

Talking business with Anthony Haas

## Imperial Preference Preferred

The departure by Great Britain from the EU signalled by the outcome of the Brexit referendum can reasonably be interpreted in New Zealand as foreshadowing a return to the 1950s. In this fabled era wives stayed at home because the bread winning husband earned enough for the whole family. You were paid to attend university, and you were paid also for each new child you brought into the world. A house was every family's right.



On the face of it, some are predicting Brexit returned New Zealand to an era of familial prosperity that on a nationwide scale remains even to this day unmatched anywhere else.

Whatever the actual nomenclature, Brexit could return New Zealand to the era of Commonwealth preference, the simple underpinning of 1950s prosperity.

Added to this will be New Zealand's improved access to the EU itself via the pending free trade agreement.



All this has a 50-50 chance of happening.

On top of this are the new Asian markets developed since the end of Commonwealth preference when Britain famously, some might say, treacherously, turned its back on its old colonies.

Consider this too. Cars and consumer goods in New Zealand are now among the cheapest anywhere. Unlike in the 1950s when they were among the most expensive in the world if not THE most expensive in the world.

Given all this, what can possibly go wrong? Plenty. Britain's pulling out of Europe will be the most painful nation state divorce in history. Certainly infinitely more rending that Britain's pulling out of favoured-nation trade with its old Commonwealth. The reason? Because as General de Gaulle always knew and said, Britain was never part of Europe in the first place.

Fifty years ago, when I was a Wairarapa farm boy at school in Wellington, Pacific Films stopped me in Lambton Quay to ask what I thought of Britain joining Europe's common market. I said then it was Britain's choice – but NZ should find its own new markets. In the years that followed, I wrote and published extensively on the new markets NZ government and business established in Asia.

Maybe post Brexit, new markets may include Scotland, helped by Scottish New Zealanders and their contacts!

**[ahaas@decisionmaker.co.nz](mailto:ahaas@decisionmaker.co.nz)**