



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. P J KEATING, M.P., NEWPORT BEACH, U.S.A. WEDNESDAY 17 NOVEMBER, 1993**

### **E & OE COPY**

**PM:** Today, Dr Hewson has sold out the indigenous people of Australia. He has sold out the fair and decent traditions of his country and he has sold out on the hopes and expectations of those moderates in the Liberal Party who thought he might have turned over a new leaf after the election. What has happened here is, out of weakness rather than out of strength, Dr Hewson has caved in to states' interests. In this case one state, Western Australia, while mouthing the rhetoric of the High Court decision saying he supports the High Court decision. But yes, Dr Hewson, but only so long as it stands beyond extinguishment from the actions of some errant state.

The only way that we can bring certainty to this issue is to pass the Federal Government's, my Government's, legislation. And I can think of nothing worse than a Senate inquiry. After spoiling for a year, going around Aboriginal communities accepting their hospitality and their goodwill, taking them down while all the time conniving in the possible pilfering of their title, he's now recommending a Senate inquiry. The best thing Dr Hewson can do is to get his shameful speech over and done with so that more serious people in his Party can get on with trying to rebuild it.

**J:** How much harder is this going to make the task of getting acceptance for your Mabo legislation?

**PM:** Well, I had hoped that the Aboriginal people of this country could have gone, with this legislation, with the support of all major parties. I mean, isn't it time after two hundred years that these people - having been given a private title right by the highest court in our country - could have expected both major parties, the Coalition and the Government of this country, to have gone to the Parliament with legislation which was unanimous? This

- 2 -

is not so. It will mean that the Government will persist with its legislation, it will succeed with its legislation. It's fair, workable legislation and it doesn't extinguish the rights to title in the way in which Dr Hewson's proposals would.

- J: Do you have any reason to believe that the Greens and the Democrats will definitely support it, because obviously you'll need them now, it's crucial?
- PM: Well, we'll need them but it's the Aboriginal people who will need them. The Aboriginal and Islander community in our country will need them. And I believe that every fair thinking person in the Senate will see the legislation for what it is - a decent and honorable attempt at settling an issue of two hundred years in the making.
- J: Prime Minister, it looks as though the NAFTA vote will go the President's way. What are the implications of that for the APEC meeting?
- PM: Well, I think they are very good implications. If the President wins it means the winds of freer trade are blowing in the United States. And what the President will say is confirm what Secretary Christopher said today and that is America will be looking West of the Pacific, leaving behind some of its Eurocentricity and taking up the great growth markets of the Asia-Pacific where the preponderance of American trade already exists. In making a decision in favour of the North American Free Trade Agreement the Congress will be, in fact, endorsing the President's view of engagement with the rest of the world rather than the fallback to protectionism, an America-first policy which would not have delivered higher incomes and more jobs to Americans.
- J: Prime Minister, do you think you'll be able to avoid a Senate inquiry as Dr Hewson has asked for now, or do you think you'll have to go through with one?
- PM: I think that anyone who has interests for Aboriginal and Islander people in Australia can best fulfill them by passing this legislation. Not by shifting off to some Senate Committee. I mean, what light is the Senate going to shed on this? A bunch of biased Liberals at best, or weak Liberals at the worst, who failed to stop Dr Hewson, poring over the Government's principal legislation. Where is that going to get us?
- J: The Democrats and the Greens have shown that they're attracted to Senate inquiries, in the past. What is your message to them at this moment?
- PM: Well, I think my message is to listen to the Aboriginal people of this country. Listen to them and let them tell the Senators that they want the Bill passed. And listen to the representative people who genuinely represent institutional groups within the Aboriginal and Islander community who themselves represent very large constituencies. And they'll say, "Pass the Bill".

ends.