

To the Senate Select Committee on the USFTA
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

In the letter I received, dated April 15th 2004, from the Minister for Trade and Deputy Leader of the National Party - let us never forget his dual role - following my letter of concern about the potential for the destruction of Australian cultural diversity and creativity, the following statement stands out.

"The government will also be able to take measures to ensure that Australian content on interactive audio and /or visual services new media platforms is not unreasonably denied to Australian consumers . .
"

What does he mean? Not unreasonably denied? Who defines 'reasonably'? The Americans pushing for more and more access for their second rate productions, or a strong vibrant Australian government proud of the quality of much of our production, at least through the ABC, and SBS, despite the severe cuts to their capacity to produce their own material? Why is the statement put in such a negative way? Why is there not a positive affirmation that a precise sufficient percentage of the media, now and in the future, free-to-air and pay TV, will remain under Australian control, delivering Australian designed, created, high quality content? What of the children's television programmes? What of support for Indigenous media development?

This federal government has copied the worst that America offers. We are to buy second hand tanks that are not compatible with all equipment here. We are to put billions into Son of Star Wars, putting back into American pockets any profits we might get from the entry to American markets over the 18 year time it will take for some industries to gain full access.

America is proud of and protects the intellectual property of its key industries. Those key global industries are global info-entertainment industries of all forms. I remember Peter Costello remarking that Australia did not need to be a designer of interactive material, because it was mainly a consumer society! The anti-intellectual attitude of the government is evident in what it is prepared to give away. This is such a contrast to America's support for its educational export industries, for example.

No American government would be willing to see that its citizens were 'not unreasonably denied American content'. They protect the profitable industries, and even the unprofitable ones - like sugar - where it is electorally desirable to do so.

This Federal government has no positive, creative, innovative vision for Australia's future. It has just gained export advantages for manufacturing industries at a time when we are less likely to have them to export. If Mitsubishi leaves South Australia, all the allied industries will suffer as well. But what has this government put in place to support our future workers in face of this overwhelming American pressure? Nothing. Statisticians tell us that the gap between the wealthy, who will profit from some of these deals, and the rest of us will widen.

I note that Mark Vaile says agreement 'will not limit governments' capacities to provide taxation incentive programmes for cultural purposes'. The decline in support for wide-ranging creative community and other cultural activities has been such that our key film industry is suffering. We have a government that would rather put money into private schools and private health insurance than research and development and encouragement of Australian talent.

Anything not nailed down specifically in the details of the treaty to protect Australia's cultural diversity and the industries that will develop as a result in the as yet unknown future, . will go by default and the signing of this treaty, which will deny future governments the right to alter what are unfair clauses, is the ultimate betrayal of the future of the nation.

Do not approve this treaty.

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