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PRIME MINISTER

11/96

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP

MR HOWARD OBFUSCATES WITH TELEVISION DEBATES

Mr Howard is now obfuscating with my proposal for nationally televised debates.

The Federal Director of the Liberal Party, Mr Robb, has told the ALP's National Secretary, Mr Gray, that Mr Howard will not debate me with the ABC's choice of moderator.

I have told the ABC through Mr Gray that I am prepared to have two head-to-head debates with Mr Howard telecast by the ABC and moderated by a person nominated by the ABC.

Mr Howard and Mr Robb are also backing away from debates between me, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Treasurer with our opposite numbers in the Coalition and between me, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister and our opposite numbers.

Mr Howard does not want to be seen on national television in the company of Mr Fischer, Mr Downer and Mr Costello - because of what it would reveal about the weakness of any government led by him.

If Mr Howard says he has the team to lead Australia he should not be afraid to be seen with them; to show them to the public with him.

CANBERRA
28 January 1996