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Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2000 6:52 PM
To: The Secretary
Subject: WTO Inquiry

The Secretary,
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Inquiry into Australia's relationship with the World Trade Organisation

e-mail: jsct@aph.gov.au

Submission from Gerhard Weissmann, Chartered Engineer, B Tech, M Env
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21st August 2000

Dear Secretary,

Having left the process of joining email discussion groups too late, I can only make some general observations.

The WTO seems to be operating exclusively by the parameters of economics. Its considerations are insensitive to non-economic considerations like the viability of this nation as a functioning, social community of people. Substantial parts of the nation function in a fashion that CANNOT be measured by the GNP nor any economic measure. If those aspects of Australia's functioning were indeed subjected exclusively to profit driven principles, Australia would be destroyed even faster than it is now. Our government is WRONG in persisting that economic growth has to be the measure of everything this nation does.

The WTO cannot expect impoverished nations in the horn of Africa to submit to further internal hardships in the process of meeting their obligations under the loan arrangements they have accepted in the past. By the same token, Australia can also not permit that it accepts more of the asset stripping practices that globalisation visits on this nation. It is no longer acceptable that national mineral resources, river water for irrigation and fossil fuel stocks, like the NWShelf gas be exported for the sole purpose of providing liquid wealth for a few corporate bodies. Since even Australian Corporations have turned themselves into transnationals, it makes little sense to appeal to their potential to provide employment in Australia. The Newcastle debacle of BHP is a case in point. The Australian position on agriculture exports is totally misdirected, since further pursuit of that idea only leads to further destruction of our river systems and consequential contribution to domestic inflation rates.

I have urged the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to advocate that Australia withdraw from further activity in and engagement with the WTO until that organisation broadens its focus to take in social and environmental concerns. It lacks the ethical integrity to see that there are essential considerations for nations outside of the field of economics. It could even be argued that since economics is a totally artificial model. There are national considerations that are external to economics which should exert more power over governments than purely economic considerations. I maintain that they should be given at least equal weight now, and growing consideration as time goes on. For instance, employment as a means to distribute wealth and provide sustenance for a good part of the population should not be made totally subservient to economic rationale.

Australia was the richest nation in the world in 1995 on a per capita basis. It still is, but slipped due to its unfavourable exchange rate and down graded credit rating. That our government has accepted such iniquities is a scandal.

I would suggest that, since Australia can still survive and meet its own needs out of its own resources, it withdraw from further involvement with the WTO. Australia's standing in the world resulting from such unilateral action may even soar.

Yours faithfully,

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