



# ON TARGET

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*The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance —*

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**THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:** "The ramifications of the New World Order permeate politics, finance, education, the media and, of course, religion. Most of those who serve it have no inside knowledge of the Grand Design. They act either out of a shrewd sense that this is the side on which their bread is buttered or else out of genuine idealism. For idealism has always been a useful handmaid of conspiracy. The idealist is blind to the limitations of human nature. Therefore he can often be persuaded to do terrible things for the sake of an impossible vision." - W.D. Chalmers, in The Conspiracy of Truth (1978).

**PARTIES TAKE A HAMMERING IN WILLS BY-ELECTION** (All Comment from David Thompson):

The election of independent Mr. Phil Cleary to the seat of Wills in last weekend's by-election is the greatest demonstration that nothing is inevitable in politics. But although Mr. Cleary's victory was a sharp rebuke to Labor - the A.L.P. suffered a staggering 20% fall in the primary vote - it could well prove a serious body-blow to the Opposition. If Dr. Hewson was ever to stake his claim to the Prime Ministership, it was in Wills - located in Victoria where the Kirner Labor Government is bitterly unpopular, and treated with contempt by the former M.P., Mr. Bob Hawke.

The election of a second independent to Canberra must change the political landscape completely for the lead-up to the next Federal election. Despite Mr. Hawke's backhanded endorsement of Mr. Cleary (to the horror of the A.L.P. strategists) as "a good bloke" and that he would be "a good representative", there is no evidence that he shows a commitment to any fundamental philosophical position. But he can still perform an essential service for both Wills and the rest of Australia. He has made a sterling beginning simply by being elected.

Ted Mack broke the accepted political wisdom that an independent can't be elected any more. Cleary has thoroughly underlined the fact that not only can it be done once, but that it can be done again. It is

this that will force a dramatic change in the basic assumptions of Australian politics in the period ahead. It is now obviously possible that a group of independents can at least challenge the party parliamentary monopoly, raising vital issues and forcing the parties to debate them. Cleary has already shown a willingness to work with Mr. Mack, saying at least "we'll be able to put ideas into the forum".

**CLEARY HAMMERS "LEVEL PLAYING FIELD":** One of the ideas against which Cleary campaigned strongly was the fashionable economic 'rationalism' of the level playing field, with the elimination of tariffs and the internationalisation of the economy. Wills has 98 textile, footwear or clothing businesses. It has an unemployment level of 19%, with a youth unemployment rate approaching 30%. Such language struck a nerve that even Keating was forced to acknowledge with his cynical, clumsy retreat from the A.L.P. objective of zero tariffs by the year 2000.

It was similar language which, when employed by U.S. presidential candidate Pat Buchanan, wounded President Bush so seriously in the presidential primaries. Cleary's was a much more genuine appeal to 'nationalism' than Paul Keating's bogus concept of nationalism; cutting the British ties, and tugging the forelock to Asia. Cleary was, in effect, saying that it was time that we put Australia and Australians first, not the global market, level playing field, or any other economic theory. This is language that not only the Wills' voters understood, but the voters right across the country understand. It is certain that the dramatic result in Wills is sending shockwaves through all political parties.

Mr. Cleary had two great assets in his election campaign: Mr. Keating and Dr. Hewson - both of whom campaigned strongly in the electorate, completely overshadowing their candidates. Keating still carries heavy political baggage as the architect of "the recession we had to have". The pain is as acute in Wills as anywhere. "One Nation" as an economic statement has failed to move mountains, and it is evident that while his abrasive republican rhetoric makes for good parliamentary theatre, it did not translate as votes in Wills.

**"FIGHTBACK" IN RETREAT:** Dr. Hewson, however, is in much deeper trouble than Mr. Keating. The Liberals suffered a 7% swing against them in Wills, and this by-election simply confirmed the widely-held impression that there is little electoral enthusiasm for the Opposition "Fightback" package. The goods and services tax (G.S.T.) is the deadly component in the Opposition platform. The Wills failure follows a State by-election in W.A. the previous Saturday, in which the A.L.P., still suffering the political stench of the "W.A. Inc." Royal Commission, managed to hold the Liberals out of the seat of Ashburton. Members of the Liberal Party are becoming increasingly restless about Hewson's singleminded determination to "sell" the G.S.T. It becomes more and more likely that the Opposition membership base must decide whether to persist with Hewson and the G.S.T., abandon both, or persuade Dr. Hewson to abandon the G.S.T. in time for its odour to wear off before the next election.

Six months ago the suggestion that Keating could win the next election if he led the A.L.P. was met with derision. A Coalition win, led by Dr. Hewson, seemed "inevitable" and the polls indicated so. The political landscape is shifting, and Keating, heartened by the shock return of the Conservative Party in Britain, led by Mr. John Major, could yet achieve the impossible. If he does so, it will only be because of the poor calibre of the Opposition. They provide no genuine alternative in either their policies or their philosophy. The Coalition is failing conservative voters. Mr. Pat Buchanan, in the United States, has shown that there is an alternative, and Mr. Phil Cleary, Member for Wills, has emphasised it.

**RETREAT FROM SUPER-GOVERNMENT:** The re-election of the British Conservative Party last week was met with almost universal disbelief, even by Senior Ministers. Nicholas Rothwell, reporting for "The Australian" from London, wrote: "not a single opinion poll taken during the past month of campaigning came even remotely close to forecasting the election result, suggesting either a collapse of the pollster's art, or an extraordinary late surge to Mr. Major."

If there is any logical explanation for the Major victory, it can only be that Mr. Major, in sheer desperation, began to retreat from his commitment to Europe in the dying days of the election campaign. Apart from the last two days the European issue, with the potential to deeply divide the electorate - and the parties - had been significantly ignored. It was almost as if an unspoken bipartisan agreement existed not to mention Europe, lest a nervous electorate cement a party into government with an undertaking to ignore international embarrassment and retreat from the European nightmare.

The European correspondent for the Sydney Morning Herald, Mr. Paul McGeough, reported on the absence of debate about Europe only two days before polling day: "In the next day or so, there is the risk that Tory elements, frustrated by the lack of momentum in the election campaign, may become desperate enough to break ranks on the issue.

"One Tory M.P. did just that last Tuesday. A former Tory leader in the Commons, John Biffen, urged Major to go no further down the road to monetary and political union ... He said: "It's small wonder that the political establishment would like to leave the issue dormant, but on any account it will soon reawaken. Indeed, Europe is not asleep. It continues to be the major challenge to British politicians and its place in a general election deserves to be recognised."

**COLD FEET ON EUROPE:** As this report was being published, Mr. Major did begin to pull back from the Treaty on European Unity, signed last December in Maastricht, Holland. Britain has yet to ratify the Treaty on monetary and political union in Europe, and Major was sufficiently aware of British sensitivity to negotiate special concessions at the time of signing.

Faced with the prospect of losing government, Mr. Major apparently decided to defy "the establishment" of the City of London - dominated by 500 banking groups who orchestrated Mrs. Thatcher's destruction when she also began to retreat from merging Britain with Europe. Mr. Major would have been fully aware of the strong grassroots undercurrent against European union, not only in Britain.

Last year Belgian voters supported "right wing" and environmental parties against the governing pro-European Christian Democrats. This pattern was emphasised in French local government elections, in which the National Front delivered a devastating blow to Mitterand's strong support for European union. The issues in France (and Germany) were dominated by the prospect of mass migration within a European super-government with few national border restrictions. Ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in the 12-nation E.C. will be very difficult in France and Germany, where Mr. Kohl is pro-Europe.

In recent German State elections a strong backlash against immigration and European policies underlined opinion polls now showing a majority of Germans opposed to the Maastricht Treaty. In the Italian election, a number of separatist groups, like the Lombardy League and the South Tyrol People's Party, made big gains against European Union, and in the Irish republic a referendum is to be held on the Maastricht Treaty. It is feared that Irish voters will reject it, because under European union the Social Charter would not permit the Irish to make their own decisions on the issue of abortion. It should also be noted that the Scottish nationalists also suffered losses in the British elections, campaigning on independence from Britain within Europe. It is significant that the Conservatives gained two Scottish seats.

**TREATY DIFFICULT TO RATIFY:** Paul McGeough comments further: "Few voters fully understand that the deals already done mean that at the end of this year the citizens of Britain will become citizens of Europe, that despite some jiggery/pokery at Maastricht, the E.C. is on the way to common foreign affairs and defence policy.

"By its very nature Brussels will go on demanding a greater say in the lives of Britain. . . . Why, under a government that has been hell-bent on deregulation is Britain subjecting itself to more than 7,000 regulations churned out by Brussels every year? Why can Brussels overrule British legislation? Why does Brussels regulate the British environment? . . ."