



To the Committee on the USFTA

25/4/04

Letter on USFTA

Democracy

"A government by the people; a form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them, or their elected agents under a free electoral system."

This is the first definition and the generally accepted definition of democracy in the Macquarie Dictionary.

It may then be assumed that the "US Free Trade Agreement" proposal between the Australian Government and the USA Government is democratic if it gets the endorsement of both governments. But this is not so.

We Australians have no democratic vote in the USA where power to make important decisions affecting our country will be made, if the "Free trade Agreement" is signed.

Is the agreement itself democratic between a large, powerful country, hungry for resources and a small population country like Australia, rich in resources? Not likely.

Certainly its effects will not be democratic.

The proposed agreement and its implications have not been fully explained to the Australian people. Where is all the publicly accessible information?

The democratic process required an education campaign, carried out by the Federal Government and then a referendum.

Is this so called 'agreement' within the law and understanding of our Australian Constitution?

Why the secrecy? As they say - 'the devil is in the detail'

The dates for submissions are 13th April to the Joint Standing Committee and 30th April to the Senate Standing Committee. There is no way enough information has been made available to the public.

The effects of this "Agreement" if signed by Australia are binding into the future and there appears to be no redress and Australia's right to regulate, undermined.

Some of the effects, as I understand it are as follows:-

This "Free Trade Agreement" if passed by the Australian parliament will cede to the USA power over our -

- Quarantine laws -e.g. relaxation of these laws to suit the USA and probable irreparable damage to Australia.
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme -e.g. added costs
- Media and content laws - e.g. possibility of there being no Australian owned and representative free press or TV channels
- Services delivered by state and local governments - e.g. privatization and foreign ownership of water, gas, power etc. - total takeover.
- Australian trade or policy laws e.g. introduction of GM crops, U.S. farm crops remain protected
- The freedom to make new laws in some areas will be restricted in future.

Yours sincerely
Barbara Cliff,

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