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From: Glen Chittleborough [SMTP:glench@senet.com.au]
Sent: Monday, August 14, 2000 12:52 PM
To: jsct@aph.gov.au
Subject: Submission: Australia's relationship with World Trade Organisation

The Committee Secretary
Joint-House Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

1. I note with dismay that the deadline for submissions to your Committee on the nature and scope of Australia's relationship with the WTO is only 25th August 2000. In view of the shortness of time available for public submissions as well as the complexity of the matter, I request that the Committee SEEK LEAVE FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME ALLOWED for these submissions.

A two-month extension would seem adequate, three months would be preferable.

2. Under each of the Committee's terms of reference one can strongly criticise the WTO's emphasis upon the dominance of business/multinational interests to the detriment, not only of the specific and democratic rights of individuals, governments (local, state and federal), but also of the natural environment. For the sake of brevity I mention only the following concerns as examples of this dominance.

* The lack of transparency and accountability of WTO procedures. Secrecy must be outlawed. Trade negotiations should be conducted in public and decision-making should be democratic (LCD countries have been marginalised).

* WTO's dispute settlement procedures are completely unsatisfactory in the light of the disaster of the salmon decision relating to the industry in Tasmania. The decision has a serious impact upon the Australian federal system and the democratic right of the State enforce its own laws relating to such matters.

* Treaties on environment, human rights and labour standards should be given

primacy over profit-regulating agreements - not vice versa, as is the case at present. Mandatory responsibilities should be instituted in these areas.

* The distribution of genetically engineered food should not be regulated by WTO. National and State governments must retain legislative autonomy in controlling food supply, labelling and the consumer's right to reject such food.

Please draw the attention of your Committee to my comments. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Glen Chittleborough

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