



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON.  
P.J. KEATING, M.P.,  
VILLERS-BRETONNEUX, FRANCE  
WEDNESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER, 1993**

- J:** The Dawkins crisis, Mr Keating. What's the truth behind that?
- PM:** Well, I think, I spoke to the Treasurer early this morning, briefly and he is - I can assure you - soldiering on, indefatigably. And we will pass the Budget in the Senate and we'll get on with the business of the Government.
- J:** Was he considering resignation?
- PM:** I don't think so. No, I think he wanted to make a point. But there's only one point and that's the business of the Government continuing and that means passage of the Budget.
- J:** Well what point was he making about threatening to resign?
- PM:** I think he's feeling that he's needed perhaps more support amongst members of the caucus than he's had.
- J:** From you, too?
- PM:** Oh no. I think he thinks my support for him has been exemplary - which it has. But the fact of the matter is that we all think this way from time to time but the thing is you've got to get on with it. He said to me, "Look, we will get this Budget through and we will then be in a position where the finances of this Government are largely, then set - in the course of this Parliament."
- J:** Does Mr Dawkins still have your full support?
- PM:** Of course he has my full support?
- J:** Should he exercise more discipline in what he says?
- PM:** Oh look I'm not here to....

- 2 -

J: What do you think of the Senate Committee (inaudible) ... They're doing a 'dog in the manger' trick, too. Aren't they?

PM: This is not the place for me to be passing opinions about them.

J: Mr Keating, a question for the local press. What did you think about this day?

PM: Well, this is a very touching day. We, I think all of us who were too young to be part of this war - because of its huge impact on Australia - remember it. We remember the sacrifice of those who served and died here. And as well as that we remember the relationship with France.

Can I say though that the flower of many countries' youth was lost here in France - unselfishly, for the greater good of this country. And at an important time of world decision, we are not seeing the magnanimity from France that all of us who have fought and respected France, have shown it. And I speak here about the GATT Round; about the selfishness which has crept into European politics - most obviously in Bosnia - and the selfishness with which I think the French are pursuing international policy. And, I think, it is time for the French to reassess themselves and magnanimously be part of the world rather than sitting out there by themselves thinking that the world owes them a living. It doesn't and it's not going to give them one.

J: Do you think the GATT Round is now in doubt following the result in the EC Summit?

PM: I hope not. But, I think this is the time for plain speaking. Seven years is long enough and I think that the Europeans should understand the kind of world they'll create if they take the view that they can afford to play fast and loose with the GATT.

J: Mr Keating, are the tax cuts likely to go ahead if the .....

PM: Look, I'm not here to do a whole series of questions about domestic questions.

J: Prime Minister, have you had any communication with the Americans subsequent to the Brussels meeting?

PM: No, I haven't but I will be doing it.

J: Have you had a reply to your letter to Monsieur Balladur?

PM: No, I haven't. Not as yet.

J: Is there any legitimacy to the Europeans' claims to have some adjustments made to the Blair House Agreement?

- 3 -

- PM:** In my view, no. Blair House was negotiated between the European Community and the United States. It was done when the former Government of France was here. It seems to me, now, that the current Government of France thinks that in some way they can unwind this. Now this is the issue here, this is the issue here. It's a domestic political issue; it's France not rising to the occasion. And I can only recommend to Prime Minister Balladur that they rise to the occasion and agree, with some magnanimity, that because the Blair House Agreement is basically a set of minima, that it's untenable to now go back and try and unwind it.
- J:** You weren't this tough on the Irish, though. Were you Prime Minister?
- PM:** I said exactly that to the Irish. But the Irish - the key problem here is with the French.
- J:** Mr Keating have you received any advice on the situation in Russia now?
- PM:** No, I haven't. No. No, but let me say though that I support - Mr Yeltsin is the one democratically elected politician in Russia today. And the path of action which he contemplates is about seeking an expression of the Russian people to give constitutional authority and political authority to their legislature. And in the end, I don't think anyone can object to such a democratic process.
- J:** Mr Keating, do you think it's fair to put something that happened in a war 75 years ago in the context of the current trade negotiations?
- PM:** Well, I think it's more than fair that, when a nation's interests are threatened and other nations answer the call, in such a way... I mean, for Australia we lost, we sent to this war and lost nearly ten percent of our population. That's like losing nearly two million people today. I mean, that's sacrifice on a scale almost unheard of. And frankly, I think the world ought to be an easier and better place. Particularly amongst allies and former allies than has been the case recently. European politics are now becoming very, very self-centred and very selfish indeed as, I think, Bosnia well and clearly demonstrates. And I think this kind of self-centredness in the biggest thing of all - that affects the world most greatly now, in trade - has, I think, got to come to an end.
- J:** What is the significance of the unknown soldier?
- PM:** Well, the symbolism is that, that somebody who died here and was unknown - unknown - but who died here in the service of Australia and in the service of France. The symbolism is that such a person be taken home. To be honoured. So that the Australian nation can honour all service people who have died in similar conflicts.
- Ends.**