



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

CONFIDENTIAL

23 April 1990

Prime Minister

CAF 23/4

Dear Charles,

Prime Minister's Possible Meeting with
Dr John Hewson, Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia,
Gallipoli, 25 April

In your letter of 10 April you said that the Prime Minister would be willing to have a very brief meeting with Dr Hewson if it could be fitted into the programme. A slot is still being sought, but the timing may have to be decided on the day.

Following the Liberal Party's defeat at the Australian Election on 24 March, the Party's leader, Mr Andrew Peacock, resigned on 2 April. The Shadow Treasurer, Dr John Hewson (an MP since only 1987) was elected by an overwhelming majority.

It will be some time before a considered judgement can be made on the capacity of the opposition coalition to recover from their failure in an election which they should have won. No one doubts the technical competence of Dr Hewson in the field of economic and financial policy, but he has very little experience of other areas of policy and is still comparatively new to the Federal political scene.

Dr Hewson announced his Shadow Cabinet on 11 April. It is generally regarded as being a fresh looking team, with a more business-like structure. The key economic portfolios are held by economic "dries", reflecting Hewson's free market philosophy.

I enclose a personality note.

*Yours ever,
S L Gass*

(S L Gass)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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HEWSON, DR JOHN (ROBERT) MP

Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Liberal Party since April 1990.

Born 28 October 1946 in Carlton, NSW. Educated at Kogarah High School, Sydney University (BEC Hons), University of Saskatchewan (MA) and John Hopkins University, USA (MA, PhD).

Formerly a teaching assistant and lecturer in economics, he worked as an economist with the IMF, 1973-74, and the Reserve Bank of Australia, 1975-76. Economic Adviser to the Treasurer, 1976-77 and 1978-81 (when Treasurer was John Howard, qv), later Chief of Staff to Treasurer, 1981-82. Professor of Economics, University of NSW, 1978-87. Head of the School of Economics, University of NSW, 1983-86. Director of the Japanese Economics Management Studies Centre, University of NSW, 1984-87. Executive Director, Macquarie Bank, 1985-87. Director, Baring Securities, 1988. Has been a consultant to the IMF and UN, amongst many others, and has been a member of a number of State and Federal Government inquiries. On the board of a number of institutions. A newspaper columnist, he has been a regular contributor to various financial and economic publications.

Liberal member for the blue ribbon seat of Wentworth (East Sydney) since 1987. Member, Opposition Economic Policy Committee and backbench Treasury and Finance Committee. Shadow Finance Minister 1988-89. Shadow Treasurer 1989-90.

One of the brightest MPs of any persuasion, he stands head and shoulders above many of his Liberal colleagues. An archetypal over-achiever and working-class boy made good. Very ambitious. A touch arrogant and a workaholic.

Category I visitor to the UK in 1989.

Divorced; three children.

Likes golf, tennis, soccer, skiing, jazz, theatre, collecting antiques and classic cars. Owns several cars, including a Ferrari. Has a penchant for monogrammed shirts and French champagne. Owns a businessman's restaurant in Sydney called 'Simpons'.