



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
INTERVIEW WITH FRAN KELLY, ABC 'WORLD TODAY', MONDAY,
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FK: Prime Minister, you have accused the Liberal party of now being bereft of policies, but isn't it truer to say that they are just moving closer to yours?

PM: No, their strategy is to have no policy. This is a very strange political party which has actually had a weekend meeting to develop a strategy to have no policies. 'Fightback' - the policy which they said was too good to be changed, which Dr Hewson said he would resign over if it was changed - is now, he said, dead and buried and had they won the 1993 election he would be putting it into place. So, the policies which he said were critical to Australia and Australians he would have, had he won the election, be now implementing, he has now said are dead and buried, they were wrong and they don't need them. So, basically what's happened to the Liberal party is it's now given up on policy and is picking up themes. Whenever you hear a conservative party running on law and order, the Queen, the monarchy, the flag, all that's happened to the Liberal party is it's getting further and further back towards 1954.

FK: But what they spent their time yesterday saying was that the time has moved on now for the economic stuff, that the recovery is in place and now it is time to focus on the social implications of high unemployment, building bridges with the minority groups. Now, you and your voters would have to support that as a focus wouldn't you, that's the way you go?

PM: We don't have to support that as a focus. We are the focus. I was the person who introducing 'One Nation' said this was a policy of social inclusion. I used the word 'inclusion' there, I used the word 'inclusion' in the speech on election night and right through the course of the eighteen months up to the election when I was Prime Minister and

since. When John Hewson talks about inclusion he is thinking of something which will include him. When he talks about consensus he is thinking of a consensus about his leadership. The consensus is, as you and I know Fran, that he should go - so, he has changed his identity. If he came out in a toupee and a moustache he couldn't be more obvious. This is just simply the most hollow change.

FK: But you couldn't be recommending that he hang on to 'Fightback'. You must welcome the change that the conservative party is now focussing on the socially bereft?

PM: But, this is the party of inclusion he says now. He is going to use the word 'inclusion' except for the unemployed, except for the low paid. He says he is interested in the welfare of Aboriginals except he wouldn't support Mabo. He is now going to focus on immigration, but he is down on migrants. This is the same fellow who attacked renters, school teachers, churches, nurses. He says, for instance, they talk about family values, but they want to take away the material supports for the family. The fact is, these people when they talk about law and order they are at the same time talking about inequality, lower wages, a weaker safety net, they want all the conditions in place that actually lead to a break down of law and order. This policy statement or this strategy statement of theirs is the most comprehensive twaddle I've heard since John Howard came up with incentivation a few years ago.

FK: They have done extensive research and their research shows that middle Australia is upset about the changes caused under your Government, changes caused by high unemployment, the hopelessness amongst the young, the rising crime rate, the disintegration of families as the poverty levels rise. These are all problems that have risen under you.

PM: But these are people who say they don't want to support families. They say when we increased the Family Allowance Supplement in 'One Nation' it was bankrupting the country. These are people who want to tug away at lower end wages. These are people who want to attack someone on \$360 a week and say they should be exposed to peasant wages under individual wage contracts. People who should be dragged down from \$360 a week while at the same time they're out there talking about the family. You've never heard them say anything either about Medicare, where they stand on that. They say that they have junked 'Fightback', but where do they stand on Medicare and health? And are they still supporting South-east Asian wage rates? Are they still supporting individual wage contracts? I'll bet they are.

FK: But, politically, aren't they smarter to fight you without a detailed economic policy document, fight you on your ground if you like, so they can't now be accused of being heartless econocrats as they were last time round?

PM: Well, they are a party now officially without a policy. This is going to be a novel experience in Australian political life. They are going to go to an election without a policy and I don't believe that this community, conscientious as it is for change and prodding the political system all the time for change - economic change, change in our social environment, change in the region we live in, integration, exports, research and development - all of those things, will take a party that has got no policies or a party which said our policy which we would now be implementing had we won the last election was all wrong and it is now dead and buried. I mean, where does it leave them? Where does it leave John Hewson who said he would resign over the policy if he had to change it, that it was too good to be changed - where does it leave him now? A person who was elected on the basis that he had some economic credentials? Fran, what they have said, is they have given up on the economy, the economy is doing too well. They have said the economy is growing too well, we can give up by it. This was their principal focus of attack not a year ago. So, where are they left now? They are now saying we are now for inclusion, just forget the fact we attacked the renters and the school teachers and the churches and the nurses and we are going to attack the low paid, we don't support the long-term unemployed, we tried to knock over Mabo, I mean, as I say, if he came out with a toupee and a moustache he would be no more obvious.

FK: Prime Minister, thank you.

PM: Thank you, Fran.

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