



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. P. J. KEATING, M.P., ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, WASHINGTON, U.S.A., SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 1993

J: Why won't you be attending the signing ceremony tomorrow?

PM: Because I only have a couple of days here and so I have rescheduled some of the Tuesday meetings onto Monday, in which case - for the Trade Secretary, Mr Kantor and the Secretary of the Treasury - I'll get a chance to meet them on the Monday which I wouldn't otherwise do. The President having scheduled our meeting on the Tuesday which of course I think is entirely appropriate given the weight and circumstance of what's happening the day before.

J: Did you seek a meeting with the CIA Director, Mr Keating and for what purpose?

PM: Well that's been a permanent part of the program, from the time the program was developed for the purpose simply that this gentleman is director of all American intelligence and we, as you know, have an intelligence partnership with the United States and an important one.

J: Will you be taking up with Mr Clinton the trade issues that have caused friction in the relationship?

PM: Well, I think for the President I will leave the discussion on the broader issues. That is, the broader bilateral and multilateral issues and that...I mean, the point of the visit is to get to know him, to have the chance to meet an American Administration in its formative days at a time when there is a coincidence of interests between Australia and the United States. These are the things to concentrate on rather than scrabble around over a particular issue which I think is better left to the discussions with the particular ministers who are dealing with them.

J: Won't he have his mind on other things? Like the Middle East?

PM: Well, I think the Middle East ceremony on Monday will probably - I think Governments tend to do things in discrete ways. One handles one issue at a time one day and something else the next. I think that the interests Australia now has in trade, that is with such things as the Uruguay Round and with APEC, also happen to be on the top of the United States agenda. So I think, therefore, they are very much contemporary issues and contemporary issues of the President.

J: Shouldn't you take every opportunity, Mr Keating, to forcefully put the plight of Australian rural producers?

PM: I'll be putting it and I will mention it probably over the lunch. But for the key discussions I'd like to keep them on to the big mainframe issues which will affect Australia way into the future.

J: On APEC then, will you be trying to get any kind of endorsement from Mr Clinton for the Summit in Seattle actually moving towards making APEC a genuine economic community?

PM: Well, I think the whole point about the APEC ministerial meetings to date - four of them which we have had since its inception - and now the meeting of leaders and such things as the development of a trade and investment framework agreement and the work program; all of these things provide the capacity for the nation states of APEC to get to know one another, to begin working cooperative frameworks, to be developing agendas together to develop a sense of economic community. And that's the very essence of it.

J: But isn't EEP the most pressing issue in the relationship?

PM: No, I don't think it is. I think the most pressing issue in the relationship is the Uruguay Round and APEC to get Australia's long run interests set. EEP and the United States' willingness to deal with the Export Enhancement Program in terms of the areas in which these subsidies go....I will be making it clear to the administration that we've appreciated the assurances we've had in the past of not extending EEP into other areas. But I am not here just simply to make those trade points. I mean, that's the key point about this visit, it's about the longer run and broader issues.

J: Mr Keating, how do you see Australia's relationship with the United States changing given that the Cold War is over and also Australia's making a bigger push into Asia?

PM: Well, I think it is changing, as the United States' relationship with the world is changing with the Cold War overlay removed. And that means, therefore, that

events will have a more regional focus and the relationship the United States has with countries will necessarily change because of their regional complexion and regional fit. This is also true of Australia.

J: Mr Keating, NAFTA is also a big issue in the U.S. How do you see APEC fitting in with NAFTA if the U.S....(inaudible)

PM: Well, NAFTA is a North American trading agreement and if North America were to be integrated with APEC it would be an entirely consistent thing. Were it to be the United States and Canada and Mexico in an agreement I don't see that as being in any way different to the individual parts - the United States or Canada being involved with APEC.

J: Is there a real chance that your talks won't be effective as they otherwise would have been had the Middle East developments not occurred at this time?

PM: I don't think that's true. I think maybe the converse is true. That is, I think I now have more time with the President on the Tuesday than I was going to have on the Monday. And I think the United States appreciates the fact that Australia can see the weight of what is being concluded on Monday. I think they appreciate countries which have an appropriate sense of priority and magnitude. But because the issues which are on our agenda are also very much on their agenda - and they have been cooperating with Australia in them. I'm really looking forward to the meeting and I hope the President is too.

J: Going back to Dr Evatt, Australia has played, in many ways, a key role in Israel. Does the fact that we're not going now reflect our attitude to the Middle East and Israel itself?

PM: No. No, we've not been part of the peace process.

J: Mr Keating are you surprised that the Governor General has entered the republican debate?

PM: I haven't caught up on his views.

J: Prime Minister, your predecessor, Mr Hawke, has suggested that conservatives are - in an article in the London newspapers over the weekend - winning the intellectual debate on the republic and that all he's heard from the pro-republicans is emotionalism. Is that the way you see it?

PM: Well, no and I think that what you'll hear from the republicans, so to speak, is in

the first instance the report of the task force, the committee, which will look at ways of making a competent change to a republic. And I think the music starts after that.

J: Do you believe that the monarchists have made a few hits though?

PM: No, I don't think so. Look, Australia will become a republic as inevitably as we are standing here. And it's about modalities, forms and timing. So I don't think the monarchists, as you put it, have made any hits at all.

Ends.