



# PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON, P J KEATING, M.P. AND SIR BOB GELDOF MIDDAY SHOW, CHANNEL 9 STUDIOS, SYDNEY TUESDAY 22 FEBRUARY, 1994**

DH: Welcome back. Some big changes to the way that Parliament operates in Canberra today. For the first time, Paul Keating has an RDO, a rostered day off. He's not in Parliament as formally required because of a change to the system. A change that he wants to have, has made possible. So, the ringmaster is absent from the circus and that's why Prime Minister Keating can be our guest today. Would you please welcome the Prime Minister of Australia.

DH: It is true, the first day the ringmaster hasn't been there for Question Time?

PK: It is the first, well, in 25 years.

DH: 25 years. Why?

PK: Oh I think it just became a stale format where the focus was only on the leaders and one or two other people and that was it, basically. It lost the opportunity for ordinary backbench members and, I think, general interests - that is the eliciting of information and general interest by the public.

DH: But you were regarded as the King of Question Time. You were the, almost the serpent in the House. Won't you miss that?

PK: No, I don't think so. There was a time when Question Time provided the rank and file backbench member the chance to raise things which were of genuine and local interest to them. Now, all the questions are scripted by both sides.

DH: Yes, because your people also throw Dorothy Dixers.

PK: That's what I mean by scripting - scripted to suit the general policy lines that either side of politics wants to get out on the day. So, this way I think it will be far more spontaneous, more natural and therefore better.

- DH: But it's not being... it won't be televised now, will it?
- PK: Oh yes, it will still be rebroadcast. That is, on the news services or later but it won't be live in the afternoon because...
- DH: It runs into *Play School*...
- PK: It runs into *Play School*..
- DH: One play school has been replaced by another, you might say.
- PK: It runs into *Play School* and the ABC says *Play School* stays and Question Time doesn't.
- DH: Yes, somebody is making some decisions there. Now, on the SBS with Mary Kostakidis the other night, some people would think they were watching a different person. I mean, here's a Paul Keating who is saying he's humble, is saying, virtually, he's modest, that he doesn't want to be remembered as a great Prime Minister?
- PK: Well, no. One of the questions was, "Are you there to be a great Prime Minister?" Well, that's for other people to judge. I'm there to do what I have to do. But, I think, Derryn there are sides to my personality which are not always evident - in the same way you've switched from hard hitting investigative journalism to a more open, warmer format here which is revealing a different side to your personality - there's a different one to mine, too.
- DH: Yes but I don't have any power, you see, you're the Prime Minister. But when you see the Paul Keating that people know and you can be - I'll blow your bags here a bit, for a minute - you can be very urbane and you can be very charming company and you talk well at cocktail parties and all that sort of stuff... but then you get into the House, on the floor there, and you say the Liberals are like dogs returning to their vomit, you call people scumbags, sleaze bags, all of that.
- PK: No but, hang on... let me just correct that. I've used scumbag once in 25 years, once, once.
- DH: Well, I never said shame, shame, shame and I got hooked with it...
- PK: And, you see, the House of Representatives is the central cockpit of Australian politics. It's where the big issues are fought over and when people want to, if you like, change policy whether it be in health or in education or in social security this is the place where I defend the interests of ordinary Australians. I mean, if somebody...
- DH: And your party and your Ministers...
- PK: Yes, but, if somebody wants the right to have elective surgery or to have their hip replaced and they don't have private wealth Medicare is there to help them do it. Now, when that's under attack I'm there to defend it so you can't go in and say, "This is all blase, we don't really care. We don't really care whether access and fairness in health

or in education goes. If the Liberals want to make assaults on these things I won't fight it."

- DH: But you've actually been defending your own Medicare against one of your own ministers, Graham Richardson. He thinks you should have private health coverage as well.
- PK: Medicare is like any other national scheme, it's evolving. It has to evolve. And, as private health is more sophisticated than it was a decade ago, as technologies improve, as all of these diagnostic imaging and things improve the system has got to change with it. I think all that Graham and I are now looking at is how we change that system and keep the best.
- DH: Speaking of systems, we had Senator Kernot on the program the other day talking about women in politics and do women get a tougher time in Parliament from men, because they're women, or do they get an easier ride because they're women? How do you regard it?
- PK: I don't think they get any tougher or easier ride, by and large.
- DH: Because you've jumped to the defence of Ros Kelly very fast and very loudly...
- PK: Yes I did on a couple of occasions where I thought the notion of drowning her out as she was trying to give a serious reply - someone had made an allegation and she was up replying to it - and then being drowned out by a front bench of noisy characters was unfair. And, therefore, I made that point at the time.
- DH: Do you believe she had 2,000 names on a whiteboard?
- PK: Well, what I believe is that because nobody in the Opposition's actually held down a big job, apart from John Howard and Andrew Peacock, no-one's been a minister and they've never held down a big job so they don't know that ministers make 50, 60, 100 decisions a day. It's not a case of little notes from bureaucrats which you tick and cross. It's a sort of a naive, childish view of the world. Ministers are there to make decisions.
- DH: One final question on Ros Kelly - doesn't it smell to you when a minister is going to give a \$60,000 grant to bowling club of 100 people and it gets to \$100,000 by the end of the Comcar ride?
- PK: No, basically because this is a facility for those sports clubs that can never basically get that sort of money together. Be it in netball or basketball or bowling or whatever...
- DH: I'm not opposed to grants. But I am saying the way it is distributed...
- PM: Yes, but, in the end if they eligible - and all of these are eligible - a decision has got to be made then about whether the grant works, or whether it is designed well enough or whether it is enough. On this occasion Mrs Kelly made that discretionary change.

But that is the power that a Minister has. I mean who else does it? I mean, who else do we have in the system to do it?

DH: Will she survive?

PM: Oh, of course. Survive? She had them for breakfast a week ago.

DH: All right, speaking of political survival. If you, Paul Keating, had a Labor Bronwyn Bishop coming after you like a barracuda, how would you deflect it?

PM: By making the obvious points about her, I think. And that is, I mean why has the Liberal Party not taken Bronwyn on? I mean is she as notionally popular? But there is resistance to having her. Why do the people who know her best, why won't they take her? And the answer is, because she has got no policy depth. It is all tip and no iceberg. Now, that is what they understand.

DH: But, she is a populist, and Bob Hawke proved as a populist that he could go above the heads of his party in Canberra, and look where it got him.

PM: Yes, but Bob had a framework in his head about the society, the economy, that Bronwyn Bishop doesn't have. And it rankles the Liberal Party's parliamentary party that somebody who has basically made it by weekend magazine reviews, and middle newspaper reviews, and television magazine reviews, has climbed over them without earning the right to do it in terms of knowing about the structure of this country and society.

DH: I would agree with that, I have said before and to her, on television, that in Canberra she is so popular she would get three votes in a Caucus leadership vote if she was allowed to vote for herself three times.

PM: That's right. It's a nineties version of the Joh for Canberra campaign. At the time when Joh was running for Canberra all the conservatives were all in a tizz saying, oh, this will be terrific. Nobody, today would seriously have thought that Joh would have ever, have made a contribution. Now, she is the nineties Joh for Canberra version and the serious people in the parliamentary Liberal Party are saying, well hang on, there is an entry price here, you have to know what the economy and the society is doing and how to change it.

DH: And you have to know where Manila is.

PM: Yes, you have got to know where Manila is.

DH: Which she didn't know. Now, on a personal thing, will we ever know what happened about the housekeepers at the Lodge? Because I read at the weekend that your daughter sent Gail Gray a birthday card, that they used to walk the dogs and worm the dogs and even cut your hair on occasion.

PM: Yes, we had a nice relationship. Well, look it is now largely a matter which is between the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet who employs them and the Commonwealth Ombudsman is now running through ...

DH: But you didn't have a clash and say, "Get them out of here"?

PM: No, no. I never had a cross word with them. But there were obviously problems amongst the staff.

DH: There were factions.

PM: Well the Department sort of sorted it out, and their argument is with the Department and the quicker that is resolved the better.

DH: All right, we have saved something up for after the break, I am going to talk about your serious career as a rock and roll manager, and we are going to come back with Sir Bob Geldof.

PM: Well, he is a rocker.

H: Welcome back, I wonder how observant you are because during the commercial break the Prime Minister just said to me, "Do you realise we are wearing identical suits?" It's like two women at the races.. but the ties are a little different.

PM: Let's keep an eye on the detail...

H: That's true, that's true. We have been talking to Paul Keating and I guess he'd agree that my next guest would be pretty formidable in the political ring but Bob Geldof's not interested in joining that boxing troupe. Instead he uses his songs to sway the world and his clout to get interviews with heavies like Yasser Arafat, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and Paul Keating. So, to reunite a couple of interesting Irishmen, please welcome Sir Bob Geldof.

BG: I thought I'd wear the same suit...

DH: No chance that you were going to risk that.

BG: Well, it's the Italian cut, I knew you guys were into it so...

DH: With these careers you have, the charity work you've done, one your main career of course as a singer and entertainer, suddenly here's this breakfast television host...

BG: Yes, mega tycoon I think, media tycoon, that's the new thing.

DH: Now, you interviewed the Prime Minister?

PK: He did, about a year ago.

- DH: And, although he's sitting there, what was it like?
- BG: Oh, it was a pain in the arse, you know.... No, it turned out we have some mutual friends in London and it turned out we shared some...
- DH: Liz and Phil..
- BG: Of course, yeah...and the guys generally, you know. And so, that was a pretty good basis and..
- PK: He's a toff, Bob. He's a toff, you know.
- BG: Who me?
- PK: You.
- BG: Yeah but I don't try and hide it Paul, you know.
- DH: When you interview all these people, I mean, Arafat, Mandela, Keating what were they like to interview? I mean, your life hasn't been from that school of journalism so you would come from a different perspective. What were they like?
- BG: I only said I'd do it if the people interested me. It wasn't necessarily their political agenda, it was that there seemed to be some moral stance that they took, vis a vis their politics.
- DH: What was his? Keating's?
- BG: He just interests me as the classic Paddy, Tammany Hall politician.
- PK: Hey, cut that out, you'd better decipher all these terms...
- BG: It's the Irish-Catholic, union, Labor, mass sort of...
- DH: Like the ..... in Boston and all that sort of stuff, the Tammany Hall stuff?
- BG: I'm not sure I like it but I come from it, you know, from Dublin. And so over here is very recognisable to me and he's an immensely robust politician, you know.
- DH: Did you believe he was humble, didn't want to be a great Prime Minister, didn't care if he was remembered by history?
- BG: Well, you know, some of the things I say when I do interviews are for a specific reason and some of the things he says are for another reason. I mean, he does interviews to get across his agenda and I'm more interested in the person. I'm not a political - look at those shoes, can we have a close up.
- DH: Do you like those?

- BG: Look at Hinch's shoes.
- PK: Well your's are exactly ....
- BG: Well I've been in Mildura. I've just been in Swan Hill, I mean, you know.
- DH: That explains it. Mildura explains that.
- BG: Look at them, oh no they're Keating's ones.
- DH: At least they're shiny.
- BG: Well, they don't have to be those sneakers Derryn, I mean, you remember that don't you? But, like I said, the politics in this country are immensely robust.
- DH: Well, you being Irish, do you feel for the strength of the Keating argument for a republic?
- BG: That's his thing, I'm also in somebody else's country so to me I don't really care, it's your argument as, you know, Prince Charles said. But I come from a republic. Now if you shut up for a minute, if you can just manage that.
- PK: Well so far I have.
- BG: Can anybody name a President of Ireland who isn't Irish. It's very hard to remember who the President of Germany is or the President of Ireland, even though she's immensely a bright woman and very charismatic and I think republics are a bit of a bore. And I've lived in one all my life and I understand your argument about the Monarchy and all that, but I think it would be quite good to have this sort of Australian King and I think that, Paul, you would look very nice.
- DH: Swap the vermin for the ermine you think?
- BG: I would have that as tongue in cheek. I'm not sure that a republic has that time and that politics hasn't gone. And as you are consciously looking forward to the next millennium.
- DH: Your upbringing. You had a fairly sad childhood, didn't you. In terms of your mother dying when you were very young. I'm just wondering, you both being Irish, both being Catholic. You said in your SBS interview that your religion is very strong for you.
- PK: Well I think it has set a lot of political values for me and for Australia, certainly in the Labor Party.
- DH: And yet, Bob, you are very anti the church in a lot of the things you have said over the years.

- BG: Unlike Australia, the Church and the state are hand in glove in Ireland, maybe less so. But certainly when I was growing up it was. And it was a very close society and young people, in particular, were not allowed to - you have it here the tall poppy syndrome thing which you have sort of elevated into this national shibboleth sort of thing. And you weren't allowed to express ambition, even that was to cause derision. And so all possibilities shut down on you because of this claustrophobic small country, society. And so I had to get out and loads of us blame that relationship that did exist between church and state. It's becoming disentangled now rightfully.
- PK: Well, of course, that's not true here. I mean, what Bob says about Ireland may well be true, but it is not true here. There has always been a great separation.
- DH: Actually the separation of church and state has been almost as virtually strong here as the United States where it is protected virtually constitutionally.
- PK: I think the sort of great humanitarian values of the Labor Party spring from a sense of equality and justice and these things spring from the dignity of the human person which has come from ....
- DH: But the Labor politicians can play just as dirty as anybody else.
- PK: But it is always this question about, you know, the classic conflict in Australian political thought between what Manning Clark called the enlargers of life and the straighteners of life.
- DH: You see, what intrigues me about you is this very thing, you are a person who in your life has built to be this urbane person, a lover of classical music, and Bob gave you some classical music, you collect antique clocks, you love fine art, you certainly like bird prints, but then the other side of you is that you are a political bovver boy ....
- BG: He's a street brawler.
- DH: But then you are a bovver boy, in other ways you are a bovver boy.
- PK: Yes, but principally what I am, I am basically a builder of a better place here. That is what I am principally about. I mean, what's my life about - it's about enlarging the show.
- BG: Well your idea of a better place.
- PK: Well, not my idea. Simply a better place, that is a fairer, more just, more decent, more productive place.
- BG: But everyone in politics is that, they just use a different format.
- PK: No, but everybody says that, Bob, but they don't all do it. I mean, the difference is, we have done it.



- BG: They do try, you just won the last election, Paul, that's all.
- PK: I know, and that has come, those instincts, I think, in part have come through this sort of society we have and it has also come through the sort of belief people like me have had.
- DH: Would I be right if I said that Paul Keating, when he made his speech to staff at the Chinese restaurant before the election last year, thought he would be in opposition the following day, and thought you would be out of politics?
- PK: No, I thought we would sneak in. I thought we would sneak home. But when I say sneak home, for a start we had an 11 seat lead, a majority of 11. And that had to be whittled back before anything came from us, so I knew we were going to do well in Tasmania and NSW.
- DH: So you really thought you would win it?
- PK: I thought we were in there with a real chance.
- BG: When I was talking to him, you know, it looked very grim indeed. And said to him, you know, you may as well kiss goodbye to this place. He just said wait and see, you know, he was pretty insistent then.
- DH: Because you looked like stunned mullet for the first few months after you had been elected as if you thought, gee we haven't got any policies cause we didn't think we would be here.
- PK: Well, it is just because the Government ducked back into the Cabinet to do the big things like Mabo and other things which we had on that year. I mean, the problem is we were running against a couple of deadlines and having already lost three or four months of the year, we had to basically get our heads down and get at it. Now that was assumed to be that the Government had sort of lost control of the agenda.
- DH: On British politics, I'm sure this doesn't happen in Canberra ...
- BG: ..... plug by music, he's plugged by politics.
- DH: No, I'm going to in one minute, this will plug in music as well, I'll hold this up while I'm talking about British politics.
- BG: Along side your shoes please. It's the Cuban look, you know.
- DH: It is too. Why is it in British politics, so many of the politicians dress up in women's dresses, and these are the men, or there was one guy who was found hanging in a gas mask and an overcoat in his shed, and another one had on women's stockings and suspenders and a plastic bag over his head.

BG: Because they have to get their kicks somehow, it's so boring in the house of parliament. You know, have you ever sat there? I mean, when Thatcher went it would probably be like him, you know, the fire went out of the street politics. And what you were earlier talking about women and whether they got, no pun intended, an easier ride or a harder ride. And the thing that Kinnock always said, who was leader of the opposition during Thatcher's reign, that he felt always pulled back because he came from the Welsh valleys and he was sort of brought up to respect women, and he always pulled back from the killer insulting blow. Even though he loathed everything she stood for, he just couldn't bring himself to go.

DH: Well speaking of strange dressing habits, would your weirdest gig in music have been the Goondiwindi bachelors and spinsters ball? And what were you doing there?

BG: It was one of the best dresses. Because I'd heard about B&S things and being Irish they struck me as familiar. This used to go on in Ireland like, while I'd grown up. And I went there and had a great time, I mean, these people got seriously out of it.

DH: Is it true that that is going to be seen on British television?

BG: But, so what?

DH: Well I think Sylvania Waters was bad enough. They'll think this is going on everywhere.

BG: Nobody watched Sylvania Waters, and these are young people who are in a drought land area and they have had drought for years, they still have drought. And as they say on the film, at the beginning of the film, it is a time where we can forget our troubles for 48 hours and go back to work with a fresh hope. And these people are walking off their farms now. They've sold their car, the banks are closing and they walk away, it's like the dust bowl in Okalahoma. And they have got immense dignity and they should be allowed to get out of it for 48 hours and the great thing about it, unlike an english audience where I would feel fear and danger, that never went off in any violent sense. And I think, in Europe that they probably would ..... the naive, the sort of, cliché salt of the earth, but their values are so fixed and straight and generally good, I thought it was great.

DH: Now, let's talk about your music. You are making a new clip with Sting who has been singing for you on Crazy, that's coming up on your new compilation.

BG: Yes, the single thing. So I did that about four weeks. ....the Pinnacles, do you know where that is? North of Perth, have you ever been there?

PK: I've never been there.

BG: I've seen more of Australia than you and you're supposed to call it a stump.

- PK: I don't think that is true, but I haven't been to the Pinnacles, no.
- BG: Twenty-five cities and towns in 30 days. You know, Goondiwindi gave me the taste for it, of seeing the country. And he said you should move over here, you know. And I said, well it's 60 per cent marginal tax, sure.
- PK: Forty-seven, forty-seven.
- BG: Not if the Left have their way.
- DH: You have fallen in love with this country, haven't you, you spent a lot of time here.
- BG: Yes, its a beautiful country. Me and the Mrs and the kids are made for it and were it not for the fact that ....
- PK: What do you like about it most?
- BG: It is very familiar to me, the attitude.
- PK: It's open, accessible.
- BG: Yes, all that. The attitudes are very familiar to me from Ireland.
- DH: Being both Irish Catholics, both family men, how do you handle, as Bob Geldof, the disciplinary things with your kids?
- BG: Beat the crap out of them on a day to day basis.
- DH: How do you? I mean you are growing up, ... the rock world, the sex, the drugs, the rock and roll, and you see your own little kids growing up. How do you handle it and how do you guide them?
- BG: Like any parents you give what you believe are the correct moral parameters to in which to live to your life. And then you hope that at 13, 14, and 15 they kick robustly against that and find their own way. And like, you know, you say you can't do that, you are not allowed to do that, you have to go to bed at this time, you know, you have to behave, you have to show respect et cetera, et cetera.
- DH: Do you work this way?
- PK: I think so. I think you try and give your children, as Bob said, a moral framework, or moral parameters which, hopefully enough of that glues on to them so as they go their own way there are these residual values which they then rebuild and build.
- DH: But do your children still see you, are you two people to them, I mean are you at all Prime Minister Keating to your family, or are you still just Dad?
- PK: No, no. Just Dad. I had my second youngest saying, what are you going to do when you get out of politics, Dad? She said, you want to be a composer, don't

you? And of course, I don't, you know. And before I got a chance to say anything she said, well I think you had better forget that because you would be a dud composer.

DH: Do you stand around at home and conduct?

PK: Yes, I conduct a bit at home, she might have got the conducting and the composing mixed up. No, I think I like to see the kids personalities, jumping around and springing and going.

DH: When will you get out of politics, how many years?

PK: I think there is a natural time in all this. You get the right message.

DH: Will you know when to go?

PK: Oh, I think so. And I don't think anyone should try and stay on too long.

DH: Like Bob Hawke.

PK: Well, anyone.

DH: Who are the megalos, the megalomaniac Prime Ministers you were talking about?

PK: No, we are not in the identification business.

DH: Menzies, Whitlam, Hawke?

PK: We are not identifying.

DH: Two out of three ain't bad. Hold on, here it is again, this is a Bob Geldof new happy club. You are not looking very happy on it.

BG: I am not a very happy person, you can tell I am deeply disturbed.

DH: I will make you happy now, by doing some of Bob's concert dates.

BG: The ex-rock manager should do this.

PK: Yes, I should be.

BG: Failed rock manager.

PK: As I say, I could probably do for Bob what I did for the Ramrods, send him into obscurity.

BG: It is an unfortunate name.

DH: Mr Prime Minister?

PK: Well, if Bob gives me a piece of the action, I mean I am not going to manage him for nothing.

DH: Will you please thank Prime Minister, Paul Keating, and Bod Geldolf.

ENDS