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PRIME MINISTER

109/94

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP

If imitation is the highest form of flattery, I should be overwhelmed by Dr Hewson's remarks today.

On the other hand, plagiarism is a symptom of intellectual and professional bankruptcy and in the case of the Liberal Party, yet another symptom of terminal decline.

A week ago it was Mr Downer talking incessantly about "Mills and Boon" fictions, a phrase borrowed directly from my own description of that less than monumental work of fiction, *The things that matter*.

Today it is Dr Hewson telling his fellow liberals that it is "not the jockey but the horse" - my very own words of advice to the Liberal Party on several occasions this year. And Little Sir Echo, Mr Downer, says he agrees with Dr Hewson, which is the same as saying that he agrees with me that it is his party which is the problem and its incapacity to race.

The Liberal Party is not a national party with policies for a nation, but a composite of state fractions run by the most reactionary of states.

As the last 12 months have made clear, for the Liberals the leadership issue has become a form of entertainment, a distraction, a means of forgetting the awful fact that the party is no longer a credible or viable conveyance.

Mr Downer may console himself at Christmas by telling himself over and over: "It's not me that's really the problem, it's my party".

And they can quote me on this.

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