



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP DOORSTOP ON THE MARITIME DISPUTE, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, 12 SEPTEMBER, 1994

PM: Well, as you know, the Government has met tonight with the maritime unions and the ACTU, and as a result of the discussion and the negotiations the unions are going to recommend to their members tomorrow a return to work. This is on the basis of a set of agreements between the Government and the maritime unions about the future of ANL, which we think will improve the prospects of the Australian shipping industry, and ANL itself. This is a dispute well settled. We can't afford any prolongation of shipping disputes or stevedoring disputes in a country which relies upon its maritime trade. I'll be pleased to see the union membership accept the recommendation to return to work.

J: What are the details of the deal?

PM: Well you'll have to wait till tomorrow...so that the unions will have an opportunity to present this to their members and explain to them what arrangements they've made with the Government, and that will be revealed tomorrow.

J: Can you tell me how much money the Government is prepared to ...?

PM: No, it will all be revealed tomorrow, in that respect. They're entitled to go back to their members and say what they have negotiated with the Government without it being telegraphed on the media.

J: How would you describe the talks?

PM: Oh, it was a tough discussion, but an honest one.

J: And how crucial was your role, Mr Keating?

PM: Well, I think all Prime Ministers would say "entirely crucial". Let me say very crucial.

J: Was Mr Brereton rolled?

PM: Mr Brereton played an absolutely tip-top role through this and stood his ground right the way through, and added confidently to the various proposals and fashioned and re-fashioned them as needs be.

J: Some in the union movement are questioning his handling of his portfolio, and this dispute in particular...

PM: Oh, well that will always happen in every dispute.

J: But you're standing right behind him?

PM: Exactly...well, not exactly (standing) right behind him at the moment...of course I am, yes. It's not a matter of me standing behind him - you shouldn't be putting the question in the first place, it has no basis to it.