



PRIME MINISTER

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING
MP, DOORSTOP, ST VINCENT DE PAUL CENTRE, TOWNSVILLE, 15
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J: Are you capitalising on problems in Victoria of the Kennett Government?

PM: The Kennett Government has got no respect for its community. It's taking away benefits that people have secured over a century, not negotiating them away but taking them away in the dead of night by legislation. They never had the courage to mention them in an election campaign. So when Governments decide to do those sorts of things they forfeit community regard.

J: Do you think industrial action should be spread outside of Victoria?

PM: Apparently Mr Howard has said today that he endorses the Kennett Government's industrial relations policy, but of course he always did. What the Kennett Government has is a policy of stealth - they've crept up on people in the middle of the night without telling them. This naturally is sending very bad signals across the whole of the workforce of this country, who are worried about their terms and conditions of employment. This is not an unnatural thing.

J: Are the unions acting politically in flexing their muscles?

PM: If the unions are politically flexing their muscles, it's nothing like the political muscle-flexing that Mr Kennett is doing. He is acting entirely politically. In the end, Governments when they secure a majority in the Parliament, don't get the right to tear things down unless there's community support for it. There's been no community support for this sort of policy. They are garnering, they are taking more than the mandate gave them, so of course naturally there is a public reaction.

J: Would you be prepared to support national industrial action?

PM: I'll see what comes of it. This dispute has been made by Mr Kennett, not by us. We've had a decade long break out of industrial peace. It's been upset by the Liberal Party of Australia.

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