

22 August, 2000

Sam de Silva
sam@media.com.au
PO Box 12222
A'Beckett St Post Office
Melbourne VIC 8006

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
by Email: jsct@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir / Madam,

My concern regarding the WTO is that I know very little about them. My research suggests that the WTO is a very powerful, undemocratic organisation, dominated the agendas of transnational corporations, that has ability of working outside and above the laws of a nation-state.

I am deeply concerned about any organisation that advocated the 'free-trade' agenda – and which pushes the line that economic growth will solve the problems and lead to happiness. Having originated from the 3rd World, I can say with certainty that money does not bring peace or harmony. It has the reverse effect. Money creates conflict, it denies humanness, and it creates an illusion which distorts our understanding of life and the world we live in.

I am concerned that the WTO can override Aboriginal Land Rights. For example, the Mirarr people in Jabiluka has refused to allow the mining corporation to build a road effectively stopping the mine's development. From what I understand, the WTO has the ability to put adequate pressure on Australia, indirectly, to force the government to re-present the Jabiluka in a different light – winning public opinion (measured by polling operations which are also corporate drive) to effectively overturn the Mirarr rights.

Equally, I am concerned with the possibility of a world nuclear waste dump in Australia. Through threats of other trade options, is it not possible for the WTO to force Australia to accept nuclear waste?

No organisation or authority should have the ability to exist outside the control of people. No organisation or authority which operates in a location should be able to make decisions without the thorough involvement and consent of the people who live and are connected with that location.

As I mentioned earlier, my knowledge of the WTO is not thorough, but I am hesitant to trust official versions of its purpose. Rather I would prefer to trust opinions from community respected groups such as the Australian Council for Social Services or Friends of the Earth.

I urge you to carry out a education campaign, involving from the ground level, grass-roots organisations, in developing community kits which demystify the World Trade Organisation. By doing this, you will be inviting the massive numbers of disillusioned citizens, in to being empowered and being able to participate in the democratic process.

Please accept this letter as my submission to your inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Sam de Silva