



PRIME MINISTER

EXCERPT OF TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR SYDNEY MORNING HERALD
WITH MIKE STEKETEE AND PETER BOWERS - 9 December 1986

E & O E - Proof Only

STEKETEE: Is the natural unpopularity that the Treasurer has suffered, particularly during the difficult economic times, been aggravated in Paul Keating's case, by the blind spot over failing to file his tax return?

PM: The Treasurer has obviously suffered as a result of that. It is something that he acknowledges - that he has suffered as a result of that. And inevitably, there is some negative impact for the Government. It would be futile for either myself or Paul to deny that. He doesn't deny it and nor do I.

BOWERS: Prime Minister, you have said the Treasurer should spend more time talking to people in supermarkets, I think. Do you think it is time that the boy from Bankstown went home?

PM: Let me say this. In terms of where Paul Keating's commitments are, I think he has been done a terrible injustice in the assumption that he has lost a commitment to the traditional Labor electorate. This is one of the great injustices of Australian politics. And I know from being the person who has sat there year after year, in the ERC processes, just how real Paul Keating's commitments are to the traditional Labor values. That gets ignored or neglected because of the extraordinary capacity he has to deal with the business and the financial community, not only in this country but internationally. The fact that he has that capacity, to a hugely demonstrable, degree carries no implication, and indeed it is not right to say that he has lost his traditional commitments. Now to assume, therefore, that he needs to be physically, at some point, to remember his values, is an unfairness to him. Now I guess, objectively, it would be the case that it would be easier for him politically if he were back there. But, of course, the point he makes is that to do the job of Treasurer of this country is one which requires, almost more than any other position, a relatively continual presence in Canberra. The third point I would make is that no-one knows more than I do the deep commitment that this man has to his family. And it is traditionally appropriate for politicians to assert the closeness that they have - the inspiration they ... from their family - and it is fair enough for politicians to do that. I know, from my own personal and intimate knowledge of the Keating family, how true it is in his case. Those are

the things that are relevant in full answer to your question.
But I acknowledge that in political terms, yes it probably
would be easier for him if he were back there.

BOWERS: ... wran's offer of resignation ...