

311 GLENLUSK ROAD
GLENLUSK TAS 7012 (phone 03 62 390 312: permission given for release of the
submission for public scrutiny)

25 August 2000.

jsct@aph.gov.au. Phone 02 62777 4002, fax 02 6277 4827.

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE; INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE
WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION.**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the above inquiry.

I feel that this is a most important matter and by way of introduction, would suggest the following as an ideal situation in contrast with the present unsatisfactory status quo.

I have a dream of a WTO that has ESD as its first principle, has forgiven all third world debt and encourages the free and fair exchange of ideas and assistance to Least Developed Countries without undue influence or pressure on them to produce at least cost the stuff that western and developed countries require. My impression is that the WTO, World Bank, IMF, etc, favour the developed countries at the expense of the LDCs, which in turn leads to the development of large multi-nationals and the perpetuation of child labour, displacement of indigenous and native landholders and fishers, the change from native subsistence agriculture/fishing/forestry to large-scale monoculture, etc.

I wish to comment on the following aspects:

1. Community Involvement. The system of political representation we have means that the ordinary voter has very little chance to influence our negotiating position in the WTO. It is only the voter who is an active member of the ruling political party of the day who can sometimes prevail upon their MPs to ask for a change, and then this request has to find its way through the maze of other influences on the party hierarchy, the bureaucracy, etc, before it emerges maybe as part of a policy. Ideas that 'trickle up' have very little chance of success unless their time has come, or a power broker or bloc picks them up, or popular demonstrations like Seattle focus media attention on them.

This is one of the chief reasons that the WTO has such a poor image as it is seen as way out of touch and under undue influence of the big and powerful.

2. Transparency and accountability of WTO operations and decision-making.
Very low to non-existent.

3. Effectiveness of WTO's dispute settlement procedures. Ditto. We in Tasmania were hounded by our own Federal Government and Canada over our wish not to permit the import of diseased salmon and a similar battle is looming with NZ over fireblight in apples.

4. Australia's capacity to undertake WTO advocacy. This is apparently very weak; witness our inability to stop Norway and Japan from hunting whales and over-fishing our tuna!

5. Involvement of peak bodies, industry groups and external lawyers in disputes. I would permit this provided that equal representation of Environmentalists and Indigenous Groups is permitted, otherwise they should be excluded forthwith as they have sufficient influence on the halls of power as is.

6. Relationship between WTO and regional economic arrangements. As these regional economic arrangements are usually time-limited or made to defend a region from undue influence of bigger, more rapacious groupings, I feel these should be permitted to 'run alongside', with the provisos of ESD, etc, as mentioned before.

7. Relationship with other agreements like trade, environmental, human rights and labour standards. Ditto. I feel, however, that the over-riding considerations should be ESD and the need to foster good labour standards.

8. Social, cultural and environmental considerations and their influence on WTO.

These are absolutely prime considerations and should have their voices heard as loudly and as often as possible. There is no WTO without the environment, there is no life without respect for the cultural aspect and there is no acceptance of the WTO without respect for the social aspect.

Other remarks

I feel the WTO has been a mixed blessing at best. Apparently the rest of the world feels the same as there are increasing signs of discontent amongst the general populace as seen in the demonstrations at Seattle and planned demos at the S11 talks planned for Melbourne in September.

From our own experience here in Tasmania and from hearsay, it seems that the WTO is powerless to assist when something is patently against our interests (eg Salmon, fireblight) and against the interests of the environment (eg Japan's whale hunting in the guise of science).

Please contact me if you require further clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Rick Calitz (wto 25 august)