

From: Dale Duguid
Sent: Friday, 9 January 2004 3:48 PM
To: FTA, Committee (SEN)
Cc:
Subject: FTA supporting legislation in Senate



**TO Senate Select Committee on the Free Trade Agreement between
Australia and the United States of America**

To the attention of:

Senator Peter Cook (ALP, WA) (Chair)
Senator Brandis (Liberal Party, QLD) (Deputy Chair)
Senator Boswell (National Party, QLD)
Senator Conroy (ALP, VIC)
Senator Ferris (Liberal Party, SA)
Senator Harris (One Nation, QLD)
Senator O'Brien (ALP, Tasmania)
Senator Ridgeway (Australian Democrats, NSW)

FROM
Dale Duguid

DATE 9th April 2004

Dear Honorable Senators,

In regard to the current FTA agreement seeking supporting legislation to be passed in the Senate in due course I seek your rejection of that legislation. Following is a personal perspective as to the dangers of permitting legislation supportive of the FTA to be passed.

I write to you as the founder of photon - the proudly Australian pioneering company that supports the visual effects industry for feature film & television drama production in Australia. My vision, in the late 80's, for that industry was to empower our story-tellers with the tools that would release them from the practical, visual boundaries of contemporary suburbia or the timeless Australian bush: to allow Australians to tell stories set in any location and at any time in history: to project our voice and opinions about the wider world and to the world within the format of film & television drama: to reciprocate or provide a balance for all those inbound values launched at us from abroad. We might not change the world, but at the very least, we could hold our own and preserve our national values and culture against the inbound tide. For my generation, that culture was a gift from the previous generation that gave up more than their fair share to pay for the stupidity and violence of other cultures. They, as custodians also, had preserved that gift via unspeakable hardship & tragedy. The ever-evolving gift of our culture then is surely irreplaceable and beyond value. Like our forefathers we found ourselves now as custodians of this precious, fragile asset. Were it entirely lost then, or now, displacement of culture rather than evolution of culture would be the inevitable consequence. We therefore risk heading toward a cultural destination not of our own choice rather than that hardwon potency of being able to chart our own course.

14/04/2004

I am a recipient of the Centenary Medal for my outstanding contributions to the film industry. As such I feel a duty to express my concerns about this one, core aspect of the FTA. My views expressed herein paraphrase the views held by the vast majority of industry peers with whom I have spoken. The common area of concern is the EROSION OF AUSTRALIA'S SOVEREIGN RIGHT to regulate its cultural industries. In our modern society, nothing is more influential than film or television content to our sense of national identity. Any diminution therefore of this sovereign right presumes that it is for sale. This presumption insults proud Australians. It's consequences in respect of the FTA violate and betray our culture.

In my lifetime I have observed the loss from our vocabulary of words like "Cobber" and I hear words like "Buddy" uttered more and more. "Zed" truly is becoming "Zee". The historic "Kakoda Track" is now the "Kakoda Trail". American cultural invasiveness is everywhere. It is already almost and overwhelming force WITHOUT and FTA. Imagine its effect if that door is unlocked and the safety chain removed.

In my childhood, many decades ago, I mocked an American accent when I played a medieval knight or gunslinger. American cultural invasiveness existed then too. The hero always had an American accent so it was a natural association for a child to make that such an accent (or nationality) equaled being the hero. Such thinking began to take hold.

Vietnam 's war bombarded us with messages of leadership stupidity and non-heroics that collectively challenged the notion that all things American were better or even as good as our own. Then, in that amazing tumult of the seventies we found our own identity again. Australian films, many of them admittedly lacking in some areas, gave us back our lingo; gave us back our sense of cultural self-worth; gave us the platform and self-assurance from which internationally successful talents and films could later be launched; ultimately spawning films that were not burdened with cultural cringe or the flip-side of myopic, cultural indulgence; instead, the films evolved into mature, astute, "world-films" that told pan-cultural tales woven with fibers of true Australian culture, ideas and ideals. The world embraced it. Australian's loved it. To this day there is as much a sense of a David vs. Goliath victory when an Aussie wins an Academy or Emmy award as there was in Alan Bond's Americas Cup victory. One of the reasons for such a nationwide-pride of Australian Oscars is surely the sense that we a 'giving' and not just receiving cultural insemination. The FTA will erode the institutions that spawn Australian Oscar winners. We will become exclusively 'receivers' in every sense.

Astute individuals had seen the need to offset the fragility of our nation's short history by reinforcing our national identity via domestic film & television content. Governments were persuaded and the nation embraced the results. Pilgrimages to 'the old country' were no longer necessary to garner a sense of identity. Looking to a distant shore for a role models or explanations of our identity rapidly became unnecessary; then simply silly; and eventually abhorrent. Now the FTA will strike at the heart of that cultural sanctuary. Let's be very clear. THE FTA WILL UNDO what was done. What was done was good. It's undoing is therefore bad. Australian culture and identity even now after decades of assault retains so much that we hold dear. The assaults by another fundamentally racially divided, materialistic, commercially overwhelming, populous nation cannot fail to ultimately fracture our own relatively fairer, more-tolerant & humane multicultural society and tiny commercial influence. The FTA betrays us and all those who sacrificed before us to preserve our sense of self-worth.

From a cultural perspective the FTA flag has no southern cross; it has far many more stars that fall into regimented order beside its stripes. It flutters above us now where the FTA agreement has firmly planted it. Those old Diggers will not salute it. If you leave it flying, our children WILL salute it and never sense the need to question why.

Vote against the supporting legislation of the FTA in the Senate please. In so doing, preserve our ancestor's cultural gift and thus preserve our past. Both are precious commodities. Both belong to all

Australians. NONE OF IT belongs to America. Blocking this legislation will prove that we deserve our cultural inheritance. The millions of eyes that scrutinize your decision-making now stretch back to Federation and forward into all the possibilities of the future. . The nation's soul is in your hands

Dale Duguid
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