



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP  
DOORSTOP MELBOURNE 19 MARCH 1992

EG&E PROOF COPY

PM: Well, I think that it is a very significant victory for the processes of democracy, for President de Klerk in particular, and we hope now that we will see a reconvening of CODESA, and that work will proceed to a new constitution, and I think upon those things happening, the rest of the world, the Commonwealth in particular, to look further at the sanctions.

J: When do you think those sanctions realistically could be lifted?

PM: I think as we get through those processes, when we see a reconvening of CODESA, to look at the working parties work, and to see then what adoptions there are of that work, I think that is the time. A lot of sanctions of course, have already been lifted, people to people sanctions and transport. But in the area of trade and finance I think we will follow generally the Commonwealth's policy which was to watch what happens inside South Africa, and look at the movement towards a new constitution.

J: Have you sent the message to Mr de Klerk?

PM: I will be yes.

J: What will you be saying?

PM: Well, congratulating him on his important win, that the referendum result will see which he has been pursuing. That is for a change and to be able to negotiate on behalf of the white community, to establish new constitutional arrangements. We will also be watching for what is said in South Africa about the events over the last 24 hours, and what they think from the ANC and others about prospects for the future.

J: Mr Keating you have been suggesting we should get away from the Commonwealth and not be caught by the British cringe. Why are we waiting for the Commonwealth to move?

PM: Well we are not waiting for the Commonwealth to move, it is a matter that we have been part of the Commonwealth policy, an international policy, you can't read Commonwealth, read Britain as you know, for a very long period in this, Margaret Thatcher was the one not involved in this, but Australians played a leading role in these negotiations and discussions over a considerable period of time.

J: Senator Evans said he thought sanctions could be lifted very soon.

PM: Well we will see what progress is made, and there is going to be, I think, a reconvening of CODESA probably in early to mid April.

J: Mr Keating Phil Cleary said he probably won't stand as a candidate for Wills now, where does that leave the ALP, and what are your chances for success?

PM: Well our chances of success I think, are good Bill Kardamitsis is a person of the community, a people person, somebody who truly represents this place, is interested in it, and while the going has been tough for the Labor Party in Victoria, we hope we can win, but it will be decided by a small margin.

J: But you won't have those preferences from Mr Cleary ..?

PM: Mr Cleary is entitled to make his own mind up about those things, but the Labor Party will campaign on its policy, which has been to induce a recovery, to come out of the recession, induce a recovery, create jobs and employment and get Victoria working again. A very large part of the One Nation statement was concentrated in Victoria, that is trying to rebuild the Victorian infrastructure, provide it with new industries like transport, like tourism, even though they exist here now, to develop them properly in Victoria, for Victoria to get its share of those things. And TAFE, we have just come out of a TAFE college, and we will make, as I said in the Statement, TAFE one of the strong reeds of Australian education. And a significant proportion of that \$750 million is going to be spent in Victoria.

J: In airing the Delacretaz letters hasn't there been a serious breach of parliamentary tradition?

PM: No. Look the Liberal Party is entirely embarrassed about this. I mean, overnight apparently, Dr Hawson and Mr Kroger had to have a meeting about whether they would pull their candidate out of the race. And they decided to leave him in. And I notice that Dr Hewson said he is happy with Mr Kroger's report. That is, he is happy apparently with Mr Delacretaz saying that social security should be cut by 30 per cent, that pensions ought to be cut by 30 per cent, that we ought to send

migrants home, that we shouldn't fund sheltered workshops for the disabled if they compete with any business of which their candidate is involved. You know, I was quite interested to see Dr Hewson say he was happy with Mr Kroger's report, and the report, of course, had to comprehend the policies which their candidate has proposed.

J: Some would say that airing the letters was a dirty trick.

PM: Look, the thing is, I don't know where the letters came from. I was shown them by a Channel 10 journalist and I gave a comment on the spot. But the fact of the matter is, I can understand the Liberal Party is embarrassed. They have got a candidate in the field who wants to cut social security payments by 30 per cent. Who wants to cut pensions back, who wants to send migrants home, who wants to cut payments to sheltered workshops.

J: You don't think you have breached tradition at all?

PM: I haven't, no, anyway this is a public debate. I mean, what is the Liberal Party afraid of? They are afraid of the policies of their candidate. I mean, here they are now fomenting, going on about privacy. This is a public debate. It is a by-election. And they don't want the public to know that their candidate believes in a 30 per cent cut in social security and sending migrants home.

J: Mr Keating, will you accept that this by-election is a mini-referendum on the One Nation versus Fightback packages?

PM: I don't accept that, no, but a victory for the Liberal Party here would certainly make the goods and services tax at 15 per cent impost on the lives of all Australians one step closer. And that is why I think that the electors of Wills have a heavy responsibility here to make certain that that impost, that shift in our lifestyle which the GST would bring is not endorsed here in Wills.

J: Housing finance figures show the big drop in housing finance approvals today, does that mean we should be reducing interest rates yet again?

PM: I haven't seen the figures.

J: They are down to 7 per cent, does that surprise you?

PM: Well they move, they were up a month ago as I remember. They move but you can't take one month's figures on any of these things.

J: Mr Keating, after your strong statement of racism how do you feel about the call by Aboriginal leader in Brisbane today, Bob Weatherall, for a referendum?

PM: I haven't seen it.

J: .. to establish an Aboriginal nation in Australia....

PM: I just haven't seen it. We have got these reconciliation processes in place. I think they are good processes. I think Australian's are conscientious about their relations and the tolerance which is part and parcel in this country is, I think, evidence to that. I mean, look inside this TAFE college, how many various people of different ethnic origins are here, part and parcel of this community. It just speaks for itself.

J: Mr Keating, what is your reaction to Peter Reith's comments about Bernie Fraser in front of the international banking community that he is a political stuge?

PM: Well I mean, this is the sort of irresponsibility of the Liberal Party trafficks in. One of the great pleasures of my professional life was working with Bob Johnston, the former Governor of the Reserve Bank who was appointed by John Howard. But the Liberals have no respect for conventions. They want to tear and rip at people and institutions. Mr Reith was saying a day or so ago that he wanted to knee cap the public service, now he wants to be disloyal to Australia and again in front of a large and significant audience of business people from South East Asia to say that their central bank is politically interfered with, which it isn't. And the Governor rebuked him instantly, apparently.

J: You were the one who was saying the Reserve Bank was in your pocket?

PM: No, I have said very clearly in the Parliament the balance between the Government's prerogatives and the Bank Board's prerogatives and the Reserve Bank Act. The Bank was supporting the policies of the Government at the time.

J: One of your own supporters, Mr Punch, has recently been very critical of the public service. Do you endorse that sort of sentiment?

PM: The public service has served this Government particularly well as I think it has served most governments well. And to have someone like Mr Reith crudely putting about essentially blatant untruths for sort of crass political purposes, but taking that crassness to a meeting of international bankers is irresponsible and disloyal to the country.

J: What about Mr Punch's comments?

PM: He didn't talk in those terms. He didn't direct his remarks about the government.

J: His point was that the Government last year got captured by the public service.

PM: Well I don't believe that.

J: It seems Mr Carr has backed Mr Hewson's thoughts on immigration ....

PM: I think we will just end it there.

ENDS