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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 WELLINGTON 001656 E.O

12958: DECL: 12/20/07 TAGS: PGOV, ECON, PINR, NZ SUBJECT:
BIO REPORT: NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER JENNY SHIPLEY REF
: (A) WELLINGTON 1498; (B) WELLINGTON 1492 1
(U) CLASSIFIED BY: JOSIAH H
BEEMAN, AMBASSADOR
REASONS: 1.5(B) AND (D)

2

(C) SUMMARY: NZ'S NEW (AND FIRST WOMAN) PRIME MINISTER JENNY SHIPLEY IS AN ASTUTE POLITICIAN WHO BELIEVES IN LESS GOVERNMENT, INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT, AND A "SOFT HEART AND A HARD HEAD." SHE TAKES A MEASURED AND CONSULTATIVE APPROACH TO NEW ISSUES, BUT IS NOT AFRAID TO TAKE RISKS WHEN SHE FEELS CONDITIONS MERIT ACTION. A COMPLICATED PREGNANCY SPURRED SHIPLEY TO LEAVE THE ARMY AND BEGIN A CAREER IN POLITICS IN 1978. ENTERING PARLIAMENT IN 1987, SHE BEGAN A FAST RISE -- APPOINTED TO HER FIRST SHADOW CABINET POSITION ONLY SEVENTEEN MONTHS LATER. ONCE IN GOVERNMENT IN 1990, SHIPLEY INTRODUCED SWEEPING REFORMS IN SOCIAL WELFARE AND HEALTH WHILE MASTERING THESE TWO DIFFICULT MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS. THE REFORMS EARNED HER THE PUBLIC'S WRATH, BUT ALSO THE RESPECT OF HER PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES. HER SUCCESSFUL CHALLENGE TO BOLGER'S LEADERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL PARTY -- WELLPLANNED, WELL-RESEARCHED, AND WELL-EXECUTED -- REFLECTS HER POLITICAL CAREER TO DATE. A HARD-WORKING POLITICIAN, RUTHLESS OR PRAGMATIC AS NEEDED, SHIPLEY IS WELL-DISPOSED TOWARD THE U.S.

END SUMMARY

-----PARSON'S DAUGHTER -----3

(C) JENNIFER MARY ROBSON WAS BORN FEBRUARY 4, 1952, IN GORE, ON NEW ZEALAND'S SOUTH ISLAND SHE WAS THE SECOND OF FOUR DAUGHTERS BORN TO A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER AND HIS WIFE THE FAMILY LIVED IN GORE AND THEN IN WELLINGTON FOR FIVE YEARS AFTER SHIPLEY'S BIRTH UNTIL THEY SETTLED IN BLENHEIM (NEAR THE NORTH COAST OF THE SOUTH ISLAND), WHERE SHE SPENT THE BALANCE OF HER CHILDHOOD THE FAMILY WAS NOT WEALTHY AND HAD SOME DIFFICULTY MAKING ENDS MEET

4

(C) SHIPLEY STATES THAT HER CORE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY ("A SOFT HEART AND A HARD HEAD") WAS FORMULATED WHEN SHE WAS A CHILD, WATCHING HER FATHER TEND TO HIS CONGREGATION HIS APPROACH, SHE SAYS, WAS TO LEND A SYMPATHETIC EAR WHILE SHOWING PEOPLE HOW TO EMPOWER THEMSELVES; AND TO FOCUS ON THE CAUSE OF PROBLEMS, NOT THEIR SYMPTOMS

5

(C) SHIPLEY GREW INTO A TOMBOY AND A CHAMPIONSHIP SWIMMER (SHE TOOK UP SWIMMING TO HELP COMBAT CHILDHOOD ASTHMA)

AN UNDISTINGUISHED STUDENT (SHE BLAMES HER BAD GRADES ON HER LOVE FOR SWIMMING), SHE BARELY PASSED HER HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM AND FAILED HER UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAM

(COMMENT: SHIPLEY'S POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND FAILURE TO PASS HER UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAM PROBABLY INDICATED A LACK OF AMBITION RATHER THAN ABILITY AND A REALIZATION THAT, AT THE TIME, A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION WAS NOT A PREREQUISITE FOR SUCCESS

END COMMENT) AT 17, SHE MET BURTON SHIPLEY AND, TAKING THE INITIATIVE, ASKED HIM TO A BALL

(THE COUPLE DATED FOR FOUR YEARS BEFORE GETTING MARRIED.) AT 18, SHIPLEY'S FATHER DIED UNEXPECTEDLY, AND HER MOTHER BEGAN TO LIVE ON A WIDOW'S PENSION

(AS SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER MANY YEARS LATER, SHIPLEY WOULD OVERSEE LEGISLATION THAT REDUCED THIS BENEFIT.) -----

-----TRAUMATIC PREGNANCY SPURS CHANGE -----

(C) AFTER GRADUATING FROM CHRISTCHURCH TEACHERS COLLEGE IN 1971, SHIPLEY BEGAN TO SETTLE INTO A FAIRLY CONVENTIONAL LIFE FOR A 19 YEAR OLD NEW ZEALAND WOMAN IN 1972, SHE BEGAN HER CAREER AS A PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER IN A CHRISTCHURCH SUBURB SHE JOINED THE NATIONAL PARTY AND BECAME POLITICALLY ACTIVE, BUT IN CONTRAST TO HER PEERS, WHO BECAME ACTIVISTS BECAUSE OF VIETNAM, SHE FOCUSED HER ENERGIES ON COMMUNITY ISSUES (SPECIFICALLY, CHILD CARE ISSUES: MANDATORY FENCES AROUND POOLS AND CHILD SEAT RESTRAINTS)

AFTER MARRIAGE IN 1973, SHIPLEY SPENT THE NEXT THREE YEARS JUGGLING HER TEACHING CAREER, FAMILY FARM DUTIES, MARRIAGE AND INTEREST IN LOCAL POLITICS

IN 1976, SHE DECIDED TO QUIT TEACHING TO RAISE A FAMILY THE COUPLE HAD A GIRL, ANNA, IN 1977, AND A BOY, BEN, IN 1978

7

(C) SHIPLEY HAD SEVERE DIFFICULTIES DURING BEN'S BIRTH, BEGAN TO HEMORRHAGE SHORTLY AFTER DELIVERY, AND WAS REPORTEDLY NEAR DEATH

ALONG WITH THE PHYSICAL TRAUMA, SHE WENT THROUGH A PERIOD OF SEVERE POST-PARTUM DEPRESSION DURING HER CONVALESCENCE, SHIPLEY CAME TO THE REALIZATION THAT SHE WOULD NOT BE CONTENT WITH HER LIFE AS IT WAS AND WOULD BE DOING A DISSERVICE TO HERSELF AND HER FAMILY IF SHE DID NOT MAKE A CHANGE

MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD, ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT, BECAME A THREAT TO HER IDENTITY

WITH BURTON'S BLESSING, SHIPLEY BECAME MORE ACTIVE IN POLITICS AND MORE SERIOUS ABOUT A POLITICAL CAREER

8

(C) IN 1980, SHIPLEY MET HER PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATIVE, RUTH RICHARDSON, A NATIONAL PARTY FAST-RISING RIGHT-WING ECONOMIC RATIONALIST

RICHARDSON, WHO ALSO HAD A FARMING BACKGROUND (ALBEIT A WEALTHY ONE), TOOK A SHINE TO SHIPLEY AND BECAME HER MENTOR AND GODFATHER

RICHARDSON HELPED PAVE THE WAY FOR SHIPLEY'S ELEVATION FROM A CAMPAIGN EXTRA TO ELECTED POSITIONS (THE

MALVERN COUNTY COUNCIL AND THE NATIONAL PARTY'S CANTERBURYWESTLAND POLICY COMMITTEE)
IN 1984, SHIPLEY RETURNED THE FAVOR BY CAMPAIGNING HEAVILY FOR RICHARDSON'S (SUCCESSFUL) RE-ELECTION (ALTHOUGH SHIPLEY SHARES RICHARDSON'S DISLIKE FOR THE WELFARE STATE AND PREFERENCE FOR MARKET-ORIENTED SOLUTIONS TO ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, SHIPLEY'S APPROACH IS LESS DOGMATIC AND SHE HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO CHART HER OWN COURSE AFTER SHIPLEY ENTERED PARLIAMENT, AND AS RICHARDSON'S POLICIES AS AN OUTSPOKEN RADICAL REFORMIST FINANCE MINISTER BECAME INCREASINGLY CONTROVERSIAL, SHIPLEY BEGAN TO PUBLICLY DISTANCE HERSELF FROM HER MENTOR SHE IS NOW QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT SHE IS "NOT A RICHARDSON CLONE.") -----QUICK RISER IN OPPOSITION.

-----9

(C) IN 1987, AT 35 YEARS OF AGE, SHIPLEY ANNOUNCED FOR AND WON THE MARGINAL RURAL SEAT OF ASHBURTON (LATER RENAMED RAKAIA) ALTHOUGH THE RETIRING NATIONAL INCUMBENT HAD HELD THE SEAT WITH A 500 VOTE MAJORITY, SHIPLEY INCREASED THAT MARGIN TO 5,000 VOTES (THE BIGGEST PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN THE 1987 ELECTION FOR EITHER PARTY AND AN IMPRESSIVE DEBUT) UPON HER ELECTION, BURTON SOLD THE FAMILY FARM AND BECAME A HOUSE-HUSBAND, WHILE SHIPLEY COMMUTED TO PARLIAMENT

10

(C) SHIPLEY BEGAN HER PARLIAMENTARY CAREER RANKED 38TH OUT OF 40 NATIONAL MPS, SERVING ON THE EDUCATION AND SCIENCE COMMITTEE SEVENTEEN MONTHS LATER, AFTER EXHIBITING THE HARD WORK AND THOROUGH RESEARCH THAT HAVE BECOME HER TRADEMARK, SHIPLEY WAS APPOINTED OPPOSITION ASSOCIATE SPOKESPERSON ON EDUCATION BY NATIONAL LEADER JIM BOLGER (LEAP-FROGGING NATIONAL'S ENTIRE INTAKE OF MPS IN THE CLASS OF 1984) A YEAR LATER, AT 39 YEARS OF AGE, BOLGER APPOINTED SHIPLEY OPPOSITION SPOKESPERSON ON SOCIAL WELFARE, A JUMP TO 11TH PLACE IN NATIONAL PARTY RANKINGS

HER QUICK RISE BEGAN TO ATTRACT ATTENTION IN THE MEDIA, WHICH
UBBED HER "MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED." -----

.THANKLESS GNZ PORTFOLIOS: SOCIAL WELFARE AND HEALTH -----
-----11

(C) UPON NATIONAL'S ELECTION VICTORY IN 1990, SHIPLEY
BECAME MINISTER FOR SOCIAL WELFARE (THE GOVERNMENT'S
LARGEST SPENDING PORTFOLIO) AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN'S
AFFAIRS

IT WOULD BE THE FIRST OF TWO POLITICALLY THANKLESS P
ORTFOLIOS PM BOLGER WOULD HAND SHIPLEY (IN AN ATTEMPT
BY BOLGER TO TEMPER HER METEORIC RISE, ACCORDING T
O SOME OBSERVERS)

AS MINISTER FOR SOCIAL WELFARE, SHIPLEY PRESIDED OVER
"THE MOST EXTENSIVE REVAMP OF THE WELFARE STATE" TO
DATE

SHE FIRST CAPPED THEN CUT WELFARE BENEFITS TO THE UNE
MPLOYED, RETIREES AND WIDOWS BY AS MUCH AS 25 PER CEN
T

DURING THIS TIME, SHIPLEY DEVELOPED A REPUTATION FOR
RUTHLESS EFFICIENCY AND, IN SOME EYES, BECAME THE HAR
D FACE OF AN UNCARING GOVERNMENT

IN INSTITUTING DIFFICULT POLICY DECISIONS, SHE EARNED
THE PUBLIC'S IRE (SHE WAS BURNED IN EFFIGY SEVERAL TIM
ES), BUT ALSO ITS GRUDGING RESPECT AS WELL AS THE ADMI
RATION OF HER PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES

SHE ALSO DEVELOPED FINE DEBATING SKILLS, IN CONFRONT
ING LABOUR'S THEN SOCIAL WELFARE SPOKESPERSON (AND C
URRENT DEPUTY LEADER) MICHAEL CULLEN -- ONE OF LABOU
R'S SHARPEST PARLIAMENTARY DEBATERS

12

(C) AFTER NATIONAL'S SUCCESSFUL RE-ELECTION IN 1993, S
HIPLEY WAS REWARDED FOR HER DEFT HANDLING OF THE DIFFI
CULT SOCIAL WELFARE PORTFOLIO WITH A JUMP IN CABINET (
FROM 11TH TO 5TH PLACE--THE BIGGEST PROMOTION IN THAT
CABINET SHUFFLE), BUT WITH ANOTHER DIFFICULT JOB
AS MINISTER OF HEALTH, SHIPLEY WAS ASKED AGAIN TO CAP
AND THEN CUT PUBLIC SPENDING

SHIPLEY MANAGED HER PORTFOLIO WELL, AND INTRODUCED M
ANY OF THE CUTS IN UNIVERSAL HEALTH BENEFITS THAT AR

E ONLY NOW COMING INTO BEING -- TO THE CONCERN OF MANY NEW ZEALANDERS (HEALTH CUTS REMAIN AN ACHILLES HEEL FOR NATIONAL, AND WILL PROBABLY REMAIN A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE IN THE RUN-UP TO THE NEXT ELECTION, REQUIRED NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 1999.) 13

(C) WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF MIXED-MEMBER PROPORTIONAL (MMP) PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION IN THE 1996 ELECTION AND THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL-NEW ZEALAND FIRST (NZF) COALITION IN DECEMBER 1996, SHIPLEY HAD REPORTEDLY HOPED FOR A RESPITE AND A REWARD WITH A JUNIOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO INSTEAD, SHE BECAME MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES AND STATE SERVICES (SHE WOULD LATER REGAIN THE WOMEN'S AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO AND RELINQUISH THE STATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO) ONCE AGAIN, HOWEVER, SHE THREW HERSELF INTO HER WORK, ACHIEVING OPEN SKIES AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S., SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA AND NEW AVIATION LIBERALIZATION ACCORDS WITH THE UK AND SOUTH AFRICA

14

(C) UPON THE FORMATION OF THE COALITION, SUPPORT FOR P M BOLGER BEGAN TO SLIDE WITHIN HIS PARTY AND IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS AT THE SAME TIME, SHIPLEY'S STATURE BEGAN TO GROW WITHIN THE PARTY AND ON THE STREET THE MEDIA PICKED UP THE DRUMBEAT AND, FOR SOME TIME, PALACE COUP RUMORS AROUND PARLIAMENT BECAME COMMONPLACE

15

(C) SHIPLEY'S STATURE WAS FURTHER ENHANCED AS SHE BEGAN TO DISTANCE HERSELF PUBLICLY FROM NATIONAL'S COALITION PARTNER AND NZF'S CONTROVERSIAL LEADER, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND TREASURER WINSTON PETERS AMIDST PETERS'S DEMANDS DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS TO FORM THE COALITION, SHIPLEY ASKED, "HOW MANY RATS DO WE HAVE TO SWALLOW?" LATER, SHE PUBLICLY OPPOSED A REFERENDUM ON COMPULSORY RETIREMENT SAVINGS CHAMPIONED BY PETERS THAT LOST BY MORE THAN 90 PER CENT OF THE VOTE

16

(C) AMIDST BOLGER'S LANGUISHING POLLS AND DURING HIS

VISIT TO THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING IN SCOTLAND AND TO PARIS IN EARLY NOVEMBER, SHIPLEY LAUNCHED A SECRETIVE, WELLPLANNED AND SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE IN THE NATIONAL CAUCUS AFTER INTENSE BEHIND-THE-SCENES NEGOTIATIONS, BOLGER RESIGNED IN FAVOR OF SHIPLEY AS PARTY LEADER ON NOVEMBER 3

(SOME OBSERVERS SPECULATED AT THE TIME THAT THE BAD BLOOD BETWEEN PETERS AND SHIPLEY WOULD PROVE INSURMOUNTABLE AND THAT PETERS WOULD PULL OUT OF THE COALITION UPON SHIPLEY'S ACCESSION

INDEED, PETERS EXPLORED FORMING A GOVERNMENT WITH LABOUR AFTER SHIPLEY BECAME NATIONAL'S LEADER, BUT RETURNED TO THE COALITION AFTER LABOUR TURNED HIM DOWN (REF A)

AFFIRMING THEIR PRAGMATISM, SHIPLEY AND PETERS HAVE REPORTEDLY SINCE PATCHED OVER THEIR DIFFERENCES.) SHOWING A DEGREE OF SENSITIVITY, SHE GAVE BOLGER A DECENT FINAL INTERVAL AS PM, ALLOWING HIM TO TRAVEL TO THE VANCOUVER APEC SUMMIT AND TO VISIT CHINA AS SCHEDULED

ON DECEMBER 8, AFTER ONLY TEN YEARS IN PARLIAMENT, SHIPLEY WAS SWORN IN AS NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST WOMAN PRIME MINISTER

-----SHIPLEY TODAY -----17

(C) JENNY SHIPLEY DESCRIBES HERSELF AS "CONSERVATIVE CENTER-RIGHT." HER POLICY INTERESTS ARE MICROECONOMIC REFORM, WOMEN'S ISSUES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ISSUES WITHIN THE NATIONAL PARTY, HER CREDENTIALS ON ECONOMIC REFORM ARE SOLID

HOWEVER, HER LIBERAL LEANINGS ON SOCIAL ISSUES (BIRTH CONTROL, SEX EDUCATION, WOMEN'S ISSUES, GAY RIGHTS) HAVE ALLOWED HER TO CLAIM

NEW TERRITORY FOR NATIONAL (WHICH MAY PROVE VALUABLE IN ATTRACTING THE FEMALE UNDECIDED VOTE IN FUTURE ELECTIONS), BUT HAVE ALSO OCCASIONALLY ANGERED SOME OF HER PARTY COLLEAGUES AND AMUSED OTHERS

(IN ONE UNUSUAL CAUCUS MEETING, SHIPLEY OFFERED TO EDUCATE NATIONAL MPS ON HOW TO EXAMINE THEMSELVES FOR SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

HER EMBARRASSED COLLEAGUES DECLINED.) 18

(C) SHIPLEY DESCRIBES HER APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE AS ON

E OF SELF-RELIANCE -- STRESSING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND DISCIPLINE

SHE DEEMS HER COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO BE HER BEST ASSET, ONCE BOASTING PUBLICLY THAT SHE COULD "SELL RICE TO A CHINAMAN." WHILE NOT AN ACADEMIC OR AN IDEAS PERSON, SHIPLEY HAS POLITICAL SMARTS, SEIZES HER PORTFOLIO, LEARNS IT INSIDE AND OUT, AND STAYS CURRENT SHE IS ALSO A GOOD MANAGER AND HAS ASSEMBLED ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST, MOST LOYAL STAFFS IN PARLIAMENT OBSERVERS HAVE CHARACTERIZED HER AS ICY, CORRECT, UNFAPPABLE, AND ABLE TO WORDLESSLY CONVEY THE SCHOOL-TEACHER-LIKE MESSAGE OF "DON'T MESS WITH ME." SHIPLEY STATES THAT HER CHRISTIAN FAITH IS IMPORTANT TO HER, BUT RARELY TALKS ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SHE IS INTERESTED IN WATER SPORTS AND LIKES TO SPEND HER FREE TIME WITH FAMILY, GARDENING, READING AND COOKING OUT ON THE BARBECUE

-----SHIPLEY'S FEELING TOWARDS THE U.S
-----19

(C) THE PM HAS WARM FEELINGS TOWARDS THE U.S WHEN SHIPLEY FIRST ENTERED PARLIAMENT, SHE OFTEN ATTENDED USG FUNCTIONS BUT NOW DOES SO LESS FREQUENTLY DUE TO HER BUSY SCHEDULE IN APRIL 1989, SHIPLEY WENT TO THE U.S ON A USIS IV GRANT TO LOOK AT ORGANIC FOOD AND GREENHOUSE GAS ISSUES ALTHOUGH SHIPLEY IS WELL-DISPOSED TO THE U.S., SHE IS HER OWN PERSON AND TAKES POSITIONS THAT ARE IN HER OWN PERCEIVED INTEREST LIKE MANY OF HER NATIONAL PARTY COLLEAGUES IN THE RUN-UP TO THE 1990 ELECTION, SHE DID NOT OPPOSE NATIONAL'S ADOPTION OF LABOUR'S ANTI-NUCLEAR POLICY (BELIEVING THAT TO DO SO WOULD HARM NATIONAL'S ELECTION PROSPECTS) IN THE WAKE OF HER FIRST FOREIGN INTERVIEW AFTER BECOMING PARTY LEADER, SHIPLEY TOOK TO THE FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT TO REFUTE A SYDNEY MORNING HERALD ARTICLE THAT STATED SHE WOULD RECONSIDER NZ'S ANTI-NUCLEAR POLICY UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES (REF B) SHIPLEY'S CLARIFICATION EFFECTIVELY ELIMINATED (FOR THE TIME BEING) ANY CHANCE THAT SHE MIGHT PUSH FOR A CHANGE IN NZ'S NUCLEAR POLICY

-----HUSBAND, BURTON SHIPLEY -----20

(C) MARRIED TO SHIPLEY FOR 24 YEARS, BURTON SHIPLEY IS A 45 YEAR OLD, MID-LEVEL FINANCIAL ADVISOR WITH WESTPAC BANK

A FARMER BY TRADE, HE BECAME A FULL-TIME HOUSEHUSBAND FOR TWO YEARS (RAISING TWO CHILDREN), WHILE HIS WIFE COMMUTED TO PARLIAMENT

ONCE THEIR CHILDREN ENTERED BOARDING SCHOOL, BURTON LEFT THE FARM AND WORKED AS A LOBBYIST FOR THE DEER FARMERS' ASSOCIATION, AND THEN AS A FINANCIAL ADVISOR FOR MONEY MANAGERS BEFORE JOINING WESTPAC

AT 6'4", BURTON IS OFTEN MISTAKEN FOR HIS WIFE'S BODYGUARD

HE IS A FORMER BASKETBALL PLAYER (JUST MISSING OUT ON NEW ZEALAND'S NATIONAL TEAM), AND CURRENTLY ENJOYS SAILING

NOT SHY ABOUT VOICING HIS OPINIONS (TO HIS WIFE AND, AT LEAST BEFORE HER ACCESSION TO PM, TO OTHERS), BURTON SAYS HE IS FURTHER RIGHT THAN HIS WIFE AND GOOD AT IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS, BUT NOT THEIR SOLUTIONS

BOTH THEIR CHILDREN ATTEND CANTERBURY UNIVERSITY.

-----WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID ABOUT SHIPLEY --

-----21

(C) HOW OTHERS SEE SHIPLEY IS ILLUMINATING:

-- NATIONAL PARTY PM ROBERT MULDOON DESCRIBED SHIPLEY AS: "...A FRONT ROW RUGBY PROP...BASICALLY A NICE PERSON, BUT IF YOU THINK A MIDDLE-AGED, OVER-WEIGHT FARMER'S WIFE CAN REMAKE THE WELFARE SYSTEM THEN YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR MIND." -- LABOR DEPUTY LEADER AND FINANCIAL SPOKESPERSON MICHAEL CULLEN CALLED SHIPLEY (AS SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER): "THE MOST HATED MINISTER IN THE HISTORY OF THIS COUNTRY." -- FORMER NEW ZEALAND FIRST MP AND CURRENT NATIONAL COMMENTATOR MICHAEL LAWS RECENTLY CALLED SHIPLEY: "THE HUMAN FACE OF THE SPANISH INQUISITION...THE SILENT MENACE OF NEW ZEALAND POLITICS...SHE CAN TELL YOU IN WONDERFUL WARM TONES HOW SHE IS GOING TO GARROTTE YOU AND THEN THROW YOUR INTENTIONS OVER HER LEFT SHOULDER." -- FORMER LABOR PM DAVID LANGE RECENTLY DESCRIBED HER AS: "...TOUGHER THAN ANY MAN IN CABINET...THE ONLY WORTHY NATIONAL OPPONENT SINCE MULDOON...BEATING HER IS LIKE BEATING SOUTH AFRICA (IN RUGBY)." 22

(C) COMMENT: IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO REDUCE SHIPLEY TO A RICHARDSON-CLONE, A THATCHER-CLONE OR "BOLGER IN A FROCK." SHE IS A SMART, HARD-WORKING POLITICIAN, ALTERNATELY RUTHLESS AND PRAGMATIC AS NEEDED SHE WILL TRY TO AVOID BOLGER'S MISTAKE OF BEING SEEN AS TOO CHUMMY WITH NZF AND PETERS AND ISOLATED FROM NATIONAL'S BACKBENCH
NONETHELESS, THE NEW PM REALIZES THAT UNDER MMP, NATIONAL'S RE-ELECTION HOPES RIDE ON A WELL-RUN COALITION THAT ADDRESSES IMPORTANT DOMESTIC ISSUES