



The WTO: What in the world it means to Canadian culture

You'd think it would be enough to satisfy the giant American entertainment industry that 95% of the movies we see are foreign-produced; eight out of ten magazines on our newsstands are American; and more than two-thirds of both the books we read and the music we hear are produced outside Canada.

But dominance, it seems, is not enough.

At the upcoming World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings in Seattle, American negotiators are taking a tough stand – pushing for an even greater liberalization of culture. Their goal is to gain open access to our cultural industries – and the WTO is the vehicle of choice.

The WTO is the most powerful organization on the planet. Its stated goal is trade liberalization, but it also has the legal clout to strike down laws of countries that are seen as too "trade restrictive."

The message American cultural moguls want us to hear was sounded during the recent flap over split-run magazines when the WTO was used to strike down Canada's ability to protect its magazine industry.

That's a taste of what's planned.

At the Seattle meetings, new negotiations are scheduled to further liberalize telecommunications, including the Internet and new digital technologies. And global negotiations on the deregulation of broadcasting could put Canada's public radio and television systems at risk.

All this in the interest of global free markets.

Culture was always thought of as more than a service or commodity. At least until the formation of the WTO when the big cultural exporters were able to put culture on the same level as any other product.

The question is: what's at stake?

If the free trade hawks get their way, public measures to ensure the survival of Canadian culture will be destroyed. And then the ability to tell Canada's story to Canadians and the rest of the world will also be crippled. Is the legacy we want to leave future generations that market forces alone were the deciding factor in what radio programs and music we listened to, what films and television we saw, and what books and magazines we read?

If you want to help save Canadian culture, here's what you can do:

- ▶ **Call, write or fax your Member of Parliament and Minister of International Trade Pierre Pettigrew.**

Ask them to oppose any new deals at the WTO.
(To get your MP's name and phone number, call 1 800 267-7360.)

Write to: Pierre Pettigrew
Minister of International Trade
507 Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6
Tel. (613) 995-8872
Fax. (613) 995-9926
Email: PettiP@parl.gc.ca

- ▶ **Inform and mobilize your community.**
- ▶ **Write a letter to your local paper.**
- ▶ **Organize an event.**
- ▶ **Talk about the Seattle WTO negotiations and the corporate threats to culture, food safety, Medicare, public education, environmental protections and labour standards.**
- ▶ **Lobby your provincial elected representative and ask your city council to adopt a resolution opposing any new deals at the WTO.**



A SHADOW ON OUR FUTURE

For more information on the campaign to stop new WTO deals and how to join call **1 800 387-7177**. Or log on to **www.canadians.org** for updates on campaign activities and a calendar of campaign events in your area.



502-151 Slater St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5H3
www.canadians.org