



ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance —

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "If we are to preserve civilisation, we must first remain civilised" - Louis St. Laurent.

BEHIND THE HOO-HA CONCERNING INTERNATIONAL TRADE: As we survey the torrent of headlines and comments concerning the latest international talk-fest, held in Seattle, USA, we are reminded of the comment by British Prime Minister Disraeli, who said that he was intoxicated with the exuberance of his own verbosity. Paul Keating described the Seattle conference of the 17 politicians at the Asia-Pacific Conference as "one of the defining moments in the history of the Asia-Pacific". One headline read, "A NEW UNITED VOICE FOR THE ASIA-PACIFIC". The feeling of "unity" does not extend to Malaysia, whose Prime Minister declined to attend the Seattle Conference. Dr. Mahathir favours the establishment of an all-Asian trading bloc. Chinese President Mr. Jiang Zemin was all aglow with optimism, claiming that his talks with President Clinton "marked a new and good beginning in Sino-United States relations". Mr. Zemin brushed aside questions about Chinese human rights abuses, but claimed that "democratic reforms" were rapidly improving, adding "it is not an easy job to manage a country of 1.2 billion people". The reality is, of course, that there are growing tensions inside Communist China, which are going to increase as the programme of mass industrialisation is imposed. A growing number of observers are now starting to agree with our prediction that there are going to be growing frictions between the major Asian nations, and that the Keating view (and that of his backers) of Australia's future being secured in some type of an Asian Community is dangerously misleading.

The key to understanding the reality of international politics is an understanding of how the debt system of finance-economics attempts to operate. Every developed nation strives to overcome a deficiency of domestic purchasing power by striving to export more than it imports - to obtain what is called a "favourable balance of trade". Most of the comment concerning international trade is sheer nonsense.

The media has been full of hoo-ha concerning, for example, how President Clinton scored a major diplomatic victory by having Congress endorse the North American Free Trade Agreement on the eve of the Seattle Conference. There is enormous and widespread opposition to NAFTA in the USA and the majority vote in the Congress was only obtained after the most cynical buying of votes. Then President Clinton allegedly went to Seattle with a greatly increased status. Another headline read that a NEW FORCE IN WORLD TRADE had emerged, with the commentators claiming that this would put pressure on the reluctant members of the European Economic Community to ratify the GATT agreement by December 15th. And then, according to the sooth-sayers, there will be a "freeing" of international trade and, wonder of wonders, the clouds of depression will at long last start to lift.

The worldwide depression conditions can only be alleviated, temporarily, by increasing money supplies. Under debt finance, this is merely a form of drug which in the long run increases basic problems. It is not surprising that in the "booming" Chinese economy, inflation is starting to emerge as a major problem. Inflation is mathematically certain. Attempts to create still bigger trading blocs not only cannot solve the basic finance-economic problems, but all attempts to centralise control in those blocs must result in a vast expansion of bureaucracy and growing social disintegration. Attempts to force nations of different cultural and other backgrounds into any type of Common Market, with common institutions, are doomed to create even greater disasters than those now afflicting mankind.

The great Lord Acton observed about the French Revolution, that behind all the smoke and smother was design. There is a design behind the persistent attempt to drive the world towards some idealistic New World Order. Those responsible for these grandiose designs are probably, as individuals, quite pleasant and well meaning, but they are completely mad; they are divorced from reality. And because of this they are dangerous. Further doses of the windy abstraction to which people have been subjected about the latest international talk-fest will not change reality.

NO MORAL AUTHORITY FOR NATIVE TITLE BILL: Dr. John Hewson's response to Mr. Keating's address to the nation on the Mabo legislation seemed to be more an exercise in defusing leadership pressures within the Liberal Party than dealing with the issue. While it may be quite true that the Native Title Bill will be a costly millstone around the neck of future generations, and compensation bills certainly amount to something of a "blank cheque", Hewson has effectively ducked the issue by saying that it is a matter for the States.

The Native Title Bill seems to have been written in such a way as to rob the States of their sovereign powers to manage land titles. Dr. Hewson has no answer to this, and declined to offer specific support for the Western Australian legislation designed to "deal with" the effects of the Mabo decision within the new legal restrictions.

The truth is that the moral authority for Mr. Keating's Native Title Bill does not exist. ALP backbencher Graeme Campbell's commitment to abstain from voting on the Bill demonstrates this. Mr. Campbell points out that large sections of the genuine, rural Aboriginal people, do not support the Bill. Contrary to Mr. Keating's claim, a number of the States have expressed deep reservations about it. The response from business interests has been wounding; managing director of BHP, Mr. John Prescott, said that the Bill was "like reading porridge", and was confusing and unworkable. The Business Council of Australia and the Australian Mining Industry Council were also highly critical. The WA Farmers' Federation broke with the NFF position, and rejected Mr. Keating's Bill, and declared support for the WA legislation. There has been sustained rural criticism of Mr. Rick Farley, Mr. Blight and the NFF over their support for the Bill.

THE WA POSITION: It now appears that the WA Government will mount a High Court challenge to the Native Title Bill, which WA Premier, Mr. Richard Court, correctly claimed, strikes at the balance of power between the States and the Commonwealth. This is really the main purpose of the Bill. As Mr. Court said at the National Press Club last week, the ALP Government in Canberra could pay a very high price for its attempt to bully the States into giving up sovereign powers. The price would be paid at the ballot box in future elections if Keating's bill proves either unworkable or obviously centralises further power.

The WA legislation seems just and fair. It extinguishes native title, but provides statute title of a type allowing Aborigines to maintain traditional access to land, and offers compensation for the removal of traditional rights. It also does this in a way that avoids the restrictions of the Racial Discrimination Act, even though the use of this Act to browbeat the States substitutes one form of "discrimination" for another.

The leaders of the "Aboriginal industry" are calling for a form of self-government, which could eventually become separate nationhood. Although this is not supported by the rural Aboriginal groups, the creation of "black homelands" is perilously close to what the "left" has been condemning in South Africa for nearly 40 years: "apartheid". It is interesting to note that the Afrikaners in South Africa are

most distressed by an agreement between the Government and the ANC to return land to the indigenous population it expropriated since 1913. A type of "South African Mabo" agreement.

POSSIBLE "CIR" BREAKTHROUGH IN CANBERRA by David Thompson: As a kind of shadow-minister-without-portfolio, Mr. Peter Reith has made a useful contribution in stiffening the Coalition's collective spine on such issues as the republic, and the Mabo legislation. While this is not enough to give the Opposition drive and direction - not to mention a more solid philosophical base, it has had the effect of helping to slow the decline of the Liberal Party, which needs far more than a simple change in leadership.

But what are we to make of a report that the Coalition has agreed to support Mr. Reith's call for a re-examination of initiative and referendum to be introduced on a national basis? This is not receiving wide press coverage, but two reports have been published in which Mr. Reith extols the virtues of voter-initiated referendum.

One report stated: "The Federal Coalition has swung its support behind shadow-special minister of state, Peter Reith, to re-examine whether Australian citizens should have the right to initiate referendums. Mr. Reith said he was thrilled that his colleagues had agreed to support him by backing a review of his earlier discussion paper on citizen-initiated referendums...."

MAGNIFICENT SUPPORT FOR BASIC FUND: Some truly magnificent giving has swept the Basic Fund past \$30,000. We are deeply moved by the efforts of those we know have gone beyond the normal call of duty. What can we say to a Second World War veteran, still suffering, who sends \$1,000 at a time when he is trying to do his best for members of his family at a time when business is failing. And others. This is truly inspirational and further confirms our faith that there is deep spiritual health still coursing through large numbers of Australians. May we suggest that we all make a special effort during the pre-Christmas period. It would be a tremendous Christmas present if we could lift the Basic Fund over \$40,000 before Christmas. This would ensure that early next year, during the later stages of the Basic Fund campaign, we can move through safely to the \$60,000 target. Those holding back are failing those who have given so magnificently. All donations to Box 1052J, GPO, Melbourne, 3001.

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