



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW, BERT NEWTON SHOW - 20 MARCH 1989

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NEWTON: Prime Minister, welcome.

PM: Thank you very much Bert. Good luck too.

NEWTON: Thank you very much indeed. You're there in Sydney today and I guarantee you were there in Sydney on Saturday too, were you not, at the Golden Slipper?

PM: I was indeed Bert.

NEWTON: Did you stick with the Golden filly?

PM: I did, and I tipped it and I backed it.

NEWTON: Good on you because I thought last week you might have been a bit stiff actually. I thought you might have gone for the wrong Colin Hayes horse. Did you?

PM: Yes, yes, but that was last week.

NEWTON: That's right. Speaking of last week, we've just been talking to Peter Allen and he's had quite an horrendous couple of weeks ... and his attitude is just absolutely wonderful. A bloke like yourself, when you get a bad press, how do you handle it? Do you read it for a start?

PM: Yes, it's no good in my job dodging the bad news. I try and face up to it and read it. If it's fair and constructive in what they've said, I hope to learn from it and I hope I'm intelligent enough to do that. If it's crook, if it's badly motivated and not fair, then I put that aside. You'd be very silly not to try and learn from criticism.

NEWTON: What about the criticism at the moment that the financial state of the country is not as good as you promised it was going to be. Are you at all, do you believe on time with the plans that you ... a couple of years ago?

PM: Yes. With just basic things we're ahead. The thing that I'm proudest of and which is going well is employment. We've created 1.3 million new jobs Bert in our period in office. That's four times faster than Howard and Fraser when they were in office, four times faster. We're creating jobs twice as fast as the rest of the industrialised world.

PM (cont): We're right on track there but it is true that we've got to have a tight monetary policy now and I think most Australians understand we just can't keep sucking in imports with too high a level of activity so we've got to cool it down a bit.

NEWTON: Delivering those tax cuts in a couple of weeks time. Can the country afford it?

PM: I believe so. We've had to ask ordinary Australians, your normal viewers, the lower to middle income Australians to exercise a lot of restraint which has enabled us to create all those jobs. I think the time has come when we've got to give something back so that they're able to gradually improve their standards. And we're going to do it.

NEWTON: What about your promise, the one that comes back to visit you all the time about 1990 and not a starving child in Australia? Do you wish in some ways you hadn't said that?

PM: Not at all. Do you think I should be unhappy about a situation where we've brought in a policy under which something like \$1.5 billion will be spent on family allowance supplements to the lower income people in this country, which will mean by the end of this year as we go into 1990 that we'll deliver on the real pledge I delivered, that is that there'll be no financial need for any child to live in poverty. I've never been able to - this is not a dictatorship, I can't dictate that no parents will behave awfully which will lead kids to run away from home. But what I can deliver on is the promise I made and that is that the money will be there so that there'll be no financial need to live in poverty. What we've done Bert is bigger than has ever been contemplated before in this country, hasn't been attempted in any country anywhere in the world. That sort of money that we'll be putting out to the lower income people in this country will mean that we will have delivered on the pledge that there'll be no financial need. Now, as I say, we don't run a dictatorship. I can't control every domestic situation in this country, I never believed I could. But what I can do is to make sure that as far as what government does, a concerned and compassionate and caring government, that the money will be there, that there'll be no financial need for poverty for kids.

NEWTON: I don't know if you realise or not, your supporters of course would declare that you've created many firsts since you've been in government, since you've been our Prime Minister. But do you realise that you're about to become the Prime Minister in Australian history with the most grandchildren?

PM: Is that right?

NEWTON: You've got six coming up haven't you, number six?

PM: The sixth is coming up.

NEWTON: Whose is that?

PM: Sue's. She's been around with us this weekend at Kirribilli and she's very close, very close. That will make six, yes. We started with none when I was Prime Minister. It's been a very prolific prime ministership.

NEWTON: I think it's been one for every year.

PM: That's how it's worked out, yes.

NEWTON: So whilst you've been busy as Prime Minister, the family obviously has been busy too.

PM: They are the joy of my life too Bert.

NEWTON: I'm told that one of your great pleasures when you're with them is to tell them stories. Now a lot of joke writers would make a lot of that. What sort of stories do you tell them?

PM: I try, when I sort of make up stories, really what I try and talk about is stories about people so that they have no concept of prejudice in their minds at all about colour, of people of difference races and origins. I try and talk to them in ways which makes them understand that we're all in the end in this world brothers and sisters, we are. I think you can't get that story into the minds of little children too early. I think it's a lesson we all have got to understand and some of we adults haven't learnt it properly I'm afraid.

NEWTON: Some people in the public life seem to treat their grandchildren as they wanted to treat their children because of the value of time that wasn't able to be given to the kids. Are you in that boat?

PM: Absolutely. I feel some sense, I mean I'm quite honest about it, I feel some sense of guilt about the fact that in the pursuit of my career in the trade union movement and then later on and always with politics intertwined that I didn't spend the time that I think I should've done in hindsight. So there is a sense in which I think you compensate, or try to compensate a bit. You can never make up for what you should've done with your own children but that's consciously and subconsciously I think part of it. But kids are just beautiful anyway, and grandchildren, there's something special about them.

NEWTON: Just finally, how do you feel about the press releasing the story on Hazel and her facelift?

PM: I was quite relaxed about that. But let me say in regard to the vicious, untrue piece in yesterday's Sunday press, viciously untrue, that Hazel did this under pressure from the Party. There is not a skerrick of the beginning of an element of truth in that. It is false, it is malicious and I can assure you that those who've written that have not heard the end of it.

NEWTON: Have you every considered you know what?

PM: No, no, ... face, I'm happy enough with it mate.

NEWTON: I can only speak on hair transplants and it's quite ...

PM: ... it just keeps growing faster and faster. I haven't had any trouble with it.

NEWTON: You're doing ok. Thanks for your time. I really appreciate it.

PM: I've loved being on and may I say to you, really, I wish you the very very best indeed.

NEWTON: Good luck to you.

PM: Thanks mate.

NEWTON: Thank you.

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