



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
DOORSTOP, ST VINCENT DE PAUL, BANKSTOWN
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J: ... jobs not second hand clothes and structural unemployment to the turn of the century?

PM: They want jobs that are going to last, not slick solutions. Agencies like St Vincent De Paul look after that segment of society which in one way or another slip through the social security net. But could you imagine these agencies with people tipped out of the unemployment benefit as the Liberals want to do after nine months. The tens of thousands of Australians who would no longer be supported by the social security system would have to come to these places for basic sustenance. It's more than St Vincent De Paul or the Smith family or the Salvation Army can wear, they do a marvellous community job but they can't take the place of the social security system, which is what John Hewson wants them to do.

J: Mr Keating do you accept some responsibility for St Vincent De Paul's claim that this will be the worst Christmas since the Depression?

PM: I hope it isn't, but the thing is the Labor Government has got a social security safety net out there, I think now second to none in the world, and part of that is access and equity in health through Medicare, poor families can bulk bill their doctor at no cost, John Hewson wants to knock it right out of the way. People on unemployment benefits, knock it right out of the way. We have got to keep the primary national values of Australia, community values, where we are looking after those not well off and those who are poor and those who are sick because I think as a society if we are at the point where we are not looking after these people what sort of society would we be.

J: Peter Cook says he doesn't support the national strike that is planned, what is your view on it?

PM: The Liberal Party of Australia are bent upon turning ten years of industrial peace into industrial warfare. My very, very strong contention is that Australia can only progress together. We can only get along, business and labour - that's l a b o u r - in a compact of cooperation. But internecine battling reminiscent of the '60s and '70s courtesy of Kennett and Hewson will always lead Australia into a low growth path and industrial disputation. It is their fight it is time they put it to bed.

J: Do you think the High Court has over-stepped the mark?

PM: No. The High Court has got very clear imperatives under the Constitution and the High Court is entitled to sit in judgement on all the matters brought before it and make judgements without Prime Ministers giving doorstep comments about their work.

J: Will we have a referendum though, on dual citizenship?

PM: I don't know, that is an issue but it has got to be ranked with the other big issues of Australia.

J: Do you have a comment on the September quarter trade figures today?

PM: Well they show again this sort of enormous driver that exports have become. The driving force of exports, if you look through the statisticians release as I did you will see the rural commodity is flat, non-rural commodity is bursting away earning for Australia in exports. The question that the community has to ask is where would we be now if we were simply relying, as the Liberals wanted us to rely, on rural commodities without that burgeoning export sector now in manufactures and services, which is out there paying Australia's way in the world.

J: Will the Government have to revise its growth figures now?

PM: That's not to do with the balance of payments.

J: Do you think the Commission wants greater microeconomic reform? Do you think we have had enough microeconomic reform?

PM: The Industry Commission is a ginger group. They are a paid for, Government paid, ginger group. And what we expect ginger groups to do is ginger things up, and that's what they do.

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J: Do you believe people should go on strike on Monday, yes or no?

PM: Don't give me simple questions. The Liberal Party wants a national conflagration on industrial relations, that's what they are trying to give us and they are the only people who can take it off.

J: ... do you agree with that?

PM: It is not a matter of ... my opinion on this, the primary matter here is the Liberal Party of Australia. It wants to turn ten years of industrial peace into industrial warfare and it is for Mr Kennett and Dr Hewson to reconsider their position.

J: Have you got a Christmas message for the unemployed?

PM: My message is that the only way Australia will deal with unemployment is with a growth strategy like the Government ran right through the '80s. We're the only Party in Australia committed to growing the Australian economy and growing employment. And the quicker we can get back to that, the quicker we will add to the 1.8 million jobs we created in the 1980s.

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