

Key takes aim at media: Herald in gun

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The Prime Minister has taken shots at the New Zealand media, and singled the Herald out for particular criticism.

John Key spent an hour discussing issues with Newstalk ZB's Leighton Smith this morning.

Mr Key says that the media's attitude towards his Government has become more aggressive, hostile, and antagonistic.

"They won't like it if I say that but it's absolutely statement of fact. What they're doing at The Herald is very clear. They have decided they need to get their circulations from stopping falling or at least maybe try and go up," he told Leighton Smith.

"They have a new editor, and the new editor has turned the front page of the paper into a pretty sensational sort of front page and that's a deliberate strategy to get more sales at the dairy."

The Prime Minister also commented on the proposed SkyCity convention centre.

"When I came in as the incoming Minister of Tourism in 2008 they said to me 'build more infrastructure', if you want to take lumps out of tourism, the peaks and troughs, build a convention centre and other infrastructure."

Mr Key says of the five deals received through an expression of interest, four of them asked the Government to pay for the entire construction.

"SkyCity said 'here's a deal where we get more pokie machines and other minor changes to our license in return for no cash injection'."

According to the Prime Minister, the reaction prior to the election was positive – including from Labour.

"Now they're trying to change the argument and say 'it's about problem gambling'."

He believes if all pokie machines were removed, people would partake in internet gambling anyway.

The future of ACT is another issues that came up, and Mr Key believes it's an issue that may continue.

"I don't need to know all the ins and outs and I don't because all I need is a clear assurance he hasn't broken the law.

"The Local Electoral Act, which is the act that governed taking of donations for the mayoral campaign is a very liberal and loose act."

Mr Key has also defended criticism on his tax cuts decision which was a feature of his 2008 election campaign and described Greens co-leader Russell Norman as 'factually and completely incorrect'.

"There is no deficit from the change in tax that took place, what we does is he picks two bits of the tax changes and says 'there's a difference there' – very conveniently forgets all of the other increases in taxes we had," he told Leighton Smith.

He says changes to property tax alone brought in \$1 billion.



Prime Minister John Key. Photo / Mark Mitchell

"Not only are they fiscally neutral, in other words don't cost us money, we're making money out of them."

The issue of the gap between the wealthy and poor was also addressed, with Mr Key saying New Zealand has made strides in this area.

He says in the three and a half years National has been in office, after tax wages has increased by 11 percent.

John Key says the entire time Labour was in Government, after tax wages increases were less than half of that figure at four percent.

"So in real after tax terms, which is the way everybody measures this stuff, it (the gap between rich and poor) has narrowed."

The economy and getting back into surplus led to comments regarding Colin Craig.

He says Mr Craig wants to cut expenditure by putting interest back on student loans and cut working for families.

"We can do that if you want to. There will be significant implications for a large number of New Zealanders, better in my view to curb those systems as we have."

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