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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Conversation with Prime Minister Bolger of New Zealand

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
Douglas Paal, Senior Director for Asian Affairs, Notetaker  
  
Prime Minister Bolger  
Terence O'Brien, Permanent Representative to the UN

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: September 23, 1991 Time 6:35 - 6:45 p.m. EDT  
Reception at the Waldorf Astoria, New York

The President: I am glad to have this quick chat with you. I have heard from our able Ambassador all about of what you have done. That's just fine. I would like to ask Brent Scowcroft here to plant a ray of hope in our relations. (C)

Gen Scowcroft: We will soon be announcing something big with respect to nuclear weapons. (C)

The President: Really, pretty big. (C)

Gen Scowcroft: What we will announce will have an effect on your policies, we believe. (C)

The President: What you have done with your law makes it complicated with us and with the Australians. And now, here we are, we are cooperating in the Gulf and there have been things that you have been willing to stick your neck out on. If this problem were not on paper, we could make progress. (C)

PM Bolger: We inherited this policy. The last person I spoke to before I left New Zealand was Della Newman and, of course, you know we have another channel as well, one familiar to you. (C)

The President: We have a good man in there, he is Brent Scowcroft's right hand man and he is my right hand man. He is going to do well. (C)

PM Bolger: Ambassador O'Brien put his hand through the hole in the wall (sic). When my people approached me about the Gulf I

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said we could not send the battalion that you sent, but we could do a little and we did it quietly. (C)

The President: What is the political situation like down there?  
(U)

PM Bolger: They are out to cut my throat. (C)

The President: Is it your guys or their guys trying to do that?  
(C)

PM Bolger: I have to get some wealth for New Zealand. We are really down in the polls, but I am totally optimistic. All the polls are against us, but I am confident that we will be reelected in two years. It is also important that we be credible, and that is why we have to stick to our policy on ship visits. (C)

Obviously you and I did not share our speech notes, but your remarks at the United Nations helped us sell our policy back home. (C)

The President: How are you doing with the Australians? (C)

PM Bolger: Ninety-nine percent of our relations are very good. And I respect Bob Hawke. (C)

The President: Bob Hawke is actually a very agreeable guy. (C)

PM Bolger: He is a good guy, only he is losing. (C)

The President: I met the other side a couple of months ago. (C)

PM Bolger: That would be John Hewson. He is a good guy. He has been over to visit and he will work with us. Yet you have to remember that Bob Hawke is very sensitive on the nuclear issue. I am not being critical of him, but he is just very sensitive on this issue. (C)

The President: I do not want to be under false colors here. I do not want to make trouble for him. I am not implying that is against Hawke's position. I would put it in a broad historical perspective. I am a World War II sort of guy. You and I, we agree on many things, let us get this one hurdle out of the way.  
(C)

PM Bolger: We do on so many things, we should get this out of the way. (C)

The President: And you have got great trout fishing, really great trout fishing, I heard from a friend of mine. (U)

PM Bolger: It is almost worth changing your policy to get to the trout. (U)

The President: Why don't you change your policy? (C)

PM Bolger: I will take you to a small lake with brown trout. They have got a lot to do and you can get out and walk around without a helicopter. (C)

The President: I would love to go to cook out. Where were we? (C)

PM Bolger: You have got to change your policy. (C)

The President: No, you have got to change your policy. (C)

PM Bolger: We have got a lot of capital out on the economic reforms. (C)

The President: We sent Dick Solomon down there. (C)

PM Bolger: That went well. (C)

The President: Dick's a good man. (C)

PM Bolger: I said to Richard that we have spend all our political capital on the economy. At the moment we are 20 points behind in the polls. There is no particular concern about this on my part, we will be elected. But you are in a better position right now to push this forward. You are more a shoo-in than me. (C)

The President: Don't believe that crap. The polls can change in an instant. (C)

PM Bolger: You did a tremendous job in the Gulf. What you did in the UNGA I said was an exciting display of international diplomacy. You had to go out, pick up nations one at a time. In terms of the future, I want to revoke the legislation. But we cannot just change overnight. We cannot turn the legislation over. I want an amendment that allows you -- and the Chief of Defense Forces of the United States -- so that you can come back. I want the Chief of New Zealand Forces to be able to participate in exercises of your forces. If I said right now that I want to change, after I am gone, the opposition instantly will repeal any changes. (C)

The President: It is precisely the same if I went out. Each has to stay where we are and know in our hearts we will get out of this. (C)

PM Bolger: I am tremendously pleased you agreed to this meeting. We cannot go out and say everything is changed. But we can say we talked about ways to work out the problem. (C)

The President: Say we had an informal chat in connection with a social occasion. Each side repeated its position and found common ground on economics and trade. We talked about how to work out the problem, but rather ... (C)

PM Bolger: We talked at a reception and had an informal chat. There were issues where we had agreement, such as our views on trade and the like. (C)

The President: Say that the President is an old guy who remembers the loyal stand of the New Zealand people. I am going to remember New Zealand during the war as long as I live. We all stood together on something pretty big. (C)

PM Bolger: I remember being sent, as a nine year old, out to milk cows. It is certainly difficult to believe U.S.-New Zealand relations have this bitter disagreement. I have a nine year old today. (C)

The President: Well, I have been married 46 years and if I am any later for dinner I am going to risk the whole thing. Thanks a lot. (C)

-----End of Conversation-----