

This is a plea from a concerned citizen with no connections to any organisation. But I do reflect the concerns of many people in the community in this area who have found it difficult to keep up with what is happening because of the paucity of information on this proposed "free trade agreement" .

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I sent last October to Mark Vaile raising my concerns. No reply was ever received from Mr Vaile. He treated it with the contempt he no doubt thought it deserved.

I received a platitudinous letter from my local MP, Dr Brendan Nelson, enclosing all the guarantees that Australia would NEVER give away any of the issues I had raised. Similar guarantees were being spouted all last year.

The question of "core' and "non-core" promises came instantly to my mind.

I do not trust any more and I have been seriously worried by the detail and "double standard" clauses in the proposal.

Someone I know was part of the last delegation to the US. He could say little but enough to express his disgust with all the last minute changes sprung by the US negotiators, and the re-writing needed at the end.

If John Howard is so keen to attach us to the US perhaps a request to become the 51st State might have brought more benefits.

Let us have fair trade or no trade. Time to stand up for Australia's future as a free nation.

Anna Smith

The Hon Mark Vaile MP
Minister for Trade
Parliament House, Canberra
ACT 2600

23rd October 2003

Dear Mr Vaile,

I have been worrying all year about the proposed Australia-US Free Trade Agreement. Secret negotiations, with the Australian public NOT being told just what is being bargained are open to abuse. Especially when one is negotiating with an economy the size of the US. Its a bit like expecting a mouse to do a deal with an elephant.

The two studies which dealt with economic issues, ACIL Consulting and APEC Study Centre, both projected losses and small gains respectively, based on the assumption that all agricultural barriers to trade would be removed. However, I believe that only tariffs are under discussion, while what Australia needs to be removed are both quotas and subsidies. I am sure the farmers understand this well.

Other concerns are Australia's PBS, essential services like health, education, transport and water: the position of the Foreign Investment Review Board: Australian content rules in audio-visual media: quarantine standards: labelling and regulation of genetically modified food: use of local firms in government purchasing. All of these are under attack by the very multinational US companies which have successfully sued the Canadian and Mexican Governments under NAFTA.

My Canadian friends tell me to be careful, the US plays "hard ball". They have at least resisted any further encroachment on their culture.

Do you want to see this Coalition Government reviled in ten years time as the one who sold Australia down the river? This is going to happen when all Australians see the fine print.

My views are shared by many of my friends, particularly those of us with good memories.

Yours sincerely,

Anna G Smith