



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
INTERVIEW WITH JOHN SHOVELAN, "AM PROGRAM", ABC RADIO,
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- JS:** Japan wants it to be flexible, Malaysia wants it to be voluntary, we want a firm commitment. There seems to be conflicting approaches to exactly where we are going.
- PM:** Not after today there is not. There is a very comprehensive action agenda and the declaration - which, of course, run to 30-odd pages - were all agreed. So while it may be true, the question you put reflected the position as they came into this, coming out of it they have agreed on these very firm dates of free trade by 2010 for developed countries and 2020 for developing countries, and the means of getting there. It is an absolutely outstanding result.
- JS:** Well there was some question whether there was going to be much in it for the Australian farmer. What is the result for them?
- PM:** Well the answer is there is much in it for everybody. It will mean we will be able to see the Asia-Pacific continue growing at this rate because you see as these very large economies like China start to get a critical mass, the resourcing requirements in minerals, in energy, in food, are going to be larger than we have ever seen before. So unless we get the trade barriers down now, the impediments straightened out, we won't see the Asia-Pacific growth continuing the way it has been. But for it to continue at that pace and at the same time have Australia integrated into it, is the biggest change in Australia's trade position in our history.
- JS:** Can't the sceptics, though, still justifiably argue that it is long on rhetoric and short on action because essentially nobody is really giving certainly in Australia's case, we are not actually doing that we haven't already announced?
- PM:** That is not true at all. In fact what we have said in this statement is that the action will begin now. That what the declaration and the action agenda require is that Ministers will start to put together their

well let me read from it, "Each APEC economy will begin to develop its action plan immediately after the Osaka Leaders Meeting." This is for each individual country's plan for next year in The Philippines. "Overall implementation of action plans will begin as of January 1997." You can't get it more specific than that and, of course, the down-payments: what we have done here today is put a very big down-payment on the Uruguay Round outcomes. So, as a group of countries, we are advancing - as distinct from the Europeans and others - we are advancing the whole of the Uruguay WTO Round. And countries here today - like Indonesia, China, others, Japan - put very large deregulatory trade liberalising packages down and so to has Australia.

JS: Can I ask about a couple of the personalities of the meeting.? One that wasn't there, Bill Clinton, and Dr Mahathir. Is Dr Mahathir still recalcitrant about APEC?

PM: Now look focus on the big issues. I mean you can't get an Australian journo off an old slogan. Here you are faced with one of the great post-war trade changes and you are asking me about something Dr Mahathir said two years ago. Dr Mahathir signed up today to this process and the atmosphere of trust and goodwill and general good-naturedness amongst the leaders is what is driving this process. The problem about trade and economic integration in the past is that the people involved have been Trade Ministers or officials and, try as they will, they can't get the authority that heads of government or leaders have. So to get the leadership at heads of government and heads of state level of the whole Pacific-Rim and get them together in a very friendly environment, driving a process of this quality, is what has made all the difference and it gives the authority to the Trade Ministers, it gives the authority to the bureaucracy, to the Trade and Foreign Affairs Departments and, as a consequence, the Asia-Pacific will lead the world in open markets and that is why already over half the world's production is in the Asia-Pacific. In ten years time it will be 60 odd per cent of the world's production and when this is implemented by 2010 and 2020, 75 per cent of the world's production will be in our backyard.

JS: Can I ask you about the industrial dispute at home just briefly. What is your reaction to Bob Hawke going back into the Industrial Court as ACTU advocate?

PM: The important thing is the dispute itself, not who the ACTU advocate is. The important thing is that the Government has taken the dispute over. Last week the company went its own way as it has done now for a number of years to try, in a discriminatory way, to take unions out of their sites so that they can control the sites without any group representation by trade unions. The ACTU for its part, didn't confine the dispute to the CRA, it broadened it to a waterfront dispute which it should not have done. I thought we could have this resolved last week and the indications from the ACTU and the company was that it could

be resolved. When that didn't happen I had a number of conversations from Osaka with the Minister for Industrial Relations and he and I agreed that he should speak to the President of the Arbitration Commission, President O'Connor, to suggest or to have the President consider whether a compulsory conference was a reasonable thing to do given the national interest considerations here. On balance, Justice O'Connor decided that and she has called a compulsory conference, as you know, over the weekend and for Monday.

As a result of the weekend's meeting, the waterfront dispute is off. There is now a dispute limited to CRA and in the Commission tomorrow the matter to be considered is the question of discrimination or non-discrimination around equal pay for equal work. Given the Commission's history and its remit I can hardly see what avenue there would be for the Commission to say that there would be unequal pay for equal work.

So, I don't think it matters very much who the representative of the ACTU is. Whether it is Bob Hawke or Bill Kelty or whoever. I think almost anyone can get this proposition over the line in the ambience of the Commission's Act.

JS: John Howard says that it is very embarrassing for you that Bob Hawke had to be called in to settle a dispute or to try to settle a dispute that the Government has failed to settle.

PM: He is not settling a dispute. The dispute was taken over by the Government. It is the Government's Act and the Government's processes which have got the dispute settled to this point. I mean, the waterfront dispute off and nobody has gone to the Commission, not Bob Hawke, not anybody. So, it is quite wrong for Mr Howard to say that. I mean, it suits him to make this tawdry political point, but let the public judge his remarks. The thing is the Government is going to take no nonsense from CRA or the ACTU and it has evoked the proper processes and if the ACTU feel more comfortable about having Bob Hawke represent them, that is fine. But the case in question now, the residual matter, about equal work for equal pay, I think, almost anyone can win that case because I doubt very much the Commission, having decided to call a compulsory conference can say other than that work of equal value should have equal pay.

JS: Just a last question, do you have any sort of advice or wishes for Mr Hawke?

PM: Not at all, but I mean Bob has been in the self laceration business in recent years and any balm the Government can spread on it, I'm sure will be appreciated by him and be well meant by us.

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