The fact that this was a by-election is campaigning meant that the natural available for preselection and campaigns was absent. The limited time probably in the recent British election was a potent factor in Tasmania in 1992 and holding the balance of power (a receipt in a general election. The appearances, which no candidate includes extended television appearances, but should not be seen necessarily as the first in a wave of seats to fall to such candidates.

The successful candidate is also unusual. Phil Cleary has a much broader appeal than the vast majority of would-be independent parliamentarians. He appeals to the politically aware minority because he is an articulate and intelligent person with a well-developed worldview. He also appeals to the unaware because he is a current local sporting hero who is very well known in the electorate and outside it. With the Liberals tagging him as a "Labor stooge", Hawke describing him as a "good bloke", and the Labor camp not really seriously attacking him, what reason did an ordinary Labor voter have for not voting for Phil Cleary?

The Wills electorate is also unusual. It is based on one of the very few regional unemployment, it will be making a very serious mistake: unemployment was part of a broader patchwork of issues.

In fact, the vote for Phil Cleary was a rejection of almost everything the ALP now seems to stand for. In particular, it was a rejection of the party's recently acquired born-to-rule mentality. It was a rejection of arrogance; a rejection of smart operators adept at electoral manipulation but light on substance; a rejection not only of 'economic rationalism' but also of the managerial/technocratic mentality which allows contemporary Labor to embrace that alien philosophy. It is not so much specific Labor policies that have alienated the electorate: it is a general sense of what Labor has become. Phil Cleary won because he was 'one of us', a fighter who stood for something, and a down-to-earth character light years removed from the slick real estate agent parody that is all too common in the major parties.

Twice this year—in Tasmania and Wills—the ALP has polled less than 30% of the vote in areas where it has traditionally dominated. Although there are many unusual features in Phil Cleary's win unlikely to be reflected elsewhere, it is sobering to reflect that Cleary didn't just win: he bolted home by the length of the straight. He could have handed back 6 or 7% of his 34% to Labor and still won. Despite the tentative signs of movement away from the appalling Labor culture of the 80s, which are inherent in One Nation, and Paul Keating's forays into republicanism, the ALP remains in a very precarious position.