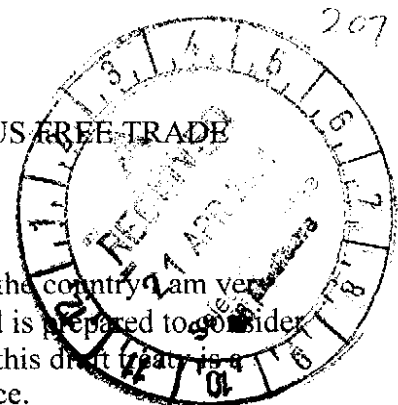


SUBMISSION TO SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE US FREE TRADE
AGREEMENT



As an Australian who has spent most of my working life outside the country I am very concerned that this country is still showing a "cultural cringe" and is prepared to consider that it has to bow to larger nations on most issues. I consider that this draft treaty is a prime example where we are going to "sell our souls" for a pittance.

LOCAL CONTENT

In my reading of the documents it appears that the Government of Australia will be severely constrained in its ability to regulate the media particularly for local content. Any one who cares to watch the television channels will appreciate that the Australian content is already heavily weighed in favour of other countries particularly the USA. As this treaty apparently locks future governments into the conditions set out this means that we are committing future generations to what the present government considers appropriate. Even the Australian Broadcasting Corporation regulations could be challenged by the US This is not democratic.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT BOARD

This Board has in many respects been a paper tiger but it will become even more so if this treaty goes ahead. There will be no requirement for any US firm to use local content ,transfer technology , or be subject to export control. In many of the already approved take overs by foreign firms there has been loss of research facilities and often transfer of headquarters. There can be no requirements for joint ventures and requirements for technical and licensing requirements can be challenged Though some firms are going to be placed "off limits" there are restrictions on any increase in government holding or further restrictions.

SERVICES

In the rush to privatize services in this country we seem to have created a monster which can now be open to control by US companies. The treaty appears to apply to services which are supplied in competition and on a commercial basis. This could result in power companies being taken over by large US coal companies with even less chance of governments moving towards sustainable non polluting power sources or encouraging more efficient energy use .Such measures would be considered to be restraints on free trade.

The US has identified Australian labelling laws as barriers to trade. Any attempt to have food labels indicate whether the product contains genetically modified material will be treated as a barrier to free trade regardless of what the Australian public wants.

PATENTS

The requirements that Australia must adopt the longer time periods for patents means that new inventions in drugs or other products can be delayed and there will be delays to cheaper generic drugs.

In the field of copyright there is an extension of time which could increase costs to education and libraries.

ENVIRONMENTAL

It is a sick joke that environmental protection can be controlled by the market mechanism and voluntary agreements. All the experience in the USA over the past three years has seen a winding back of environmental protection based on this principle with a serious deterioration in air and water quality. As the USA has not signed the Kyoto Agreement it will not be possible for a future Australian Government to take measures to control carbon emission standards as that will be looked upon as a restriction of free trade.

Purchasing agreements by States to encourage regional development will not be permitted and in any case may well be affected by removal of tariffs.

DISPUTE PROCESS

Either government can claim that a law or policy is in breach of the treaty and consultations will take place. Then if there is no agreement three agreed trade experts will consider the issue with or without public participation and a decision will be made. The whole process is quite undemocratic.

BENEFITS

From a reading of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests letter and fact sheet the benefits to Australian primary industries are marginal, particularly as some of the important export items are not to be in place until up to 18 years for beef and that sugar has been excluded.

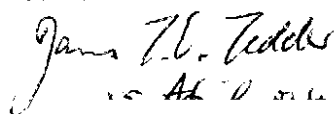
Many of the items give small gains and it must be questioned as to whether such improvements may have been achieved in the long run without this treaty. The various studies of the total economic benefits to Australia show either a minor gain or a loss.

CONCLUSION

This whole process is undemocratic and driven by purely commercial interests. It locks future governments into policies which in five or even less years may be quite counter to Australia's interests.

It should be rejected and I trust that the Committee will recommend that the Senate will reject any Bills which may be brought before it to facilitate the operation of this so called free trade agreement.

James L.O. Tedder MBE B.Ec(Syd)

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'James L.O. Tedder', with a date '15 April' written below it.