



## **PRIME MINISTER**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP DOORSTOP, ABC STUDIO, PERTH, 8 DECEMBER 1992**

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**J:** ... when will you begin articulating a fifth term agenda?

**PM:** Let's call it a second term agenda, and it will be in the appropriate part of the cycle in the run-up to the next election.

**J:** Do you believe this poll that gives you a seven point lead over the Opposition?

**PM:** There has been a confirmation of the polling of recent months in the various polls so, I think, three or four polls are all within range of one another and, of course, it will remain to be seen whether this month the other polls corroborate what the Newspoll is saying.

**J:** So when is the election Prime Minister?

**PM:** I've said that I think the public should get value from the Parliaments and they shouldn't be truncated and we haven't. The Government, this Parliament, is three years old in March next year so, as I said, any time after Christmas, in the new year, is basically the Parliaments end.

**J:** Would you prefer like Bob Hogg to go after the Western Australian poll?

**PM:** I don't discuss the Labor Party's tactics in public. I will keep all flexibility for us against the Liberals.

**J:** Peter Reith is blaming the industrial disruption in Victoria for the Liberal's slump. Do you think that is what has caused you to go up in the polls?

PM: No, we've been going up steadily in the second half of the year and I think it is because of the Government's policies of inclusion. The Government is seeking to have a community perspective and an emphasis on community values where the Liberal Party emphasis is on individual values. If you support the wealthy, they say the wealthy will drag the rest of us along. I think the public don't believe that. One hundred and sixty million Americans have just voted against that, they voted for community values and if you look at the progress we have made this year and on a whole range of issues in education, in transportation, in the environment, in industry, wherever you see it - and, of course, need I say in social policy - wherever you see these things, I think the public believe that this is the way to proceed, and they don't believe that lifting tax and cutting wages as Dr Hewson wants to do is going to help anybody but those who don't need help, that's the welfare. God help us when the dominant national values of Australia have to be focussed on the benefits to the wealthy.

J: Prime Minister, is the west Labor's Achilles heel and what can you do about it?

PM: That is believed, I don't know whether it is true. The polls, though, are not as strong for us here as they have been. I think the only thing to do about it is try and articulate our policies as often as I can, as I've been doing today on radio and on television. There is obviously some sort of feeling in the West Australian media which is at odds with that which is carried in the east and it is making a difference here of some kind. But how large, time will tell.

J: Mr Keating, you admitted that the Labor States were worried about the second part of your industrial relations legislation relying on the external affairs power. Are you willing to make any changes as a result of the consultations?

PM: Worry does not imply legitimacy or legitimate worry. Legitimacy is if Australia has ratified a set of conventions which the States agreed to, including the Labor states. With that ratification, why are they worried when we may legislate to impose the conditions, the international minima which those ratifications establish? I think it is a concern about something that they don't quite know all about and we intend to try and overcome that by consulting with them before we bring the Bills in.

- J:** Prime Minister following on your theme about the politics of inclusion, will you be planning to develop policies along the lines of a more managed economic intervention for next year?
- PM:** That is too leading a question because it begs an economic reply and I don't think we have the time or the inclination to provide it right here.
- J:** Just briefly Graham Richardson referred late last week to the idea of using the tax system to help our export industries, would you favour that?
- PM:** Look, the Government has established for the first time in Australia a true market economy. It may be ironic, but it has taken a Labor Government to establish a market economy. But I've always said it has done it with a Labor heart, and it's done it looking at industries and the needs of industries in particular sectors, and that's why our industry policy and the design of our policy - be it in tariff changes or tariff reforms or in other areas of policy - have been ones which I think truly take into account the interest of Australians. And the potential of industries in areas, say telecommunications, ship building, pharmaceutical, are all what one has termed interventionist policies. But we will never turn our back upon what is essentially a market structure.
- J:** Prime Minister, back to the polls for a second. Do these polls imply that Australians accept an eleven per cent unemployment figure?
- PM:** No, I don't think that at all and nor they should, but I think that they believe that the Government wants to get back to what it does best and that is creating jobs as we showed throughout nearly a decade of the '80s. We've kept most of the employment of the '80s and we want to go back to what we're doing best. I think the public think we are trying to do that. The 'One Nation' package was about stimulating the economy and pushing it back into growth; last week's national accounts indicate quite strongly that a government stimulus is working, is the principal reason why the economy is recovering and growing as it is, and I think the public take comfort from that. I think they also take comfort from the policies of inclusion, that we all go along together and we don't develop an underclass, we don't let the unemployed look after themselves without unemployment benefits, we pull those who are not well off, or need help, along with the rest of us; and we are not focussing, as the Liberal Party is, upon the wealthy, saying if they are well looked after, in their slipstream the rest of us can find some nourishment. I think that that sort of sterile stuff, which we've seen come in cycles right throughout the century, is now at this point rejected by nearly

all western governments and certainly by this government. I think the public agree with that.

J: With all the polls moving strongly in the same direction, do you think people now have made a final decision about John Hewson?

PM: I don't know, there is only one poll that matters in the end, I've never been too worried about opinion polls though I admit I prefer to be in front than behind. But what have the Liberals got to offer? They say, "if we tax your food, your clothing and your services, we will put the proceeds off to abolishing pay roll tax and cutting petrol," and we are supposed to be naively believing that the cutting of payroll tax and the reduction in petrol excise will change Australia. That all of a sudden will spring a new reinvigorated, modern economy from doing those things, cutting petrol prices and cutting payroll tax. Well of course it is nonsense and I think the public realises basically the same sterile old stuff from the same tired old group. That is, they start on this premise - how can we push more national income into the wealthy? And the current trick is a consumption tax, a goods and services tax. Now that's what Dr Hewson stands for and as well as that he stands for cutting peoples wages, by pushing eight million Australians onto individual employment contracts and I think the public is saying, this is dangerous, this is not good, it is not wise, it is not inclusive, it says nothing about the sense of community, it is partisan and it is dangerous, and I don't think they like it.

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