

Whose interests does the WTO serve?

The WTO – World Trade Organisation – was formed in 1994 to promote a free world trade. It is an organisation which sets the rules that govern how nations trade with each other. However, the WTO is today demonstrating to use its powers to serve the interests of the private companies – American in particular – at the expense of national economies, workers and farmers.

It is known that it has pulled down measures to help the poor world, safeguard health and protect environment in the interest of the private profit of few people. What is more is that every year, backed by many richest nations, it is extending its powers even more, as consequence there is an increasing suspicion that the initials of WTO stand for “World Take Over”. Ronnie Hall, a trade campaigner at “Friends of Earth International” says that “the WTO is pushing to increase private profit at the expense of all other consideration, including the well-being and quality of life of the world’s people mass.” To support this thesis, I am going to list some examples of its way of ruling the “Global Free Trade”.

During the Clinton Administration, the WTO ruled that the European should drop an 11-year ban on US beef treated with hormones. This resolution was backed by the Clinton administration, which was authorized to penalise European goods until the EU complied. WTO seems to have a selective view, but it was not supposed to be like this.

Another example is what has happened with Philippines some time ago. In this country the WTO has set new rules which have been penalising its already poor economy, and in particular the economy of Filipino farmers. In fact, the Philippines is made to import American corn that is more cheaper than its local one. As a result, half a million Filipinos risk losing their living. Furthermore, the subsidy to each American farmer is far higher – 100 times higher – than the average Filipino’s farmer entire income. Therefore, Third World Countries seem to be forbidden and penalised, whereas Western nations have widely increased their agricultural subsidies during these years.

On the other hand, trade liberalization and changes in the global market structure have widely helped American exports in the past years. Still not satisfied, the US has ensured that developing countries are made to conform to the WTO obligations of phasing out quantitative restrictions that allow easy penetration by American farm commodities and processed products. The trade bloc is getting prepared for the next, maybe final, assault. However, a lot of organisations from 73 countries have declared their opposition to it. These include big organisations, such as *Friends of the Earth* and *Japanese Consumers Union*, but also small networks in the Third World. They really want to oppose any effort to the WTO's power expansion.