



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON.
P. J. KEATING, M.P. - SHELBOURNE HOTEL, DUBLIN, IRELAND
SUNDAY 19 SEPTEMBER, 1993**

PM: I was received in audience by her Majesty the Queen at Balmoral Castle yesterday and there is a long-standing convention that the contents of these conversations remain confidential. But, I am able to say that I explained to Her Majesty that, notwithstanding the deep respect and warm affection felt towards her by the Australian people, there is a growing feeling that Australia should make the necessary constitutional changes to allow the appointment of an Australian Head of State. I said such a move was seen as necessary to establish clearly Australia's identity as an independent nation.

I outlined to Her Majesty the various steps that would be involved in such a process including the need for a referendum to approve constitutional amendments. I explained that the Australian Government's view was that if approved by the Australian people at a referendum, it would be appropriate for Australia to become a republic by the centenary of our Federation in the year 2001. I told Her Majesty that in such a situation Australia would remain a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and that the Australian people would warmly welcome visits to Australia by Her Majesty as Head of the Commonwealth, as Queen of the United Kingdom.

Her Majesty authorised me to say that she would, of course, act on the advice of her Australian Ministers as she always has, and on any decision made by the Australian people.

J: Prime Minister, how did the Queen take to being told by you that there was no place for her (inaudible) in Australia's future?

PM: Well, as I said to you, I am not breaking the convention of giving you details of the conversation or its ambience except to say that the visit was a most enjoyable one for Mrs Keating and I. There was a most cordial atmosphere there and it was friendly and relaxed and I came away after a very nice afternoon and evening with Her Majesty and her family.

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- J: Prime Minister has the extension of Governor General Bill Hayden's term got anything to do with your republican timetable?
- PM: No, I'd spoken to the Governor General briefly about this matter some time ago and as this is a matter for Her Majesty's pleasure neither he, the Governor General, nor I could then progress the matter without my first having had a discussion with the Queen. And she's indicated to me that she is pleased by the Governor General's proposed extension and hence we will now put the procedures in place for the Governor General's term to be extended until early in 1996.
- J: Why do you want it extended?
- PM: Well, I think that it's a matter that the Governor General seems to be very broadly accepted by the Australian public and by both sides of Australian politics and he has obviously both enjoyed and taken great interest in the position. So, not unnaturally, I've said to him, "Should you wish to extend I should be pleased to raise this matter with Her Majesty." He said to me, "I am," and so I did.
- J: By extending the term to 1996 though it does mean that if your timetable comes to pass the next Governor General would be the last before the first Australian Head of State.
- PM: That would be so.
- J: Mr Keating the Queen saying that she would act on the advice of the Australian Ministers on any decision of the Australian people, is that the kind of green light you were hoping to get?
- PM: Well, look, the statement's there, and it's there. It's there in print and I don't want to amplify it.
- J: On the subject of Bill Hayden's extension, did his warnings about the dangers of certain models of a republic influence your thinking or did that make you think twice or...(inaudible)...?
- PM: The Governor General and I discussed this some time ago and it was then simply a matter of me raising it with the Queen, which I have. So nothing that he's said in the last day, or week, in any way has influenced the decision.
- J: What do you think of what he said?
- PM: Well, I think he thought he was taken out of context and then quickly went to clear the context up.

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J: Did you (inaudible)..?

PM I didn't read the full text.

J: When do you think the referendum will be held?

PM Well, that's again a matter for - that's a matter for the Australian public and a matter for debate in Australia. And that debate has already started, it will obviously again revolve around the presentation of the report of the Committee we've established and so no doubt in 1994 we'll see some, I think, you know, some real reflections by all concerned in Australia upon the merits of a republic and the modalities of such a change.

J: (inaudible)... dangers of a popularly elected President. I know that you told the Turnbull Committee that you had a reservations about that. Are you prepared to go public on those reservations?

PM: Well I think that's probably a conversation for when I'm at home. I did speak to the Turnbull Committee about some of those matters but I think that's a debate for another place and another time and I'm quite happy to have it then, really.

PM: I have to go now.

J: Mr Keating, how would you describe the circumstances of the step taken at Balmoral?

PM: I'm sorry, I have to go.

Ends.