



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
INTERVIEW WITH RAY MARTIN, A CURRENT AFFAIR, CHANNEL 9  
SYDNEY, 27 JANUARY 1994**

### **E&OE PROOF COPY**

**RM: PM, thanks for your time.**

**PM: It's a pleasure, Ray.**

**RM: Have you had a chance to talk to Prince Charles?**

**PM: You mean since yesterday?**

**RM: Yes.**

**PM: No. But I had a very pleasant conversation with him the night before, and we had a little bit of correspondence between us yesterday morning, but I haven't seen him since.**

**RM: You haven't. Do you know whether he was concerned? He certainly looked very calm, didn't he?**

**PM: Oh, he's a professional at this sort of thing. He was attending functions like this when he was seven years of age. I think he's had more experience at these sorts of events than any of us.**

**RM: But you can't get experience with someone coming out of a crowd with a gun?**

**PM: No, I know. But his relaxed demeanour - his control in the circumstances - I think reflected the professional attitude he has.**

**RM: The NSW Premier's called for tighter security. Have you personally called for that?**

PM: No. I think one of the nice things about this country is that people are accessible. I think the important thing to record about this, is that it was not an assassination attempt - it was a political demonstration. It's unfair to Prince Charles, for anyone to be reporting it as an assassination attempt, when it wasn't. It's a serious thing for somebody to be saying that somebody is out to assassinate you. This was not true, and I think that therefore the Prince's own relaxed demeanour reflected how he wished the episode to be viewed.

RM: Yes, he wouldn't have known at the time though, would he? Suddenly someone comes out of a crowd with what looks like a gun?

PM: Oh sure, absolutely.

RM: Similarly, Premier Fahey and Ian Kiernan were quick out of the blocks and showed extraordinary reactions?

PM: Absolutely. John's had experience on the football field and Ian's an all-round sportsman, and quick reflexes and I think everyone would have been very, very proud of their quick response.

RM: Britain, America - around the world that footage obviously is in the news tonight. Should we be embarrassed?

PM: I think we must reflect upon this. We are all embarrassed whenever any good friend of Australia - any person such as this - is affronted in this way. Prince Charles is a good friend of this country and he should be treated with the respect and dignity that a good friend deserves.

RM: What about the alleged reason for the demonstration? Should we be embarrassed about our treatment of Cambodian refugees?

PM: Well, we've got processes in place to deal with refugee assessment. It's not a simple issue for Australia or any country, and we've been working through these legal processes to try and resolve all these problems.

RM: Children, women, men in jails, effectively for four years?

PM: I know they're long, and we are trying to get them resolved and finalised.

RM: Now the speech itself the Prince gave yesterday, last night. Some papers say that Prince Charles gave his tacit blessing to the republican movement. Is that the way you read it?

PM: What he said I think was, or directly said - look, this is a matter for Australians. This is a matter for you people, but personally I think this debate is a sign of a mature and confident country. In other words, personally I think you're able to handle this debate, and it's a good thing you are.

RM: But republicans, he said, may be right?

PM: Well, I don't think I'm entitled to say that he's saying Australia should be a republic. I think he has said to us have your own debate. As a member of the Royal Family, we will accept a decision by the Australian people, and frankly, he said, it shows a sign of a mature and confident country. I mean he is giving us a wink and a nod to carry on with this debate.

RM: You know that's going to be headline tomorrow? PM says Prince Charles gives us a wink and a nod?

PM: Not for a Republic, but to have the debate. But he's certainly not giving us a wink and a nod - not to move this way.

RM: I'm just looking at your speech tonight, shortly in Melbourne. You have been accused over the last couple of years by some of bashing the poms over the Singapore evacuation and Gallipoli and things like that, and yet in this speech you seem to be out there touting for British business.

PM: There is a really good modern linkage with Britain of the kind we should have. What I can't stand is this tugging the forelock business.

RM: Just before we leave Britain, can I just ask: there was a report on the weekend papers that Princess Diana would like to come to Australia. As the mother of a future King would she officially be welcomed?

PM: I have never seen any request from her, Ray, and naturally we would discuss that. But again, most people who want to come to Australia are welcome, that would include Princess Diana.

RM: Can we leave the Brits there for a moment? We will come back and talk about other things with Mr Keating in just a moment.

RM: Let's turn to the economy it has been a good year. The indicators are very good for this, can we let the good times roll?

PM: Yes, but I said yesterday, and I think it is worth repeating, this can't be a top end of town recovery.

RM: What does that mean?

PM: We don't want to see ... into the stock market and people playing paper assets, or throwing paper assets around.

RM: Like the high fliers of the '80s.

PM: It has got to spread out into plant and equipment investment and into employment.

RM: Can you officially say the recession is behind us?

PM: The recession is definitely behind us.

RM: No question about that. Are you worried about interest rates going up?

PM: The recession is way behind us, accept that we have still got the carry over in long term unemployment which the Government is devoting itself to now in these next three months.

RM: So that becomes a priority suddenly does it?

RM: It becomes a priority from a social justice point of view and a national economic efficiency point of view.

RM: What can you do about that? There is almost a million out of work.

PM: Well there is about 400,000 who have been out of work for one year or more. They're the problem. The Government has got to try and get them back into the swim as well as get aggregate employment going. So it's the short-term unemployed and the long-term unemployed.

RM: Someone sitting here watching this tonight and says - Keating would say the recession is over but I haven't had a job for a year and a half and I'm not going to get one.

PM: Well that is my point. There is a lag there. I think the word, Ray, I used it a lot with One Nation and in 1992 and in 1993, and that is inclusion. This has to be an inclusive society. That we all move along together. And if someone does drop back, we bring them up. And not let them slip away into an underclass.

RM: Yeah, but clearly from this speech tonight, you are very optimistic about the Australian economy?

PM: I think we have never faced in the last 25 years, a period quite like this. This is strong growth with very low inflation,

RM: Is it a good time to invest in piggeries?

PM: Well it is a good time to invest in Australia's comparative advantage. One Australia's great comparative advantages is food and we should all be investing in things which add value, employ people and hopefully it will lead to exports.

RM: PM, how about sandwich shops?

PM: Well, I think Ministers are entitled to invest in things, but they also have to be responsible for them.

RM: Alright, was Allan Griffith's responsible with his sandwich shop?

PM: Yes, if you have an investment you have to be responsible for, in political terms.

RM: Can you tell us tonight who the new Minister is?

PM: No, I haven't decided that yet, Ray.

RM: Would you think, I mean, Laurie Brereton, Simon Crean, Graham Richardson, Peter Cook are the names. Is that a fair guess?

PM: Well each one of those would be a competent industry Minister.

RM: Does Mr Griffith, at this stage, have a political career?

PM: Absolutely. He is still a Federal member of Parliament, and also while he will not be Minister for Industry, Technology and Regional Development he will still have a right to recontest a position in the ministry.

RM: I know you can't speak about it, so I won't push it further, but there are reports in the press that Mr Griffith knew about these alleged Labor Party checks and about the \$941.00 six weeks before he told you.

PM: Well I am not aware of it. The first, you asked me earlier, the first I knew of any of this matter was last Friday evening.

RM: Do you think, if that's the case, should you have been told six weeks ago if he knew?

- PM: Well that's a matter for him, and in the end when all this comes out in the wash, and let's not presume all these things are right, then we can make judgements about that.
- RM: What do you think about Bronwyn Bishops line that you can't run the industry portfolio if you can't run a sandwich shop?
- PM: Well I think the more important line is what contribution have the Liberals got to make to modern Australia. I mean here they are, they have opposed everything last year, they tried to knock the Budget over, they have opposed Mabo for no reason other than to oppose it. They start the new year without an economic policy, I mean they are in a terrible situation. You have got Dr Hewson on the one hand, and now Senator Bishop on the other. It seems to me, Ray, it is a choice between a vacuum and a lot of hot air. I mean Senator Bishop has no policy structure in her head.
- RM: Do you have any fears at all about Bronwyn Bishop and the bull ring, or bull pit of the House of Reps?
- PM: As far as I am concerned, as they put them up we deal with them. It was Andrew Peacock, then it was John Howard, then it was Andrew Peacock, then it is John Hewson. Whoever is next we will be ready and waiting for them.
- RM: Does your crystal ball say she is going to be leader before the year is out?
- PM: Well she is going to keep on trying, even if the Party doesn't give her the job. But if they do give her the job they know in their heart of hearts that there is no structure there.
- RM: All right, tough question now, what's it like to be 50?
- PM: Well all those Peter Pan notions go right out of your mind. I mean I belonged to that baby boomer generation which believed it was never going to grow old.
- RM: Do you feel old?
- PM: I don't feel old, but I know I am getting older, much older, and I am sure there is no generation that has resisted aging more than mine. And you see them, and they are still out there, but there ranks are thinning and they are fattening up, and their hair is thinning, as mine is. So the years go on.
- RM: Do you qualify as a dear old thing as you have called some of the older members of the Labor Party, are you now a dear old thing?

PM: Not quite, not quite, there is some cross over point, it has probably got a six in front of it.

RM: You have had your real holiday, the break. What did you do? Did you read a book, or just play old rock and roll records?

PM: We went to the beach, we went sailing quite a bit, I did a bit of reading, a bit of music. I went to a bit of theatre, so, I have had a couple of weeks of sun and culture.

RM: Did you play any Tom Jones records to loud for Anita?

PM: Well we had Billy Joel, the kids like Billy Joel and so do I. We meet at Billy Joel. Everything sort of after him I tend to drop off. And of course when the kids are around they monopolise all the audio visual equipment as it is called.

RM: PM, thank you for your time.

PM: Thank you, Ray.