

In reference to the advertisement of the 15th July 2000, in "The West Australian", I have the following comments in regard to the WTO and its operation:

World Trade Organisation - Australia

1) Community Involvement

I do not see much involvement for individuals to be involved in formulating Australia's negotiating position in relation to the WTO. All international agreements made on Australia's behalf seem to happen as 'a fait accompli'; with input from politicians, government departments (one assumes that is what the government departments are for and used accordingly) and business's which are becoming more and more owned by international companies. I question whether their (companies) interests are in the best interests of Australians.

2) Transparency and Accountability

I have not seen or read the WTO agreements, but would expect it to be written in legal jargon. (I have just read the "Kyoto Protocol", and would expect any international agreements to be written accordingly). Unfortunately, this makes it difficult to understand what agreements have been made, and who is going to resolve any disputes.

Who is going to be accountable?

3) Dispute Settlement Procedures

I have not read much which gives me confidence in settlement of trade disputes.

The following examples are highlighted:

a) USA - EEC and the banana dispute.

How can one country, which does not grow bananas, impose fines on another?

b) USA - EEC and hormone grown beef

Surely countries can determine how and what type of chemicals can be added to food? Without fear of penalties.

c) Australia - Canada and salmon

With the imposition of strict importation rules of many types of foodstuff, plant and animal material (have you ever entered this country at any airport), how can Australia protect itself from the possibility of introducing unheard of diseases to Australia.

d) Australia - USA and subsidy for a small manufacturing company

On what basis has this been resolved in favour of the USA? There are many other subsidies that have not been addressed; growing of crops (exports).

4) Advocacy

Australia is a primary producer and minerals exporter, with little downstream processing. In the overall picture, Australia has little impact on the world economy (we are a country of consumers).

I do not see Australia succeeding in areas which should concern all:

- a) genetically modified foods
- b) services such as insurance, banking, and "open sky" policies
- c) subsidies on production of crops; in particular, USA and EEC
- d) interlectual properties, patents
- e) so called globalisation
- f) bi-lateral agreements versus WTO agreement
- g) subsidies to local industries, either direct by governments or allowances/etc provided by governments to facilitate companies setting up in their country/state/local area.

Australia, according to me, is still an under developed country and should be looking at all means possible to develop the country to the benefit of all citizens, not just international companies.

5) Disputes - Peak Bodies, Industry Groups and External Lawyers

On what legal basis are these agreements signed? It is basically an agreement signed by interested parties for mutual benefit. Unfortunately, not all things are equal in this world.

I am afraid Governments ignore international agreements/resolutions as and when it is in their interests.

Governments of the day should be attempting to promote policies for the benefit of the country and the related industries. Unfortunately, Australia will have little effect in relation to this end. Company goals will not be the same as country goals, especially if dealing with international companies. How can disputes be settled if you are dealing with the same industry/company in two countries. (Industries in separate countries inevitably have the same companies popping up - eg: oil companies, banking)

6) WTO and Regional Economic Arrangements

No comment as economic arrangements generally have common or same goals.

I feel that countries are reverting to bi-lateral agreements when agreement through the WTO can not be achieved. Why have an organisation such as the WTO?

7) WTO and Multilateral Agreements

I do not believe the WTO is interested in environmental, human rights and labour standards when attempting to reach agreement on the various issues.

8) Social, Cultural and Environmental Considerations

I do not believe the WTO is interested in social, cultural and environmental conditions when attempting to reach agreement on the various issues.

This would, to me, extend to corruption. Unfortunately corruption impinges on many, many people's life in a large number of countries around the world.

I thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

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