



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
INTERVIEW WITH PAUL LYNEHAM, 7.30 REPORT  
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### **E&OE PROOF COPY**

**PL:** Prime Minister welcome again to the program.

**PM:** Good Paul.

**PL:** 'Unrepresentative swill', 'defamers', 'cowards', 'pansies', one could easily get the impression you don't like the Senate.

**PM:** The Senate is always over-stepping the mark. We have now got the Democrats talking about messing around with bills for the income tax cuts, your viewers would have seen Senator Bishop pillory one of the bureaucrats of a generation, Mr Boucher, and allege of him that he made an arrangement with the Government to secure a position for himself.

**PL:** They would say they were just doing their job as representatives.

**PM:** The Senate is out of control and they have to be told that the Government is made in the House of Representatives, that the Government's money bills are sacrosanct and that it is in the House of Representatives Australia makes its decisions, and not to try to usurp the powers of the House of Representatives in an unrepresentative chamber. That is, where we have the same number of Senators for Tasmania as we do for NSW.

- PL:** Yes, but I mean in the Repts the Democrats can't get a guernsey and they get a sizeable slice of the vote, they can at least get a go in a Chamber like the Senate.
- PM:** But people are drifting in there with 10 or 11 per cent of the vote. You have got people sitting in the Senate with 10 or 11 per cent of the vote, that's all they can get but they are still there. All right that is fine for their purpose, but their purpose is not to defame people, to pillory people, but worse to stand in the way of legitimate government of the Commonwealth in the House of Representatives.
- PL:** But this is under the constitution one of the institutions of Australian democracy, time honoured, and here is the Prime Minister looking like he is giving it a good old kicking.
- PM:** It has been kicking institutions itself – it was into the tax office last week, it is into manipulating all sorts of Government legislation. It was set up, Paul, as a States House to protect the smaller States from what they thought would be the majority of the bigger States in the House of Representatives. What is it now? It is such a party House that Mr Reith, the Deputy Leader in the House of Representatives, put a press statement out yesterday saying which Senators would sit on a Senate Committee from the Liberal Party.
- PL:** This is the one that has caused this rumpus, the one that is investigating the so-called loans affair.
- PM:** In other words, it is so blatantly a party house that Senator Bishop who is now going to serve on it, before she has heard any evidence about this inquiry said today that it was a cover up. This is not even a pretence at impartiality.
- PL:** Sure, but I could say here's Paul Keating trying to denigrate the Senate and its Committee in advance of its hearing to try to make sure that it is as bruised and battered as possible before this inquiry gets under way.
- PM:** I think Senator Bishop's claim today that it was a cover up is like a judge making a verdict before he or she had heard the case. This has become a disgracefully bad procedure.
- PL:** Who is going to nominate the Labor people to this Committee? Not John Button I should imagine.

- PM:** They will be announced as appropriately by the managers of Government business in the Senate.
- PL:** Yes, but the decisions will be made probably somewhere closer to your office, won't they?
- PM:** It is a party House, so there should be no pretence it is a States House having a legitimate review function on behalf of States. It is a party House where nonsense is the order of the day a lot of the time, too much of the time.
- PL:** But why don't you try to change it, or abolish it or something?
- PM:** It put our whole constitutional fabric at risk in 1975, they got so Bolshie the Liberal Party over there in 1975 they nearly took Australia to the edge of civil strife. It was only for the good sense and the tolerance of the Labor movement that it didn't happen.
- PL:** But as the next election showed the people supported that.
- PM:** They are all at it again over there and the fact is that people swept into there with 10 or 11 per cent of the vote have got no right to be in trying to tell the Government and the House of Representatives what its principal program should be.
- PL:** I gather then that you're not exactly broken-hearted or thinking of resigning over the fact that today you became the first PM to be censured by the Senate?
- PM:** No, here they are defaming people under privilege, calumny, detraction, all sorts of things, and then when someone in the House of Representatives, me, says look at this place, they say this is shocking, this is shocking, how dare you talk about us like that!
- PL:** Tell us in the studio here about this pledge you have given about not blocking the GST and what has prompted it?
- PM:** Well we want the battle for the GST to be fought out in the House of Representatives. We are opposed to a GST, Dr Hewson is in favour of one. But the Liberal strategists are now saying, you can still vote for Hewson and not get the GST.

**PL:** Which strategists?

**PM:** The Liberal Party people.

**PL:** You know that for a fact?

**PM:** Yes, they are saying, and they will say it more as time goes on, you can vote for Hewson and still not get the GST because it will get held up in the Senate. All I am saying, in the unlikely and in the unhappy event of this nation deciding to elect a Coalition Government with a GST as its centre piece, then no Senate obstructionism would come from the Labor Party, to that then Government presenting its program.

**PL:** So you will let it through?

**PM:** In other words we would honour the electorate's word, the electorate's mandate and respect it.

**PL:** Even though the Democrats are hell-bent on stopping it at all costs?

**PM:** The Democrats want to say, they want to run around the country in an election campaign - vote for us and we will stop the GST - when in fact they could only stop it with the support of the Labor Party. And Dr Hewson's crowd would run around saying, don't worry about voting for us - you mightn't get a GST anyway because it may be stopped in the Senate. I am getting rid of all that nonsense. A vote for Hewson will be a vote for the GST. A vote for Keating and the Labor Party will be a vote against the GST.

**PL:** But they were always going to bring the GST in in the money bills, which you have always pledged since '75 that you would never block. So this has a bit of a stunt element to it doesn't it?

**PM:** I don't believe that it is legitimate for an Opposition and in the Senate to deny the principle element of what is a clearly articulated mandate. I notice George Bush yesterday talked about the 'majesty of democracy' in his very eloquent speech where he accepted defeat and said he would cooperate in handing over the mantle to President elect Clinton. That sort of respect for the democratic process is something my party has always had. We are not the constitutional wreckers of this federation - that we have left to the Liberal Party. They are the people who hold up supply, have Governor

Generals appoint Opposition Leaders as Prime Ministers, all that sort of nonsense and risk is taken by them.

**PL:** You're a difficult character to get a handle on aren't you, because one minute you sound like the very sober-sided statesman and the next minute you're there with the big bucket over the Senate, using extraordinarily colourful language, the real larrikin?

**PM:** You've got to do things to get your attention Paul.

**PL:** We're always listening.

**PM:** If I was speaking in the House of Representatives in dulcet tones ...

**PL:** You're not doing this for us, this comes very naturally doesn't it?

**PM:** ... and articulate as one would do at the bar an argument, not a word would be reported.

**PL:** It's all the media's fault?

**PM:** No, just that we have to always not only wrap things nicely for you, but put a bow on top.

**PL:** And meanwhile, of course, we are not here talking about this so-called loans affair are we? You've neatly taken the spotlight off that.

**PM:** Why would we? It's a sham of an issue anyway.

**PL:** But if everyone is so innocent, why not bowl up to the Committee? Dawkins can look after himself can't he?

**PM:** What is the Senate's legitimate interest in the operation of a piece of policy which is principally almost exclusively the business of the executive government and which this Government alone has established. That is, we were the only party to establish control over States borrowings with the so-called global limits. When Mr Howard was Treasurer, only 25 per cent of States borrowings were controlled by the Loan Council. In other words, he is prepared to let 75 per cent just haemorrhage away, but if one small transaction in the now very tight structure this Government has imposed in a disciplinary way over a decade, well then it's a crime. So we have a Senate

Committee, but before it starts Senator Bishop says it's a cover up. It is just a shambles and a joke.

**PL:** And what if voters say, when on earth are those people in Canberra going to start talking about the fact that now one in four families has got no one in work? When are we going to get onto some real issues?

**PM:** The real issue was Monday night when I met Mr Kennett and resolved Victoria's debt position with him, resolved to look at the debt strategy which they'll present to the Loan Council so that the Victorian recovery and job growth can continue and not have its financial accounting or the settlement of its monies held to ransom by this kind of debilitating and irresponsible debate which has been promoted by Dr Hewson and Mr Reith.

**PL:** Talking of money and uncertainties, are you aware that people from the money markets in Sydney and Melbourne have been phoning this building all day with rumours and seeking confirmation that you are just about on your way to see Bill Hayden?

**PM:** You've not been taking their calls I take it?

**PL:** I have been talking their calls and I've been telling them it's nonsense, but there is a lot of uncertainty there isn't there?

**PM:** I don't know.

**PL:** You don't know? We assure you Prime Minister there's enormous uncertainty.

**PM:** Good on you Paul.

**PL:** Isn't there some point in trying to put some of this to rest at least?

**PM:** I've told you before I think that the public expect value from these Parliaments and they expect them to run their full course - that is into, in this case, 1993.

**PL:** So this rules out a pre-Christmas poll does it?

**PM:** I never rule out anything. One of the happy prerogatives of a Prime Minister in this system is to choose the date of the election, so I don't rule things out.

**PL:** Without seeking to put words into your mouth could we put it this way, given that a Prime Minister will always go when he thinks he can really win and he's always got his eye on the chance, your main thinking now is to go early next year?

**PM:** Yes.

**PL:** Thank you. Finally the subject of violence on television. I heard you raise this in relation to the violence against women at a press conference you were at the other day, you've raised it again in the House today, it's obviously something that has been on your mind. What's bothering you?

**PM:** I think in television feature films and tele-movies on television, too much violence is creeping into them. I notice this particularly when my children were watching television in the school holidays where kids do sit up after 8:30pm, and in a survey done by the ABT, 53 per cent of children are still up after 8:30pm. So what I'm saying is that the commercial free-to-air broadcasters should make certain that (a) the level of violence on television declines, and (b) adult only movies should be telecast no earlier than 9:30pm of an evening, so that at least children have got some chance of being protected from it.

**PL:** Do you think this violence is coming through in our society?

**PM:** There was a very pithy demonstration of that in that program 'The Simpsons', George Bush mentioned 'The Simpsons' in the election campaign, where the family campaign against violence in television. It very graphically illustrates the point I think, that the more the ambience, the insensitivities, as people become more insensitised to violence the more prevalent it is likely to be.

**PL:** And kids are taught that violence is a way of solving problems.

**PM:** I just don't think that children or young people in particular, who haven't had enough years to settle their thoughts about these subjects, who a majority of have probably never seen a violent thing happen or a killing. To see it as it's now being depicted as what you'd call an every day circumstance of the depiction of modern television is too much for a culture to keep absorbing.

**PL:** Are the networks going to go along with the Prime Minister's request?

PM: I don't know, but I was making the point Paul, they've been treated very fairly in the Government providing an opportunity for them to extend their reach into pay television. It's not a case of everything for networks and nothing for the rest of us, I think they've got national responsibilities.

PL: You almost make it sound like a bribe or a bit of a pay out, we look after you, you do the right thing.

PM: I'm saying they've been treated properly in national policy where national interests have been brought to bear, they should respond accordingly.

PL: And if they don't Prime Minister?

PM: We'll see, but I'm certainly going to write to the Federation of Commercial Television Stations saying that I think that AO movies ought to be displayed after 9:30pm and the classifications for films should be much more clear. That parents in particular ought to have a better idea of knowing what a classification means and what sort of depiction is likely in the event of someone viewing it. I think the ABA is going to run a survey and an investigation on this to develop a new classification system and that should help a great deal, but the greatest help will come from the self restraint of the television networks themselves. Chasing ratings with violence I think has gone too far.

PL: Thank God for family shows like this.

PM: That's right.

PL: Thank you.

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