



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS



The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

Print Post Publication Number 381667 00258

Vol.35, No.49

December 17th, 1999

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

*"Oh come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
Oh come let us adore Him, Christ the King."*

A blessed and holy Christ-mass Season to all our Readers

COLLAPSE OF A GLOBAL GIANT by Jeremy Lee:

Just after last week's article on the WTO was written, the conference in Seattle collapsed. Delegates from 135 nations, with 5,000 bureaucrats (not to mention the bevy of reporters that had flown in) flew home with nothing achieved at huge expense.

TV news and a mass of conflicting articles indicated the underlying mood, generally frustrated and woebegone, because the global media lets very few arguments through that are not in line with the global programme.

Only one newspaper – *The Australian Financial Review* – included one short article by an opponent of the WTO. Among the host of others there was weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. Herewith a selection:

"TALKS COLLAPSE; WTO IN DISARRAY" and "AMERICA LOSES ITS WILL TO LEAD ON FREE TRADE" were the two front-page headlines in *The AFR* (6/12/99). There followed in both that paper and *The Australian* a mass of comment:

"The disastrous Seattle meeting has badly wounded the World Trade Organisation, the five-year-old agency dedicated to resolving trade disputes and making new trade rules for its 135-member countries It is clear from the developing country revolt at the meeting that the days of backroom deals by the rich country members of the WTO's predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, are over Instead of leading the rest of the world in the direction of more open trade, Clinton tried to use the WTO, which has 135 members, to chase union votes to shore up his would-be successor, Vice-President Al Gore, in the presidential elections next November One European diplomat said US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky, who chaired the meeting, 'behaved just like she was running out of the restaurant without paying the bill' The four leading presidential candidates – Gore, former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley, Texas Governor George W. Bush and Senator John McCain – favour open trade but none seems willing to draw attention to those views. 'Labour is a big factor in all these campaigns and now labour smells blood,' said one Congressman in the 90-strong delegation that observed the talks. 'Congressmen have watched what happened and they will be running scared. You

can say goodbye to any more free trade negotiations for the next 10 years'" Reported Joanne Gray from Seattle (*Australian Financial Review*, 6/12/99).

(Isn't this typical? Four presidential candidates who don't want to talk about the policies they are standing for because they are known to be unpopular! The only presidential candidate **against** free trade and globalism is Pat Buchanan of the Reform Party. The odds are stacked against him, with big business and the media hostile. But by next November he is going to have a huge effect on the debate going on in America.)

"**PROTESTERS CLAIM DING DONG VICTORY**" said another headline, adding:

"When Mike Moore, the head of the World Trade Organisation, closed down the trade talks circus on Friday night, a cheer went up at the back of the convention centre.

"Hundreds of members of conservation, human rights, labour and health groups were hugging each other, happy not only to dance on the grave of capitalism, but also to take credit for blocking talks on a fresh wave of trade liberalisation.

"'Ding Dong the Round is Dead', said the flier from one consumer group that claimed victory as the WTO talks 'collapsed under the weight of public opposition and internal dissension'"" (AFR, 6/12/99)

Robert Garran (*The Australian*, 6/12/99) was not sanguine:

"The Seattle meeting was an organisational debacle that requires a radical reappraisal of the WTO's structure and processes The message was that wooing the US labour movement – a vitally important constituency for Vice President Al Gore's presidential hopes next year – was more important than achieving a result in the trade talks.

"Europe was equally guilty, however. One important goal of the talks was to push the European Union faster on farm reform. Europe's farm subsidies of \$US142 billion (\$213 billion) greatly exceed Washington's \$97 billion (\$146 billion). Europe has been far more transigent than the US in scaling back its farm support, and is the key to opening up agricultural markets worldwide. Its agenda for the talks seemed designed to frustrate substantial reform of the farm sector, a tactic that had much to do with the meeting's failure"

Perhaps Europe understands what free trade has done to unprotected farmers like those in Australia, and does not want to repeat that disaster.

Florence Chong had a different slant (*The Australian*, 6/12/99):

"Why the chair of the WTO, US Trade Representative Charlene Barshevsky, finally decided to suspend the meeting is a matter of speculation.

"But one thing is clear: Barshevsky averted certain failure to reach an agreement on the agenda for the new round because of growing anger among developing countries that were not in the negotiation loop"

The Australian Financial Review – to its credit – presented two opposing views side-by-side. The first was a woeful attempt by Labor's live-in globalist, Gary Johns, to argue that only elected governments should express views at such conferences:

"....How is it that some interest groups claim a moral superiority over the democratically elected government representatives with whom they compete for public attention and approbation? How can they be right all the time and governments wrong? The fact is that they seek to undermine the legitimacy of democracy by suggesting an inherent bias against the dispossessed"

Johns cannot admit to the truth that "democratically-elected-governments" are representing people less and less. Opinion-polls – for what they're worth – show the big majority of Australians heavily in favour of protecting local industries. Which "democratically-elected-government" has ever represented that point of view?

An article by William Mansfield, assistant secretary of the ACTU, was reasoned and moderate:

".... Not suprisingly, the global economy works well for the multinationals. Under the WTO they created, global corporations now control about a third of all export trade. But the global economy does not work to the benefit of working people: the 200 richest people in the world have a greater combined income than 2 billion of our poorest brothers and sistersEvery day, some 250 million children across the world go to work rather than to school, making goods that flow freely across national borders.

"Every day, tens of thousands of workers do slave labour in forced labour and prison camps. Every day, millions of workers work for less than a living wage, making products they cannot afford to buy..

"When working people across the world try to join together to gain decent wages and safe working conditions, what happens?

"Last year more than a thousand workers trying to organise in their workplaces were killed. Thousands were arrested and imprisoned.. Tens of thousands were fired, losing their livelihoods, devastating their families.

"Public opinion round the world is fuelling a growing protest movement that has begun to make itself heard in the political process and win real change to the way that the WTO operates.

"When an international movement of workers, consumers and environmentalists challenged the acceleration of financial deregulation by the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, they brought its closed negotiations to a halt" (Both articles, *AFR*, 6/12/99)

The most interesting contrast was between the Editorials of Murdoch's *Australian* and *The Australian Financial Review* – both on December 6th:

The Australian said: "....Since WTO director-general Michael Moore prematurely closed the talks, there has been a flurry of finger-pointing. While the protesters undeniably affected the mood of the talks, they failed to stop the meeting. More critical was the Clinton administration's call for developing nations to improve their labour standards. As US President Bill Clinton no doubt hoped, this played well with his trade union constituency - but it only further alienated those developing nations which are WTO members but which know that their low labour rates are one of the few competitive advantages in trading with the West. Long-standing tension between the EU and US over agriculture subsidies has also been blamed for the breakdown in talks"

To paraphrase – the poverty of Third World workers is a "competitive advantage in trading with the West"? And shouldn't be challenged?

The AFR's Editorial, on the other hand, made the most lasting and significant admission:

" When historians look back at how a free trade meeting could collapse in a country which has been an advocate of open trade for half a century and is experiencing its longest peacetime period of growth, the motif should not be the black-clad Seattle riot policeman. It should be the mobile-phone equipped anti-globalisation activist contributing to the diverse web of anti-WTO internet sites around the world..

"It is this use of the twin levers of the global economy – technology and telecommunications – by those who oppose the WTO that highlights the conflict at the heart of the proceedings"

There is no doubt the pressure for centralised control of world trade will continue. Seattle was a momentary breathing space.

It is also true that the fast-developing network round the world, cutting through the "divide-and-rule" of party politics, is going to gather cohesion and strength. Every effort will be made to disrupt the Internet, or at least that part of it producing political unity and will, in the period ahead.

INDECENT PROPOSAL by Alfred King:

Martin Krigier, Professor of Law at the University of New South Wales, made the point in delivering the 1999 Boyer Lectures that one of the minimum requirements of any society is decency, and that the opposite of this is a society which humiliates individuals or groups. My generation has never experienced a decent society. Though my parents fought a war against Germany and Japan, against totalitarianism, and for freedom of thought and expression; the aftermath of that war has produced the opposite result. Their slogan was *"I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it"*.

Today, each of us must be so careful in what we say and believe. The tyrant of political correctness, under its many names and guises, reigns supreme in Australia, ruthlessly humiliating and crushing any individual or group who does not follow its rules to the letter. Words are the means by which ideas and knowledge are passed from one individual to another. Over time, a censorship by political correctness on what we are allowed to say about, for example, the holocaust, is also a control on how much we know and believe about it.

The ultimate destination in this line of thinking is perhaps the German legislation which has been used to punish Fredrick Toben for the heinous crime of speaking his mind. This legislation enshrines in law that the holocaust did happen in occupied Europe between 1939-45, and it is illegal to even question this. This development is certainly a change in our legal system, but is it progress? (Progress being the value-laden word used to justify the ever-increasing destruction being wrought on our culture.)

The German legislation does not address other holocausts that have taken place, and for which there is a lot more real evidence. For example, the current war in Chechnya has highlighted the fact that Stalin executed many, and then deported most of the remaining Chechnyans to central Asia in 1945 because he had an idea that some of them had collaborated with the German forces during the previous years. No western government is keen to take the Russians to task over this example, one of many, crimes against humanity.

Again we see the double standards of liberalism in practice. When considering political correctness, the question must be asked: "who sets the agenda, who decides what is, and what is not politically correct?" This might be the first step in the return to a decent society.

"ON TARGET" is printed and published by The Australian League of Rights, 145 Russell St., Melbourne.
Postal Address: GPO Box 1052J, Melbourne, 3001. Telephone: (03) 9650 9749, Fax: (03) 9650 9368.

Subscription \$40.00 p.a.