



# PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
PRESS CONFERENCE, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA  
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PM: I'll make this brief. Mr Downer has gone out of his way to..has gone out in 1987 and associated himself with an organisation which is the most notoriously racist and anti-Semitic in the country. In 1987 it would have been impossible for any active person in politics not to have known that he was addressing the League of Rights. Particularly when all his colleagues knew about them and had already - in the Hansard record and elsewhere - reacted angrily to them. Sitting as he was, I understand, next to Eric Butler and Jeremy Lee - the person who had escorted David Irving, a man who denies the Holocaust, around the country. In speaking at a meeting organised by avowed racists and anti-Semites, he has failed every principle of his political duty. And by his failure today to explain his actions, he's failed again.

I can tell you - I've never seen a leader of the Opposition in the House display so little courage as Mr Downer did today - being protected by the likes of Wilson Tuckey, and Peter Reith and the leader of the national party, when he stood up and made a personal explanation, or ducking out of back doors from journalists after indicating that he would in fact give them an interview. When John Hewson said to Alexander Downer, when he rang him and said that he was going to run for the leadership of the Opposition, he said "You don't have what it takes, Alexander", and the truth is he was dead right.

J: Do you think Mr Downer should resign, Mr Keating?... (inaudible)...

PM: Well, he has failed I think, the principle of political duty and he has failed to explain his circumstances at the time. I mean, this is a notorious organisation. When you look at some of the remarks which have been made by...in April 1988, by Senator Peter Baume: "There can be no doubt that the League of Rights espouses values

inconsistent with the Liberal-Democratic traditions to which so many of us are committed. It's not surprising, indeed, it's almost inevitable that serious political leaders should find the League of Rights message to be anathema to them.", and it goes on with others. Senator Boswell: "The League's public face is for God, Queen and country, and support for States rights, free enterprise, the Constitution, the family farm and small businesses. It's only natural that many decent men and women are attracted to these objectives which are laudable and noble. However, the more extreme side of the League is introduced insidiously by degrees through its extensive network of organisations."

Now, if you are a member of Parliament, and you are an aspiring party leader, you shouldn't be one of the gullible men and women who are attracted to the objectives and yet not understand what the organisation is.

J: So do you condemn with equal vigour the support from members of your own party, like Graeme Campbell, for right wing groups?

PM: Graeme Campbell is not the leader of the Labor Party. That's the difference.

J: But he is an ALP politician and he did address a League of Rights meeting, will you seek to have him expelled?

PM: No. And I don't endorse his political views either...r his social views.

J: But do you condemn his views?

PM: Well, some I do. But most, of course, are consistent with the Labor Party's objectives.

J: Do you really think that Alexander Downer has anti-Semitic views?

PM: Well, it's hard to explain that he has addressed a League of Rights meeting. In the late eighties, the League of Rights was an active organisation. I mean, any of us - you in journalism, or any of us in politics at that time - knew this to be so. It shows very, at best, exceptionally bad judgement to be in their company.

J: Is the crime that he addressed the meeting, or that he won't own up to it?

PM: Both. I think he shouldn't have addressed the meeting, and he should've - today - said he did and what the circumstances are, instead of ducking and weaving, and cowardly hiding behind people in the House of Representatives when it was raised. And, of course, having it defended in the Senate. What he should have done was come out and said so - said what the circumstances were, and at least given the country some explanation of his position.

- J: Have you, in your long political career, addressed or shared a platform at a party or group of people, that you didn't share those views later on? Perhaps you were embarrassed about later on?
- PM: Not that I can remember. Not the League of Rights. You won't find me with the League of Rights.
- J: Have you seen the video, Mr Keating?
- PM: No, I haven't....which video?
- J: The one of this event?
- PM: No, I haven't seen it, no.
- J: What of his explanation that he thought he was addressing a Christian Youth Rally at the time?
- PM: Well, Senator Boswell says this...that it goes through the established fronts; "The most established front organisation would be the Institute for Economic Democracy, Ladies in Line Against Communism, the Christian Institute for Individual Freedom, the Australian Heritage Society, and the Conservative Speakers Club". I mean, you've got to be either incompetent, or a fool to turn up to a show like this and not know what it is. And if you are that, you shouldn't be the leader of the Opposition. Thank you.

ends.