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From: Neil and Perri Young [SMTP:youngart@omcs.com.au]
Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2000 7:47 AM
To: jsct@aph.gov.au
Subject: Community Feedback

To: The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
From: A concerned Australian citizen

Regarding the meeting of the WTO at the Melbourne Casino on 11 September, I have a number of concerns:

I believe the Australian government has had an unprofessional approach to community input, excluding representatives of civil society from decision-making regarding WTO issues. Surely all trade negotiations should be conducted in public. The government must recognise the undemocratic decision-making procedures over-riding the democratic will and rights of Australian voters. The present stance of the Australian government is in favour of trans-national corporations and not the Australian population it is elected to represent. All Australians are affected by trade decisions and related tax regimes that ensure lower costs for these global companies. It is ludicrous that there are tax breaks for large international corporations and that these profit orientated organisations taking money out of Australia are represented in these decisions where tax paying Australian's are not.

The WTO places economically oriented agreements over non-profit issues, i.e. human rights, environment and labour standards. This in turn creates a system within Australian trade practices that puts international business pursuits over human rights violations (e.g. East Timor). A double standard exists within WTO trade practices. Trade measures are enforceable and countries breaking the WTO's strict rules can be subject to harsh penalties. Environmental, human rights and labour issues however are subject to "voluntary" codes which are by rule "least trade restrictive".

Australian consumers have unequivocally rejected GE foods. The "rights" of the WTO member organisations over those of Australian citizens could reverse the Governments stance on this topic (or risk breaking the rules as mentioned above). Australia's current trade negotiations play an active role in the distribution of untested GE foods regulated by the WTO. Australia sides with bulk exporting countries to engineer WTO agendas which disadvantages poorer countries.

In summary I believe the WTO moves away from democracy, eroding individual rights and decreasing the power of national governments. These problems are inherent to the make-up of the WTO.

Yours sincerely
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