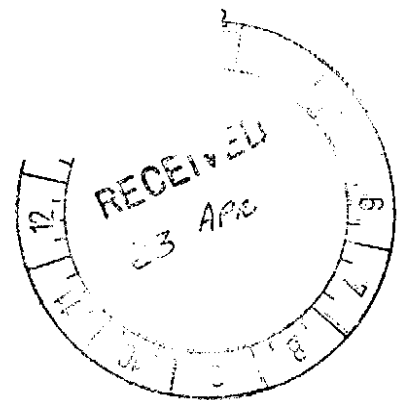


The Secretary,

Senate Select Committee on the USFTA,

Parliament House,

CANBERRA A.C.T.



I am one of the many concerned Australians who feel they were denied access to the detail contained in the Australian/US Free Trade Agreement before our politicians negotiated the terms with the U.S. Of particular concern is the USFTA dispute process. This process enables a member country to claim that a law or policy of the other country is in breach of the USFTA, and prevents the complainant country from getting the benefits expected from the Agreement (Article 21.1) Dispute process would require initial consultations, referral to a Joint Committee of U.S. and Australian Government officials, and if not resolved, would then be decided by three agreed Trade Law experts. The decision cannot be appealed (Articles 21.5 - 21.11) This, I feel, would not be in Australia's interest. The USFTA would change the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to allow drug companies to seek reviews of PBS decisions. The future health of Australians would be under threat from powerful US drug companies. Why would we feel confident of outcomes by such lobbys, especially as the US is renowned for its poor treatment of its own citizens in need of basic health care?

2.

Water services have not been excluded through any reservations. Commonwealth regulation of water services will have to comply with the USFTA. Public water services may not be protected because many are delivered on a commercial basis. Because public broadcasting is not listed in either of the Annexes, it is not excluded from the Agreement. The funding of public broadcasting is protected by the general exclusion of subsidies and grants (Article 10.1) However the regulation of public broadcasting could be affected by the Agreement because the definition of public services excludes services provided on a commercial basis, or in competition with other service providers. The US, with its commercial culture, could destroy our Australian Icon, the ABC, as well as SBS, claiming it is inconsistent with the USFTA. Our Australian political negotiators, with their US counterparts, Mr. Robert Zoellick and others, have not inspired confidence. In fact, the opposite is the case. I implore this Committee to treat all concerns with great care. Future generations of Australians could have Third World conditions, destroying the basic rights of citizens of our great country.



ELLEN HILL.