



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
DOORSTOP, ROMA BUNGIL CULTURAL CENTRE, ROMA,
2 AUGUST 1995**

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J: Prime Minister, Fred Daly died today.

PM: Yes. I was very sad about that - Fred was a great Labor person, a great soldier, a great supporter of the Labor faith. He came to the Parliament in 1943, he saw the last years of the War, he was in the Chifley Government, and, of course, he was a Minister in the Whitlam Government. And he was one of those people who kept the continuity between Labor Governments - you know, the link between Curtin and Chifley, to Whitlam, and then on to the rest of us. And throughout his retirement, of course, he encouraged other Australians to understand the Parliament, and the Government, but most especially the Labor Party. I know his family will be very distressed at his loss, as will many Labor people.

J: Prime Minister, what are you saying about your other Labor colleague in Western Australia?

PM: Just that he's the clown we have in Western Australia. John Howard has a circus over there...

J: What would you like to see done?

PM: I object to people speaking to racist, anti-Semitic organisations like the League of Rights. And he has persisted in doing this, and it reflects poorly on the Labor Party, and I have made that position clear in the past.

J: ..(inaudible)...spoken to Campbell lately?

PM: No.

- J: Have you taken his comments about you personally?
- PM: It's been on before you know - this is not the first time.
- J: Can you intervene?
- PM: I have got a Party that has got mature structures. I don't have to scurry away - like John Howard did - from Perth. You know, I saw John Howard in Sydney at the Miss Saigon show - the premiere - on Saturday night, and I said "Clark Kent must have grabbed you from behind a curtain - how did you get here on time?". He must have left that Western Australian conference at such a speed, leaving what Reg Withers calls a civil war behind him. You see, what's on in the Western Australian Liberal Party is something akin to what was on in the Labor Party in the 1950s - it's a major party split. This is not an altercation - this is a major party row - a major split. And that, I think, is a real burden for the Liberal Party - that in one of its States they are completely at war.
- J: Are you concerned Graeme Campbell has taken attention away from the Liberal split?
- PM: I think that the Liberal split is so great that it will take more than even Graeme Campbell's eccentricities to divert attention away from it.
- J: But it must be a burden to you?
- PM: I am terribly burdened here this morning. I'm just broken-hearted - just grief-stricken.
- J: Are you concerned over the escalating diplomatic row with France?
- PM: I'm concerned to see that the French understand the Australian protest, and they are starting to register that now. And the recall of the Ambassador is, I think, recognition of the fact that the Government's protest - and indeed, the protest of all Australians - has been registered in France. Now, it's effecting now French business with the region, it is affecting French standing in the region, and the French don't like it. But we don't like their capricious decision to continue to detonate nuclear weapons.
- J: Is there any problem in this protest excluding a company? Is it breaking the law for political reasons?
- PM: No. You can't... mean, what offends us about France is that it is a democracy. You expect democracies to behave better than affronting smaller nations, and doing it particularly in this way outside its own metropolitan area. So, I think, this sort of admonition is the price the French are going to have to wear.

Nuclear test

- J: Prime Minister, do you have any expectations the French will retaliate?
- PM: I'm not sure - I'm not sure what they will do. But there is a lot of reaction as well in Europe, and now North America as well, about the French decision, and we saw President Chirac in the European Parliament being affronted by a protest, and I think we are going to see more of that.
- J: Are you concerned that Australia won't have a French Ambassador now?
- PM: ...he's been recalled - I don't know how long he has been recalled for.
- J: Are there going to be further protests by Australia?
- PM: We will be registering as we have now - as the Labor Party has - all through the 1980s, we registered our opposition to nuclear testing in the Pacific, and we will keep it up.
- J: ...(inaudible)...price we are going to have to pay?
- PM: I'm not sure what the French will do.
- J: They have indicated now they are considering their options?
- PM: Okay. But I mean, let them be judged by what they do.
- J: ...(inaudible)...will there be consideration now of sending a (frigate)?
- PM: You send a frigate if you want...you send a Naval ship for Naval business, And I don't want to see an Australian Naval ship be turned away by a French frigate with our tail between our legs. I mean, if you send a Naval frigate out there, you would send it out there to do Naval things. Now, I don't think the Australian community want an Australian ship firing on a French ship, so therefore we won't be sending a frigate.
- J: Senator Ray has hinted that further action against companies...(inaudible)...?
- PM: We will be doing more. But I think we are continuing to see what we might best do to continue to register our protest, and that's obviously because this is going to be a rolling matter, we will be considering these things in that context.
- J: Are you worried about the slide in the latest polls?

PM: Oh well I mean there is only one poll that matters, that is on election day.

J: Prime Minister, what are the things Australia could do about it?

PM: Well there is a heap of things and we have mentioned some of them before. But there is no point here, I don't think, running through them all.

J: Mr Keating what is it like to be back in Queensland?

PM: Oh I don't know whether you should say that. I mean the Labor Party has won. There's that story about Eddie Ward. He walked out of the ballot room and they said "How did you go? He said, "I walked in". "What was your majority?" "One." So I mean the fact is who is the Premier - Wayne Goss. And I think that the strength that the Goss Government has brought to the Queensland economy is going to be well recognised over time and to its society and certainly with the Federal Government. Queensland has been one of the great growth States of Australia and that is coming off the policies of two Labor Governments. And I mean I think this is what is going to matter in the end. That is, where the recognition will be.

J: Don't you have to turn Queensland around before you ...

PM: I have never accepted Federal implications.

J: Not necessarily out of Queensland, but as it stands?

PM: The greatest Federal implication in Queensland is there is a Federal Press Gallery which must find a Federal implication in every matter - that is, the Federal implication.

J: So you are rejecting the notion that you are on the nose here in Queensland?

PM: Well the thing is I could have answered all these questions in the same way, put in the same cycle, at the last Parliament and, I think, you know, the questioners got their answer on polling day.

J: When are you going to call an election?

PM: Well I have answered that question on umpteen occasions.

J: farmers

PM: Whether it is translated into votes, or not, I don't think is singularly important. What is important is whether the rural community, whether the farm community, farming families in Australia, can maintain their viability through a period of prolonged drought. I mean I think that is

the thing which the Graingrowers, Ian McFarlane, under his leadership, and others have sought of the Federal Government and as I have said, we have now got around \$600 million coming into this program. We have got 5,500 farm families getting income support and it is, I think, I hope - in areas of particularly exceptional drought circumstances - holding the rural community together. I hope that is the case. If we get follow up rains, I mean nothing will break the drought better than rain, not income from the Federal Government. But the Government is there to do its part. To help the farm community in general and graingrowers keep their families together and keep their farms together through this period of prolonged drought, which is now quite exceptional - five years in some cases. So I am hoping it helps and that we get the follow-up rains. I think this is the sort of partnership that matters. It is not a case of simply listening. I made the point, good governments listened and bad governments listened. But it is what is actually done. I think what we saw here was a large change in policy which is working, which was put together cooperatively by rural organisations and the Federal Government, the Labor Government. And I am very pleased about it and very proud of it.

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