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From: Gary Scott [SMTP:gary.scott@vuw.ac.nz]
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To: jsct@aph.gov.au
Subject: Australia - WTO Relationship Submission

To whom it may concern in the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Australia should reconsider its position in support of the WTO trade negotiation process. The inclusion of GATS, TRIPs and agriculture into the Uruguay Round of GATT has had deleterious effects on many people throughout the world, particularly for small peasant farmers in countries like India who have had their property rights to plant varieties whisked away from them by global agribusiness. Australia needs to consider more than its own interests, and more than the interests of a corporate elite. The ramifications of the trade rules enforced by the WTO are enormous. More consideration needs to be given to how these rules limit democracy in Australia and other countries. The negative consequences of provisions such as standstill, rollback and expropriation will over time, I believe, outweigh the benefits of liberalised trade. Australia should be making sure that any reservations it sets can be added to if necessary and thereafter maintained. It still remains open to an Australian Government to invoke emergency balance of payments, temporary safeguard, anti-dumping and conservation provisions. But this list is not enough. The implications of trade rules for indigenous people and culture must be more fully considered before any more agreements are entered into. More public information is needed and more research must be completed. The stakes are simply too high. The WTO does not recognise the precautionary principle, but wiser heads in Australia should.

Currently I am lecturing on globalisation issues at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, but have recently been granted Australian citizenship. Thank you for the opportunity to express some of my views on these important matters. I pray that this process of public consultation will continue and that official debate over Australia's relationship with the WTO does not descend (once again) into the secret and hidden corridors of power.

Yours sincerely,

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