



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
INTERVIEW WITH OLIVIA O'LEARY, IRISH TV 'RTE',
10 SEPTEMBER 1993

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- J: Mr Keating, I would like to start with the view of you that so many people see. What they see is the style, the fists up, the fighter. It is rough isn't it?
- PM: It is combative. Politics in Australia is very combative and our Parliamentary chamber ... all the debates are extemporaneous, like our question period. There is nothing with notice, it is all without notice. So, one has to have most of the detail rolling around one's head, so therefore at will, one can draw it down and use it. The whole thing has a sharp combativeness to it.
- J: Yes, but it hurts, it is meant to hurt.
- PM: Yes, but it also gives one the opportunity to persuade people - it is also persuasive at its best. Often the film clips are not often the best bits, but the persuasive bits. I think in these sorts of environments - Parliamentary chambers - one can be persuasive and that is one of the powers of politics - to persuade people, to interest them.
- J: Yes, but is it persuasive to call somebody a 'scumbag', to talk about somebody's ashened faced performances? That is not persuasion.
- PM: No, but that all has its place in the intimidatory part of it all, which has its own little spot as well. It is a smorgasbord of techniques one applies in any of these things. But, in the last decade we have changed Australia from an inward looking country to an outward looking one. I have had a substantial role in that, so ones had an educative role as well as a policy role. All too infrequently that role is diminished compared to the cut and thrust of the Parliament.

- J: Still, a friend said about you, that when you are at your most combative, that you bruise not just the ego but the soul.
- PM: I probably have on occasions - more to be regretted, but it is all a bit sweeter than it looks let me say. Journalism naturally looks for hype and extravagance and they find a bit of that.
- J: And you give it to them?
- PM: And it gets repeated, but mostly it is reasonable and about reason and it is mostly sweeter.
- J: What makes you such a fighter, is it the Irish background?
- PM: I don't know. I have what I think is a well honed sense of fairness and when one dispenses fairness, one expects fairness. That is not just about oneself, but about national issues or about opportunity or about disadvantage. So, one feels the pinch of these issues and if you are passionate about them you put it. I think that is where it comes from - I think if you have a well honed sense of fairness and something nice is done, you are appropriately pleased. If something poor is happening, you are offended and I am offended by things like disadvantage, poverty, as I am excited by opportunity and advantage. So, it is a matter of that play of emotions which is in ones personality.
- J: But you are passionate? Do you think that is an aspect from the Irish?
- PM: That is true. I am passionate, yes I am.
- J: Is that an aspect of Irishness do you think?
- PM: This is a characteristic of the Irish, I think - very obviously a characteristic of the Irish. It is pretty true of Australian-Irish people and particularly true of Australian-Irish politicians.
- J: Why did your people leave Ireland?
- PM: I don't know, but they left of their own free will in 1855, just after the famine. I presume it was the surfeit of labour which was around for the economic opportunity which existed and they took what they thought was a sensible decision to leave.
- J: Did they leave at all with a particular view of how Britain treated Ireland? Has that affected your own attitudes?
- PM: No, I don't think so. I think that they saw for themselves limited opportunities and probably the deprivation which came in the late 1840s and early 1850s and looked at the places where they had relatives and they had relatives here in Australia.

J: Do you know much about them and how they came, what it was like for them?

PM: Not very much, no, but I do know accurately who came and where they lived and how all the family followed after that. The thing about the Irish and Australia is that they settled not in particular areas, but across the country and they very quickly opened up a lot of provisions and commerce to themselves and they were very quickly taken up in the main stream of Australian life. They were here in the early part of the formation of this country so, in a sense, they were part of the change rather than arriving as a group after it had already established itself, which was, say, the case in the United States.

J: But what has it meant to you to be an Irish Catholic in Australia?

PM: When I was a child, if one was a Catholic one was disadvantaged. I was still around when job advertisements were written that Catholics need not apply. You would never see that today in Australia, but it was still a remnant of it about when I was an adolescent. A lot of the opportunities which were more generally available to the rest of the community were not always available to Catholics. The whole equality of opportunity which has become and is part of the Australian ethos has changed all that. Now where this issue was once a great issue, sectarianism, in my party, the Australian Labor Party, is not today.

J: But that experience of disadvantage left you with a particular political view of the world.

PM: It gives you great respect for minorities and the sharpness of the disadvantage they feel. I am not saying to you that I was economically disadvantaged - I wasn't, but there was a subliminal disadvantage there which was obvious to you. Whether one looks at Australia at the various ethnic groupings - be it the blacks or the southern Europeans or the Asians - one naturally has a more sympathetic view.

J: You talk about your working class background, you are seen and referred to as a working class boy, you started work early, didn't go to university and yet people look at you and they see a man who enjoys the fine things of life, who enjoys fine Italian tailoring, who enjoys objects d'art. Have you come a long way, maybe too far from that working class background?

PM: No, I will always be loyal to the working class - I have always been loyal to working people. Let me leave the class point out because Australia is not a class based society. This is not Britain, for instance. But to the aspirations of working Australians are the loyalties which I have and I have spent now a decade, the second decade of my public life trying, to advantage materially by way of employment and across

the spectrum of issues, the interests of working Australians. But again, one learns things in life and so one should. The fact that I developed an interest in eighteenth century architecture and decoration and furniture and things like that is just simply a commentary on one's interests, that is all. It has nothing to do with one's politics or one's loyalties.

J: Just a last question on what was obviously a very close working class family background, it has affected your own attitude to family hasn't it, family matters terribly to you, your own family?

PM: It does, yes. I think that the great nurturing and development and sense of confidence which children have from a family where there is a lot of affection and care, sticks with them all their life. I think that confidence is part of an inner confidence which they draw down for the rest of their life. This is not true for everybody, I understand that, but it has been true for me and it is true for my family.

J: Your wife doesn't work, she may carry a lot of that load for you.

PM: She did, she has. She is doing a fair bit of work now in this position, as any Prime Minister's wife does, but we have invested a lot of interest in our children and we hope we are developing nice personalities.

J: A last question really on what would have been your youth. You ran a band called the Ramrods, God bless you, was it maybe the only time that you were tempted away from a political career.

PM: No, I joined the Labor Party when I was fifteen and I always saw public life as a big canvas. The board was there but you did need the palette - you needed to be in the game. I had other interests. In the 1960s when I was an adolescent was this great bounty of popular music which, of course, has really sustained popular music now for two or three decades and I was enjoying that as much as anybody else and I participated in it. My first love was always classical music and I have returned to that and it is now one of the great continuing sources of joy for me, particularly now the compact disc is here with performances of people in the '30s and '40s which you couldn't procure on vinyl. I think all those things makes the quality of life so much better.

J: And your favourite composers apart from the great song writers of the '60s?

PM: My favourite composers are Germans - Richard Strauss; Mahler; Brahms; Elgar who is English; Gabriel Fauré, French; Beethoven, German - they are basically in the 19th Century and early 20th Century.

J: To move on to something that has captured the imagination of a lot of people in this country which has been your declaration of wanting a referendum on a republic in this country. Don't you want Queen Elizabeth as your Queen, don't you want her?

PM: In the long run ... it is not a matter of Queen Elizabeth herself as a personality because I think she has been a most conscientious Monarch. But if the question is rather - do we want the Monarchy in the long run? The answer has to be an unequivocal no, we don't. Australia's population, its culture, its place in the world, its aspirations, its dignity are inconsistent with having an English Monarch as our head of state.

J: Can I put to you some of the things that have been said about you. Obviously it is a controversial position to adopt. You have been criticised as just another Irish Pom basher with a chip on his shoulder.

PM: Yes, well, that is silly and unfair, but there are a lot of silly and unfair people around.

J: But is it the Irish in you that doesn't like Kings and Queens and regalia?

PM: No, it is probably in some respects the Catholic in me. That is, that we are all born equally and we die equally and we are children of Christ. Therefore we possess, each, an innate human dignity and therefore that should be given every chance of expression. And where we to choose any group of people or any individual to manage us in the social contract we are part of, it ought to be someone chosen on the basis of those innate qualities and dignity understanding as they must that their governing and managing other people with the same qualities. Therefore, I do not think that is consistent with hereditary governance - whether that be constitutional monarchs or any other sort of hereditary position. For Australia it has worked at various times, for Britain it still works. But for Australia for the future it won't work.

J: But, how long have you felt this way? We have only heard this from you in the last few years - Bob Hawke didn't go on about it.

PM: Well, he may have had different views. He shares my view about the republic, but he didn't make it an issue during his Prime Ministership.

J: Why?

PM: I don't know really, these are just one of those things. I think probably preoccupied with other pressing issues of change.

J: So how long has it been an issue for you?

- PM:** It has been an issue in my mind for a very long period of time. Again, you only have a chance to move these issues along in a position like this.
- J:** There are some people, maybe unkindly, who say that it is a diversion from the economy.
- PM:** Yes, well, we are now growing faster than any western economy. We are growing at about 3 per cent a year and we have the prospect of growth accelerating, so that is not really a valid criticism. There is an old saying in Australia - the dogs may bark, but the caravan moves on. You will always have yappers, critics, but one has to keep going.
- J:** You will, but won't you have people who genuinely felt hurt at some of the comments you made about Britain's role during the War? Some of the old service men were very proud of the records and proud of their service.
- PM:** And as they are entitled to be and I acknowledged ... how could you but acknowledge the casualties, and the service given by British soldiers and sailors in the Pacific campaign. But, that is not to make that point - which one makes validly - it is to be able to make the other essential point and that was, in the eyes of the British government during the War, Australia was expendable and that in a sense Australia was kidded along. That Singapore and the base there had in some way provided a bastion of defence for us - it didn't. But we were never really told that and we were left to face a Japanese invasion. Now, the truth is the truth - and the truth has to be said.
- J:** There still are people and I am talking about something precious that people may miss. There were many people in this country who felt that the link with Britain and the Crown made them belong to something bigger than Australia was, gave them the feeling that they were connected may be with an empire, with a sort of master nation.
- PM:** That is very true.
- J:** And will they lose that, will it be enough to be Australian?
- PM:** I think it is going to be more than enough to be Australian - that is part of the point. If one wants to ... one should represent this nation as it is. That is, as it is now - independent, independently minded, proud of a culture of its own, and if it wants to belong to anything it should belong to the family of the Pacific nations - its natural place and not an unnatural place. Can I also say though, that we have always been a member of the Commonwealth and we would remain, in my view, a member of the Commonwealth, which I think is a useful body. So, in a sense a lot of countries which have become republics - and there are

many of them in the Commonwealth - have remained Commonwealth countries which we would well do, which I believe we would do.

J: You are still heading off to Britain though knowing that you are a 'hate' figure in the British press. They call you ..

PM: I don't think that's true.

J: Well, Ned Kelly - the Lizard of Oz; Ned Kelly in an Italian suit.

PM: Well, that is only the low lives who run the British tabloids, we all know about them. But in terms of the broadsheets I had a lot of support in The Times and The Daily Telegraph about the argument about policy during the War and even more support about the republic. So, in the quality press, I think, there is a lot of interest in Britain in Australia which we appreciate and let me make this perfectly clear to you. I think that Britain is an important part of Australia's heritage and it should remain that way; the links, as is the case with Ireland.

J: Yes.

PM: And they should remain that way. In many respects sorting out our long run constitutional arrangements will actually leave a better feeling about Britain.

J: I know many people would love to be a fly on the wall during this conversation, what will you be saying to the Queen when you meet her?

PM: I don't think I can say exactly what I will be saying to her because the convention is, and it is an appropriate one, that the conversation remains private. But, I was asked - will I be referring to my Party's views about a shift to a republic and the answer to that is in the affirmative, I will. I would be less than frank if I were not to do that with the Queen and I would never be less than frank with her.

J: Do you think she would be sorry to break that link?

PM: Yes, but again it is a decision that is going to be taken by the Australian people at a referendum. Not by me or this Government, but by the Australian nation and I don't think she would be therefore sorry that they took that decision provided that the warmth and the affection of Australians for Britain and British institutions remain. I think that would and as I said to you a moment ago, that could even be given a fuller expression once, if you like, some of the embarrassment of the current constitutional arrangements pass.

J: A quick question, people are worried about the sort of Australian president, head of state that would replace the Queen. Have you at all

thought about the Irish model of the Presidency, you have met our President?

PM: Yes, I was very pleased to meet your President. We really enjoyed her visit here and she made a very large impact on Australia. I think in fact she provided a very nice example of a republic and a Presidency to the Australian people. But as to structures - I think you are asking me about the modalities of elections, are you or

J: No, I didn't want to really get into that, but wondered whether Mary Robinson and the sort of the President she is would be the sort of model you would look to?

PM: Absolutely, I think she fulfils the office with great distinction and were that to be emulated in any way in Australia we would do well out of the presidency.

J: To move on to Asia. You have spoken so much about it and the need for Australia to belong in this particular part of the world. Will Asian countries feel differently about you if you are a republic?

PM: I think so, yes.

J: Why?

PM: Because I think they want to deal with Australia as a full partner in the Asia Pacific. They don't want to see us as a derivative society, even if the derivation comes from the constitutional arrangement which has been so long standing. Because we are, in a generic sense, representing ourselves by whoever is our head of state and in a generic sense representing the country and its great attractions and its products - to be there in this area of the world where there are diverse cultures, you have got to stand on your own feet and be as you are.

J: Won't it be difficult though for many Australians to embrace Asia - there are barriers of language, there are cultural barriers of history?

PM: Much less difficult today than thirty years ago.

J: But, say taking the sort of nature of some of the states you are talking about, basic questions of democracy and human rights. Take Indonesia for instance and its record of human rights in East Timor.

PM: Yes, but take Indonesia as an old society of 180 million people and what we are seeing there is a move, a very egalitarian move of the distribution of national wealth, consistent rising levels of incomes - there is nothing about in the broad of Indonesia's national life that make Australians feel as though they want to be part, in some way, of that change. Certainly with Timor there has been great problems and

from our point of view these incidents where human rights have been asunder has displeased us and we have said so.

- J: But not strongly enough. Your own Parliamentary Committee on the whole question of the Dili massacre felt that your response was soft, I think they said.
- PM: I reject that because I think that President Soeharto and the Indonesian Cabinet decided to take disciplinary action against some of the officers involved in this massacre and I think for the first time, and probably a long time, there was a real response from Indonesia to the objections which countries like Australia took. But, one can't hold a whole national relationship to ransom in perpetuity over that. The issue for us is to encourage Indonesia not to do these things and to economically develop Timor so that the cause is removed.
- J: But I am talking to you, having come from a country which saw the pictures on television of the people killed in Dili and who know that Australia, above all, was the nation with the white hat, the nation that stood up for a fair go within the Commonwealth. People in Ireland are asking why hasn't the Australian government, why hasn't Paul Keating created merry-hell about what is going on in East Timor?
- PM: But we have.
- J: Very quietly.
- PM: We are not going to say ... it was like though the Europeans saying we will not deal with northern Ireland, we will not deal with you because of the way you conduct yourselves - you can't do that to states. You can make your objections, but you can't in the end, not with this proximity and not this relationship.
- J: But you have gone further. You, for instance have an agreement with the Indonesians over oil exploration in the Timor Gap and it so annoys the Portuguese that you should be there, that you should have done that - a country they regard as illegally occupying East Timor - that they are taking you to the International Court of Justice.
- PM: The Portuguese were total hypocrites, they were the worst colonists in this part of the world, they left no legacy behind and we have now got a common continental shelf between which it is impossible to configure boundaries and so we are jointly developing it. It is the same sorts of things that happened in the North Sea, it is just a sensible way to conduct oneself and to be in any way moved by the hypocrisy of Portugal in this exercise would be foolish indeed.
- J: But by doing so, aren't you recognising a questionable occupation, an illegal occupation?

- PM: That debate is over. The time to have had that was in the middle 1970s - that opportunity has past. I think, to be arguing now against the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia would be absolutely fruitless, but what one should argue is that those people be properly treated and that opportunities be made available to them and that the Indonesian authorities change their tune in relation to human rights, especially for Timor. All those points have been made, but the critics want them to be made at the expense of the total relationship and that is not reasonable.
- J: You are a very inventive name caller, a very inventive user of words is that an Irish thing?
- PM: It is very much an Irish thing. I like to use words, to paint word pictures, to use the language creatively, to put a complex argument simply or to develop some emotional colour. Now, I am sure there is something about the Irish in that, because the Irish love words. The great literary tradition of Ireland is manifest and obvious and the passion with which the Irish argue over things and then use the words, paint the pictures - well, there is a bit of that happening here.
- J: To move back to prosaic things - the economy, the move of Australians and the facing of Australia towards Asia and its Asian neighbours is vital for your economic survival.
- PM: It is. We have made a very great cultural change here. Ten years ago this was a closed country with high tariffs, shipping a bit of wheat and wool, dependent only on commodities. Now the fastest growing exports here are elaborately transformed manufactures, technology products like telecommunications equipment, medical equipment, services, and that has required a very large cultural change inside Australia. We have started that change in our education system. A decade ago only two children in ten completed secondary school - now it is eight in ten and we are streaming those people through universities and through polytechnics and that is providing the horse power to our research and development. We are investing in our greatest resource - our people.
- J: You have been very big and committed to the notion of turning a closed economy around to meet the world. You have pinned your hopes on a freer trade world, but while you have brought down the tariff barriers, the rest of the world hasn't always been so obliging has it?
- PM: No, but we brought them down in what we think are our best interests as well as others'. The most, I suppose ... it's an unlikely fact, but the fact is that it has taken a Labor government to turn Australia into a market economy. But it is a market economy with a very nice social

safety net grafted on to it and in developing that amalgam, we think we are doing something which is interesting in world terms, in social democratic terms.

J: But there would be those as the St Vincent de Paul society yesterday did would point to the high level of unemployment and say you are bringing down the barriers too fast and it is time to slow down.

PM: Yes, but it is not tariff barriers producing that. It is just that the international recession has largely produced that, but importantly while those people are unemployed, we have got a good safety net there supporting them - be it in health care, in education or just in income support; as we have for low income families, as we have great supporting policies for women, the role of women in our society. We have done something interesting here in Australia.

J: But have you done maybe something you really needed to do, which is to bring wages down to the competitive levels of the economies with which you are competing?

PM: We have brought them down enough to make our products competitive, but our products are not highly labour intensive products, they are mostly higher technology products. So you can secure a premium for those products, therefore one doesn't have to pay very low wages to compete with products with a high labour content. We are leaving those products to the Chinese and to others, while we exploit the higher echelons of production.

J: To get back to the free trade argument. How do Australian farmers feel when they have to export their produce without subsidy into markets where they are competing with French and maybe Irish produce which is subsidised?

PM: French and definitely Irish. They feel cheated and they feel as though the world is having them on and that is why we have argued so much in the Uruguay round for a diminution of subsidies for our agricultural trade. We say that the countries that reduce their subsidies will be better off anyway in economic terms that their economic societies will be more robust and there will be better levels of employment, maybe different levels of employment, but better levels and a better economic performance.

J: Will you be telling this to Albert Reynolds?

PM: I think he will expect the message anyway. It has been coming for a decade, but we are saying yes, it will work to our advantage in being able to sell into non-corrupted markets. But it will also work to the advantage of those who are now in corrupted markets, like the huge costs of the EEC subsidies and the dreadful, lead weight that puts on

the economic performance of Europe. Take that weight off, Europe will perform better, Ireland will perform better and you end up with a better economy. That is what we have done here with protection and we have proved the point. We have lowered protection and we have advantaged ourselves.

J: And you have 11 per cent unemployment? How does the 'world's greatest Treasurer' explain that?

PM: But we are a more fully employed society now than we have ever been. That is 11 per cent unemployment the most massively high participation rates. If Australia had the same participation rates in its workforce as say, the United States does, we would have unemployment at 6 per cent. If we had the same participation rates today in Australia as we had in the early '80s we would have unemployment at 5 per cent or 6 per cent - but we encouraged through the massive growth of employment in the '80s, particularly the involvement of women in the work force, a huge participation rate and that is why really, unemployment is quite as high as it is, but why we are so committed to getting it down. We are not just sitting, waiting for something to happen, we are actually actively trying to grow the economy and get unemployment down.

J: Still though, if you had to choose a time to leave the country, looking at the headlines in the papers these last few days and people's anger about the level of unemployment - this is as good as time as any to go. You have said yourself the picture ain't rosy.

PM: No, but again Australia shares equal growth place in the world now with the United States - that is 2.5 to 3 per cent. Most of Europe is in negative growth, if I can use the expression. Most of Europe is contracting. In relative terms, we are doing well, but not well enough.

J: Tell that to the dole queues.

PM: That is right, but again I am not leaving Australia to ... I am leaving Australia to do something more, to try and advantage our economic circumstances and particularly in things like APEC which is developing the economic region of the Asia Pacific which will be a great long-term advantage to Australia.

J: We have an unemployment problem which is twice as bad as yours and Irish people traditionally have looked to this country as somewhere they can get a job. What would you advise them right now?

PM: I still think the largest single source, while 50 per cent of our migration comes from Asia, the largest single source still comes from Britain and Ireland, the British Isles and Ireland and that will probably remain true.

- J: But should they stay at home right now?
- PM: If people are trained they will find work here. It is about how quickly they move, the velocity with which they move through that pool of unemployment. We have here also labour market programs, job subsidies, training and work experience to take the longer term unemployed back into the work force. As this economy picks up and employment picks up, the prospects of finding jobs here are going to be much better than they are even today.
- J: When you look back at Australia's history and Australia's treatment of their Aborigines, what do you see?
- PM: Disadvantage and dispossession. We are now taking an opportunity presented by a fundamental change in our law by our most supreme of courts - the High Court of Australia - which has said that there is a native title in the common law of Australia. So, we are now as a government embarking on a process of developing a whole body of administrative law to handle what is really a revolution in land management with this decision.
- J: The native right will exist though, in limited cases, we need not go into the details, it is a complex question. Is that going to be adequate to compensate these people for what they have gone through?
- PM: No, and we will be doing more than simply recognising this native title.
- J: You will be giving compensation?
- PM: Well, it is compensation that comes in a sense, automatically, but we are doing more than that. We are setting up land funds to buy back land at some point in time, when we announce a package of measures for social justice, for justice for Aboriginal people who cannot advantage themselves from this decision. But, the importance of the decision is that land which Aboriginal people in Australia now secure will not be conferred on them by the rest of us. It will not be gifted to them by the parliaments of Australia, it will theirs of right, it will be theirs on inherent right and the difference in that compared to the position they have formerly been in is all the world of difference.
- J: You are still meeting resistance though aren't you, particularly in mining areas, they don't like this?
- PM: You will always meet resistance from conservative elements, that do not want to give land to black people - it is as simple as that. You will always meet that resistance, but I believe we will overcome that resistance and go a long way to removing the stain of dispossession which is part of the former legal concept of what was called terra

nullius - the land of no one. Where our law never recognised Aboriginal custom and title.

J: And remove a blot on your own country's history?

PM: I think so and to become the society we are becoming for everybody to embrace the country. Our indigenes must feel that they can embrace it, and where that disadvantage and dispossession becomes a thing in their memory.

J: Since you have become Prime Minister, we have seen some big brush strokes on the canvas here. We have seen perhaps the beginning of an historic settlement with the Aboriginal people, we have seen the conscious embracing of Australia's place in this part of the world, we have seen the very determined moves towards a republic. What does it all add up to, paint me the big picture?

PM: The big picture is a more independent, confident country representing itself as it has now become and with the pride that comes with the dignity of managing your own affairs absolutely. For a nation, it is like breathing fresh air into the place - it will invigorate it and give it the possibility of yielding for itself a future that in past modes it could never have possibly contemplated.

J: Is that why Australia has never had as you have said, a great leader?

PM: Maybe our circumstances ... the fact that we have never had great cathartic periods of our history, probably meant that we never needed at the time to produce them. But our leadership has been good enough when it has mattered - in WW1 in WW2, at various other periods. That is the main thing - the country has always been able to meet its requirements in terms of its political leadership.

J: Does it matter very much now?

PM: I am a punter, I tend to take political risks and I don't mind risking my own hide from time to time because as I have always said to my colleagues, the worst thing that could happen to you in this game is you loose your job, so why be a mouse? Why hang back? Why not punt it up occasionally? And on the big ticket items like the Mabo decision on native title or the republic or the big economic changes, as they say in Australia, let's have a go, lets give it a try.

J: So the great leader that Australia has never had, could you be he?

PM: No leader is entitled to talk about themselves. That is all for someone else's assessment. All one should do at the time is understand the ramifications of the issues and try and take the best and most

courageous decisions. If, in the wash up, there is a national advantage in there, well, good.

J: Finally, even though this country is so very far away, it has always been in the Irish mind, part of our ambit, part of the English speaking world, a place we could come to even though it is so far away, where we could feel at home. Now, you are moving towards Asia, you are plugging into this part of the world, you are breaking your links with Britain. Are you going to leave us behind as well?

PM: No, I don't think so. No individual group in this country, no ethnic group here is ever asked to leave things behind. Commitment to Australia - yes, but breaking emotional ties with their countries of origin or their friendships - no. Why? It is unreasonable and unnecessary. So, British people who are here will always naturally keep pride ... in terms of their relationship with Britain and be emotionally attached to it. And that will always be true, of the Irish and of course, we say often in Australia the Australian Irish are sentimental to the last tear drop, and I think that is true and always sentimental about Ireland. That is true of me as it is of anybody of Irish descent. I have only been there once in my life, but everything about the place ... it is soft on the eye and it is soft on the soul and that will always be a place where an Australian of Irish descent can go. And an Irish person can come to this country and feel as though they are in a society they can immediately take a part of. The great thing about Australia is, that is true of so many nations.

J: Paul Keating, thank you.

PM: Thank you.