, Paul. Keep it up.