



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP,
INTERVIEW WITH STAN GRANT 'REAL LIFE', 3 JUNE 1992

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SG: Prime Minister, welcome.

PM: Thank you Stan.

SG: John Howard thrown out of Parliament today, but isn't he essentially right, that politicians should stay out of the APPM issue?

PM: He got thrown out for being duplicitous. He was telling us that we should not be involved in an industrial dispute while he was around the back door talking to the owners of the business - to APPM. This is the sort of industrial mayhem that Dr Hewson and Mr Howard would give us if there industrial relations policy were to be the policy of the country. That is, the 'battle for Burnie', as it has been called, would be a feature of the Australian landscape.

SG: But you could hardly say the policy at the moment is working. I mean the Industrial Relations Commission ordered the workers back and that's been ignored.

PM: By the company doing Hewson and Howard's bidding in terms of their policy. This has been the quietest period in industrial relations probably in 20 years. Industrial disputes are a fraction of what they were in the early 1980s and the Accord model, the consensus model has worked like a charm. These silly fellows want to wreck it all by refusing unions the right to talk to employers, only an ordinary worker they say can talk to the employer. What chance has one working person got with an employer? None.

SG: It doesn't help Prime Minister does it if your own Minister, Peter Cook, starts talking about blood on the streets though does it?

PM: Well they have got picket lines, it's all because of this confrontationist approach. The truth is what's Dr Hewson got to present the Australian public with? A GST tax a 15 per cent tax, on their goods and services, their food and clothing and an industrial

relations policy which cancels federal awards, knocks off their holiday pay, cuts their rates of pay and conditions and the only recourse they have is that they individually can negotiate with the company, not the union. This is what APPM is about.

SG: On another issue Prime Minister, your failure to lodge a company tax return, a company return in time, that's not ideal is it? Shouldn't we expect a bit more from the Prime Minister?

PM: Well that's right. It's a company information return and they should be on time. But as I made the point today Dr Hewson again, who has promised us supposedly a higher order politics in a day when the Government has just revolutionised television in this country and yesterday revolutionised the airlines system, he spent the night having a Senator, Senator Baume, up talking about my company return. And what did I find today? That Dr Hewson's company return was late for three consecutive years and so was Mr Reith's.

SG: You're talking about your moves in policy though Sir, but today you were not talking about policy, you were more interested in attacking the man.

PM: Come on you weren't there. The first question during Question Time I announced the Government's new revolutionary television policy to allow Pay TV, to allow all Australians a chance to pay and watch blockbuster movies and sport, Hollywood and world movies the moment they are released on television. That change was announced today at Question Time and what did I do - I got a question from Mr Peacock for Dr Hewson asking me about my company return and the questioner, Dr Hewson, has actually not put his in for three consecutive years.

SG: Yes, but two wrongs don't make a right.

PM: No, but the duplicity of him, the double standards, and the conceit of it is he has Senator Baume raising this lousy issue in the Senate last night, he has Mr Peacock do his dirty work today and what we find is on the very topic he's asking me his returns have been late for three years. Meanwhile, what was I doing last night? Putting together a new Pay TV policy for Australia.

SG: On that issue of Pay TV, you announced it on Sunday, today there has been a big change to the policy that you announced on Sunday, making policy on the run is that the right sort ...?

PM: No, come on Stan. This is an area where there's been a policy mess for twenty years. What we saw today is a policy where we'll have a new entrant

into the media of Australia in Pay TV who does not belong to the newspaper groups, the television groups or the telecommunications group.

- SG: But clearly what you outlined on the weekend has been changed today.
- PM: It has changed today, but today is better. What I outlined on the weekend was a way where the television networks were to be included in the first round of the Pay TV satellite transmission company. It's much better with them out of it and them having the option of going 100 per cent into a network of their own, and that's what we came up with today.
- SG: The image here though Mr Keating, over the last couple of weeks you must have been squirming as you saw the Marshall Islands affair, Ros Kelly signing something that she hadn't even read.
- PM: We had a couple of bad weeks, but again look at the Government's recovery. Look at the vast change in airlines yesterday. Qantas acquiring Australian Airlines and it being sold to the public. Ansett becoming a dual domestic and international carrier, a total revolution in Australian air travel.
- SG: So as far as your concerned there wasn't so much damage done over the last couple of weeks, it seemed to be going from one bungle to the next.
- PM: You know the policy here, the dogs may bark, but the caravan moves on and the caravan moved on to a revolution in air travel and, really, a revolution in television. I mean we've adopted today a policy which will allow fibre optic cable, cable television as well as satellite pay television, to be distributed to the people of Australia. That will mean that Australians over time, will not only be able to see blockbuster movies at home, sport, news, but as well as that they will be able to operate the system back. They will be able to deal with their bank at home, they will be able to order their shopping from home, they'll be able to get information through the fibre optic cable. All of those technological possibilities were opened up today in this policy while reserving for the satellite pay television, a system to give Australians good entertainment without having the networks involved.
- SG: Mr Keating, just finally, the polls, is the gap too great?
- PM: No, not at all. You'll notice also yesterday Stan, again on the substance, the National Accounts came out. The economy has now been growing for three consecutive quarters.

- SG: Sure, but it's a matter isn't it of getting that across to the people. Now the polls.
- PM: Yes, but they see the news. Don't underestimate them, they see the news, they hear programs like this, they know the economy is back into recovery.
- SG: And you see the polls.
- PM: And as that changes it will change the political perception. As Dr Hewson is sort of playing the man and not the ball, taking our political system down to worry about company returns and the rest instead of worrying about the big issues like technical and further education, like television, like airlines, like the economy, as he traffics in that low order politics you'll see the polls switch around.
- SG: Prime Minister, it hardly seems like you to be complaining about playing the man?
- PM: Well who asked me today the lousy, dirty question? Mr Peacock.
- SG: Who called Dr Hewson a fraud and a cheat?
- PM: I did. Do you know why? Because he was telling Australians in the House of Representatives that politicians shouldn't be in an industrial dispute when he's been talking to them privately. What else would you call him?
- SG: So as far as your concerned you're prepared to get out of the gutter?
- PM: That's not the gutter. Use your sense Stan, that's not the gutter. When a major political leader says to its constituency, the public, we believe that the political party shouldn't be involved in this dispute and yet we catch them having dealt with the principles of the APPM company in secret, don't you think that is sort of double standard and duplicity should be referred to by me? Of course it should. That's not the gutter, that's just simply making clear. But who asked the lousy personal question, as always - the Liberal Party. In this case Dr Hewson didn't have the decency to do it himself, he had Mr Peacock do it. And then what do I find on the very same issue he hasn't put his company returns in for three years, well.
- SG: OK Prime Minister we'll leave it there. Thank you very much for your time.
- PM: Good Stan.
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