

A Night with the Cultists

**A new look at health or
another assault on
sensible healthcare?**



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Your correspondent has enjoyed hundreds of blissful evenings at the Sydney Opera House. But whether the evening comprised a world-class performance of ballet, opera, or symphony, I have never observed a standing ovation from a Sydney audience. Until July 22 that is, when I watched with amused disbelief two standing ovations. One before the act, and one afterwards.

The venue for this event gives the reader the first clue that something was not quite right. Sydney residents will recognise the name of the Hillsong Church, a 3,500 seat tribute to the power of mammon. On the same tax-exempt property sits the multi-million dollar Hillsong Convention Centre, and this location for the event was not a coincidence.

Readers may have spotted advertisements in the press for the Paul Zane Pilzer seminar. They were hard to miss: “World-renowned US economist, multi-millionaire entrepreneur and best-selling author explains how you can catch the wave of THE NEXT TRILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY.” (Don’t feel bad — I had never heard of this world-renowned turkey either. Nor had I heard of the ‘wellness industry’.)

The bait was too tasty to resist, so Peter Bowdich and I made the su-

preme sacrifice and attended. Even before the act started I remember looking around at the 500 or so attendees and turning to Peter with the comment, ‘This has an Amway feel about it.’ And sure enough, the first thing we were instructed to do was to turn to the person sitting next to us and say ‘I think I am going to like you.’ (Peter turned to me, and was instantly struck dumb.)

The warm-up act was a Dr John Tickell, who claimed to be a nonconformist medical practitioner and a specialist in ‘wellness medicine.’ We were instructed in the ACE Program (activity, coping, eating) and soundly hustled to buy his books. His boast that “I know I can’t prove it, but I am right” brought loud cheers from all except two in the audience.

A standing ovation from all except two greeted the entry of Pilzer. Of all the American motor-mouths I have heard, he is definitely one of them. His opening statements welcomed his audience, which he acknowledged comprised multi-level marketers. He urged us to buy his book *Unlimited Wealth*. He preached to the choir that ‘network marketing’ is the only way to go, as ‘80% of the cost of items in shops is distribution costs’ (rubbish!). Did the reader know that ‘direct selling is the only

way to advise people of new products? That's right, and it even has a name — intellectual distribution. He urged us to buy his book. Pilzer told the faithful many things, and they lapped it up with loud agreement (but to their credit, nobody actually said Amen or Praise Jesus.) Readers of *the Skeptic* will be startled to discover they have lived their lives without realising:

- Food companies are evil. They deliberately aim to make us fat so we will buy even more of their products.
- The medical industry is even worse. It is, in fact, the sickness industry, earning \$75 billion per year. It is only interested in treating symptoms, not causes.
- 95% of prescription drugs are taken for life. Just 5% are taken for ten days until the disease is cured.

- There is a conspiracy between the food industry and the medical industry. The food industry deliberately makes us sick so that the medical industry can then treat us. (I am NOT making this up!)

- Pan Pharmaceuticals was nothing more than a media beat up. The complementary-health industry is as white as snow.

He urged us to buy his book.

And what exactly is the wellness industry, this next trillion dollar industry? I doubt if even one reader hasn't already worked out it involves the multi-level marketing of little bottles containing vitamins and other unnecessary food supplements. As Pilzer said many times, wellness consumers keep re-buying.

And to a thundering standing ovation, he was gone.

Under the windscreen wipers of every car appeared the following

cheap, hand-cut notice. All capitalisation and punctuation are verbatim:

The "WELLNESS REVOLUTION"
An "AWESOME OPPORTUNITY"
We have the REVOLUTIONARY
Tools & Vehicle to grow your future

I obviously have far too much idle time, so I e-mailed for more information, and specifically, for the name of the company. There has to be a reason why companies such as Coca Cola and McDonalds spend billions marketing their corporate names, yet others move mountains to hide their identities. Eventually, and very reluctantly, having given me names such as Dreamchaser, I was advised that it is Amway. The money I save on unnecessary food supplements I spend on overseas holidays.