



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP,
DOORSTOP, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, 3 DECEMBER 1992**

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J: Prime Minister, does Mr Kennett have the right to sack any more public servants down there in Victoria as a result of your increasing the power of the IRC?

PM: I heard John Howard today talk about the Kennett mandate. I think the important thing to remember here is this Federal Labor Government went to an election with Accord Mark VI constructed in the actual weeks of the election program, which talked about minimum rates for Australians, and all the other commitments we'd made in the past, the supplementary payments for low paid workers, with all of that economic and social focus on those issues. By contrast, Mr Kennett had no such declarations in his campaign, in fact he lead people up the garden path, not only not seeking a mandate but trying to assuage their fears about what he might introduce.

There's only one mandate in industrial relations that's clear to the community, it's the mandate enjoyed by this Government. And that's the mandate which will have its way in Australia while ever I'm Prime Minister. So the States can do what they like, those who want to break those sort of things. And of course not all do, you won't see it in the Labor States. If Mr Kennett wants to go his wilful way with the Liberal's ideological agenda, well let him, and no doubt he will still cause industrial disruption in his own areas of administration by virtue of his own attitude.

But we are giving Victorian employees an opportunity now to register themselves under the federal jurisdiction, thereby letting the Industrial Relations Commission protect their conditions. Also for those people who might want to avail themselves of coverage under federal jurisdiction, we're doing that under external affairs power.

So it is the reasonable extension of the commitments we gave at an election, with Accord Mark VI and all the tenets thereof, and we are I think the only government in Australia which has specifically gone to an election with very clear commitments about industrial relations. Certainly the Kennett Government didn't and they can't rely upon that now.

J: Do you take his threat seriously that he is going to renege on the financial deal with the Commonwealth?

PM: Renege in what way?

J: (inaudible)

PM: It's one thing for Mr Kennett to be talking about putting the industrial relations of his State in jeopardy, it's another of him talking of exacerbating his financial worries. He has got to make his own decisions about financial policy. We've required him to do nothing other than to agree to a debt reconstruction plan. He did agree to that and he agreed to that for us agreeing to the borrowings which were disagreed with the former Government. As far as I'm concerned, that matter is closed.

J: Prime Minister, how much extra funding will be given to SBS Radio to enable them to set up this new network?

PM: That which is sufficient to do it. I can't give the dollars and cents, but it's a very important decision, I think, for multicultural Australia – a second radio network for the ethnic communities of this country so that they will have access to programs in their own languages, which to a large extent is now, if not being denied them, very much truncated by the growth in ethnic languages on the existing network.

J: What are the practical factors that preclude a referendum at the next election?

PM: There are a number and I don't think now is the time to go into it.

J: You are being accused of vote-catching with this move for this second frequency, aren't you?

PM: If we want to be accused of vote-catching we could have unveiled it during the Wills bi-election. No, this is the right time to do it. As the number of ethnic languages on the SBS Radio Network has expanded, there was a need for another network, and I think this meets the need.

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