



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP
DOORSTOP, JOHN CURTIN HOUSE, CANBERRA, 4 DECEMBER 1992**

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- J:** What do you think of Jeff Kennett's plan to put industrial relations on the Premiers' Conference agenda?
- PM:** We are not superstitious, we'll have anything on the agenda they want on the agenda.
- J:** Will you put it at the top now?
- PM:** And we are quite happy to discuss these details with State governments, but we intend to go ahead with our agenda.
- J:** What about John Fahey's threat to boycott.
- PM:** I didn't hear him say that, but boycott what?
- J:** Boycott the Premiers' Conference.
- PM:** John has got to decide whether he is a Premier or whether he is a court jester and if he wants to be in the game that's where the meeting is, he can be there if he wants to.
- J:** Are you concerned about the atmosphere at the Premiers' Conference given those comments?
- PM:** It's all very good for John Fahey to say that it's not co-operative. Three weeks ago he was standing in Sydney on his way to Acapulco attacking John Dawkins over loan raising from Victoria which had nothing to do with him whatsoever. He has not behaved like Nick Greiner's behaved, he's into

every argument around the place and then he wants to talk about co-operation.

J: Given that are you concerned about the atmosphere of the Conference?

PM: Not at all, no, no, not a bit.

J: Prime Minister, how concerned are you that John Halfpenny intends to continue industrial action in Victoria?

PM: The Commonwealth's legislation will give access to the federal jurisdiction for people registered under state awards and that will deal with the problem of the decline of the awards system in Victoria, but it won't deal with a recalcitrant government in a position of conflict with its own employees. One will never solve those issues from Canberra.

J: So it's all right for unions to continue protest there whatever the effects on the federal economy?

PM: No, no just get this right. If Mr Kennett wants to decimate the school system and the hospital system he has to wear the public consequences of that. In just the same way Nick Greiner had to wear it in schools in NSW, you can't expect magic and people to lay down in the face of a government which is just taking no heed of community attitudes.

J: Mr Kennett says that Mr Halfpenny is giving you a two finger salute.

PM: I haven't even spoken to Mr Halfpenny about this matter, not once, not at any stage. This is simply a matter that the Kennett government had no mandate whatsoever to destroy the awards system, none. This government had a very clear mandate in 1990 not just to maintain the award system but to maintain minimum rates, we are in there to protect that mandate and if Mr Kennett wishes to go his way then the Commonwealth is just doing what I think is both sensible and reasonable to restore confidence in Victoria and to see our national recovery going. I noticed today in today's press that the Japanese economy is in negative growth for two quarters. There's the United States limping along, the second largest economy negative growth, we are growing at two per cent, we are on the way. Jeff Kennett and his mates want to put us back.

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