



Fw: Free Trade Agreement

As a writer of Australian comedy, I have deep concerns at the perhaps unanticipated flow on from the proposed Free Trade Agreement. Free trade is intended to cover the exchange of goods and services between Australia and the USA, without regulations or tariffs hindering that trade.

This trade does not include, and should never include, the exchange of culture. Unlike primary produce and secondary manufacturing, culture cannot be bought for cash, or exchanged for other goods. Culture can only ever be exchanged for culture. The exchange of culture is a great thing, a necessary thing to advance any civilization. For these advances to be mutually beneficial between civilizations, these exchanges must be equitable. History has shown the devastating impact where one culture has been overlaid on top of others rather than exchanged, the results being not only the loss of that culture, but the loss of social identity and a partial or complete breakdown of that civilization. For example, the Australian Aborigines, the Pacific Islanders, the native Americans.

As our leaders, you are expected to be able to learn from history and apply those lessons for the future benefit for this nation. Negotiate an equitable agreement or don't have one. The USA is not, despite its own opinion, the only game in town.

Reducing our entertainment, our arts and our media exposure to a straight swap for cash (which is the inexorable outcome of reduced and removed quotas) will absolutely reduce our culture. I cannot write Bronx comedy, Black American comedy or Mid-West comedy, and I wouldn't expect writers from those places to write Australian comedy. The US networks have never come up with shows as funny or relevant to us as The Games, IMT, Frontline, Mother and Son or Kath and Kim.

I would dearly love to earn \$100,000 for writing one episode of a sitcom, as my US counterparts do, but the FTA will not provide an equal exchange of culture, it will only provide a one-way passage - a back passage. Monoculture is fine if you're a yoghurt, but disastrous for a nation. For example, I like to pop into Starbucks for coffee occasionally, but having no choice but Starbucks because the Italian or Turkish cafes have gone out of business sends shudders down my caffeine loving spine.

The Australian nation has evolved over 200 years since colonisation to be a unique country on this planet. We are not American, and we are very happy we are not - we take some American culture, some English culture, some European culture and increasingly Asian culture. The 'us' in Aussie does not stand for United States. If this free trade agreement gets passed in its present form, we will become A-US-tralia, and I am not delighted about becoming a US trailer.

(Surely a senator with the name Peter Cook appreciates all forms of good comedy).

Regards

Bruce Kirkham

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