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PRIME MINISTER

43/95

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

HOWARD AND CONNOLLY - HUMILIATED TOGETHER

The preselection of Brendan Nelson for the seat of Bradfield is a humiliating defeat for John Howard, and confirms the weakness of his leadership.

Mr Howard's attempt to cling to the past has now been repudiated by his own party in a number of preselection contests. Whatever he might say to the contrary, John Howard endorsed David Connolly, and this defeat means his support counts for little.

This leaves the Parliamentary Liberal Party without a credible spokesman on superannuation matters, at the end of a week in which the Government has introduced one of the biggest savings changes in the nation's history.

There are at least two lessons in this. One is that the Liberal Party is now so moribund that one of its safest seats can be hijacked by an opportunist.

It is also a lesson for David Connolly. Rifling through the garbage bins and household expenses of the Lodge - to which he devoted himself for the past couple of years - was no way to make a serious contribution to public life, and his electorate has made him pay the ultimate price.

**CANBERRA
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