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Contents

1. A win for AFTINET-Parliamentary Inquiry into the WTO!
- 2 . ACTU Adopts Fair Trade Policy
3. Success of Maude Barlow Public Lecture - tapes available
4. USA lobbies WTO to Oppose Labelling of Genetically Modified Food
5. British Survey shows support for local regulation of trade and of Transnational Corporations (TNCs)
6. Coming events
 - a) Jubilee 2000 Drop the Debt Vigil, Sunday, July 23rd, 1-3 pm, Archibald Fountain, Hyde Park, Sydney
 - b) AFTINET/ AID/WATCH/ NUS Seminar on Global Environment Campaigns Monday 24 July, 6pm, Level 5, Wentworth Bldg, Sydney University, City Rd, Darlingtown.
 - c) Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union Rally for Fair Trade 11am Wednesday July 26, Archibald Fountain, Hyde Park, Sydney.

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1. A Win for AFTINET-Parliamentary Inquiry into the WTO!

Submissions from AFTINET and others to the Federal Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Treaties have resulted in the decision of the committee to conduct a public inquiry into Australia's relationship with the WTO. The inquiry will be advertised in the media next week and public submissions will be invited from the end of August. The inquiry will conduct public hearings and is expected to run until the end of the year.

. The terms of reference will enable AFTINET organisations to voice many of their concerns and include:

- the transparency and accountability of WTO operations and decisionmaking,

- opportunities for community involvement in developing Australia's policy on the WTO,
- effectiveness of and access to WTO dispute settlement procedures,
- the relationship between WTO agreements and UN agreements on environment, human rights and labour standards,
- the extent to which social, cultural and environmental considerations influence WTO priorities and decisionmaking
- the extent to which the Australian community has benefited from participation in the WTO.

Full terms of reference and dates will be available next week from the Parliamentary website www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct

AFTINET can make a submission which can be circulated for endorsements. Member organisations should also make submissions if possible with emphasis on their particular areas of interest. This is a great opportunity to educate politicians and broaden the public and media debate about the WTO.

2. ACTU Adopts Fair Trade Policy

The debate on trade policy at the ACTU Congress dominated the media in the last week of June. This debate will have an important influence on ALP policy, which is to be determined at the ALP conference July 31- Aug 3.

The final version of the ACTU policy is far more critical and broad-ranging than previous trade policy. It notes the growth of international coalitions of unions, non-government organisations and progressive churches expressing widespread community discontent with international trade institutions, contributing to the defeat of the MAI in the OECD and the failure of the Seattle WTO meeting.

The policy re-asserts the importance of UN and ILO conventions on human rights and workers' rights in the context of the pressures of global economic competition. It supports the concept of fair trade which it argues does not mean protectionism but which means changes to the current trade environment to enable progress for all countries in terms of employment growth, social protections, core labour standards, a sustainable environment and adherence to human rights and democratic values.

The policy supports restructuring of the WTO and other international trade and financial institutions to achieve these objectives. This would require full transparency and openness, involvement of representatives of civil society and the development of policies to ensure the reduction of developmental inequalities, improvement of the environment, and improvements in labour standards and gender imbalances.

The policy opposes treaties on investment like the MAI which remove government powers to regulate foreign investment. The policy also resolves to oppose any treaty on trade in services which restricts government funding of public services, removes

regulation to restrict foreign ownership in telecommunications or financial institutions, or removes regulation which ensures Australian content in film and television.

The policy supports Tobin tax on international currency trading activity to inhibit speculative capital flows which can destabilise economies.

The policy also supports international campaigns to monitor and publicise the activities of transnational corporations like Rio Tinto, and proposals for regulation of corporations through national and international agreements and codes to ensure conformity to labour and environmental standards.

On tariffs, the policy supports a freeze on the current levels of Australian tariffs, which are already below the levels of Australia's major trading partners. The policy also states the ACTU "will monitor the developments in the debate on social tariffs and effective linkages between trade and social policies." The concept of social tariffs means tariffs on products from countries whose governments do not enforce basic human and labour rights and environment regulation. This policy has been promoted by the AMWU and been debated in the media as reported in AFTINET Bulletin no. 5.

3. Success of Maude Barlow Public Lecture - tapes available

180 people heard Maude Barlow Chairperson of the Council of Canadians at a packed public lecture at Sydney University on June 27. She analysed the growth of global inequality and corporate power, the impacts of international trade agreements like NAFTA and the WTO and the growing global citizen's movement which is resisting these trends and demanding democratic accountability from governments, corporations and international institutions. Tapes of the lecture are \$10 and can be ordered from Sarah Mitchell at PIAC – phone 02 9299 7833 or email: smitchell@piac.asn.au.

4. USA lobbies WTO to Oppose Labelling of Genetically Modified Food

In a paper submitted to the June 21-2 meeting of the WTO's Committee on sanitary and phytosanitary measures, the US government has complained about the growing number of countries which have introduced labelling requirements or other regulation to inform consumers when food is genetically modified. The US does not have labelling requirements and has argued that the EU's labelling requirements are not scientifically based and are a potential barrier to trade. However so far the US has not lodged a formal complaint under the WTO disputes process (Bureau of National Affairs, Washington).

As noted in AFTINET Bulletin 5, the US government has also exerted pressure on the Australian government not to introduce labelling. This has influenced Australian

government policy, although surveys show there is majority consumer support for labelling.

5. British Survey shows support for local regulation of trade and of Transnational Corporations (TNCs)

In February this year the British Ecologist Magazine commissioned the MORI company to do an opinion poll of a representative sample of 928 adults on trade and TNCs. The poll found overwhelming support for the right of governments to regulate trade and TNCs in the public interest.

The poll found that only 12% supported the principle advocated by the WTO of "national treatment" for TNCs which forbids governments from having policies which favour local companies over TNCs. Furthermore, 90% supported the right of national governments to regulate TNC conduct on the environment, employment conditions and human health standards, and 89% supported the right of governments to restrict the import of goods which may be damaging to human health. This shows public support for the precautionary principle which is recognised in environmental law and which enables governments to make decisions on potentially dangerous products before actual harm or death is caused. This support may be stronger in Britain because of the experience of the contamination British beef by mad cow disease, when there were deaths for several years before authorities agreed to act. These last two areas of government regulation have also been challenged by WTO disputes process decisions which have defined environment and health and safety regulations as barriers to trade, and have undermined the precautionary principle .

6. Coming Events

a) Jubilee 2000 Drop the Debt Vigil, Sunday, July 23rd, 1-3 pm, Archibald Fountain, Hyde Park, Sydney- part of the international campaign which is urging the G8 summit meeting in Tokyo of the world's richest governments to take real and immediate action on debt relief for the poorest countries.

b) AFTINET/ AID/WATCH/ NUS Seminar on Global Environment Campaigns
Monday 24 July, 6pm - Level 5, Wentworth Bldg, Sydney University, City Rd, Darlington.

Jim Green, Nuclear Physicist, Jabilluka and Lucas Heights campaigns
Rayyar Farhat, Committee against Genetically Modified Food, GMO campaigns

d) Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union Rally for Fair Trade 11am Wednesday
July 26, Archibald Fountain, Hyde Park, Sydney.

The focus of this rally is to urge the state government to support labour rights as part of the framework of the WTO, and to adopt local industry development policies for employment in NSW through apprenticeship training programs and the purchase of local products by government agencies .

