

GIPPSLANDERS AGAINST THE GATS
C/O D. AUCHTERLONIE
10 WILSON CT.
TRAFALGAR. VIC. 3824.
28/4/04



The Secretary,
Senate Select Committee on the USFTA
Suite S1.30.1
The Senate,
Parliament House,
Canberra. ACT. 2600.

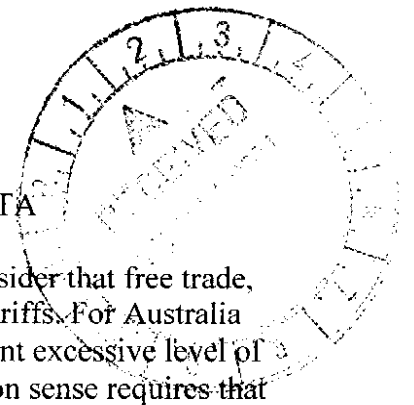
Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed a hard copy and a disk of a submission to your Committee on the USFTA.

Yours sincerely,

Don Auchterlonie

D.J. Auchterlonie.



SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE USFTA

We have serious concerns about the detail of the USFTA, we consider that free trade, if it really is a benefit should only be about mutual reduction of tariffs. For Australia to abandon support for its own industries will accelerate the present excessive level of overseas ownership of our industry, now running at 90%. Common sense requires that our Australian owned industries require protection. With every new burst of cheap goods, we get job losses and more people on the dole with its accompanying negative impact on the budget.

According to Colin Teese in "Newsweekly" 27/3/04, the USFTA does not meet the WTO guidelines that a FTA must cover all the trade and that any "phase in" period must be reasonable. A 19 year phase in period for beef and dairy products is not reasonable. Also what would happen if other WTO members demand the concessions Australia has given the USA in the USFTA?

Communications. We object strongly to the further privatizing of Telstra as it is vital for telecommunications to remain in Australian control. The government receives a 10% return on its investment in Telstra. This is ample justification for retaining the present level of ownership.

Australian content rules. Annex 1 binds Australian local content to existing levels. This inflexibility in this treaty is quite unsatisfactory. Annex 2 is even more restrictive, we need to retain the democratic right to control our own programs.

Medicines. The major beneficiaries of the provisions of the USFTA on medicines appear to be the US drug companies. The concept of the drug companies having influence on decisions by our government for the benefit of the health of our people through the PBS is a leap in the wrong direction, undermining the Australian principle of affordable access to medicines for all. This is another example of "trade law" being used to negate policies which benefit our people.

Quarantine. Quarantine and trade are different issues altogether – quarantine should not be linked with trade. Australia's position of having the advantage of a disease free status must be maintained. We remain extremely skeptical of the claimed "scientific" basis of handling imports from countries with various diseases in their produce which we are now free from. We strongly oppose the diluting of our traditional quarantine regulations.

Food labeling. We note that Article 8.5 requires Australia and the US to consider accepting the other party's regulations as equivalent to their own. Why do we not insist that the US institute labeling of GE foods? It is obvious that this is of benefit to consumers in both countries. This is raising standards not lowering standards.

Foreign investment. US investors are given under Article 11.9 the right to ignore use of local products which means our own local industry will contract. The dilution of the role of the FIRB in reviewing foreign investment is not in our national interest.

Essential services. The definition of services not supplied on a commercial basis or in competition with one or more service suppliers is a great disadvantage. Australia has privatized so many essential services that it leaves them vulnerable to this FTA. It is essential that we retain strict control of our essential services. Our very security depends on our essential services.

Copyright. Extension of copyright payments to 70 years after the death of an author (Article 17.4) is an unnecessary imposition on our schools and libraries – a public debate on this issue has been denied.

In conclusion we are a loss to see the benefits to Australia in this FTA.

Authorised by Don Auchterlonie
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Submission approved at a committee meeting on 14/4/04.