

# Q AND A ON THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

## What is the FTA?

Australia and the US are trying to come up with an agreement to abolish 'trade barriers' between the two countries - an Australia United States Free Trade Agreement.

## What's wrong with it?

1. The process is completely undemocratic. The negotiations are taking place in secret and the federal parliament doesn't even get to vote on it. Future governments won't be able to introduce any policies that conflict with it without being sued.

2. Many of the changes proposed pose a threat to the social structures we take for granted.

## Like what?

☹ The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme - a means of keeping the price of medicines affordable - might be scrapped.

☹ The US wants moves to label genetically modified food scrapped and quarantine laws changed.

☹ Content quotas that give airplay to Australian music and TV programmes are up for grabs.

☹ The US say they want social services like public health, education and water, privatised and opened up for commercial investment.

## Why are they doing it?

Studies show that Australia won't benefit economically. But the government says having closer ties with the US is good foreign policy. The Howard government are probably also using the agreement as a means of forcing through the privatisation of public health and education.

The US are using this agreement as a precedent for bilateral trade agreements. They want to go to big economies like Europe and say "if the Australians will give us this, why won't you?". The US wants individual agreements because negotiations for multilateral agreements like GATS (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) aren't going well. You see this in the way the World Trade Organisation talks broke down in Cancun.

## What about similar agreements?

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) the Canadian and Mexican governments and even town councils are continually being successfully sued for millions of dollars when they try to introduce progressive social policies or environmental protections that get in the way of US corporate interests. Even existing public services are under threat - for example Canadian Post, is being sued for doing what it's always done - providing affordable post.

# COPY PROTECTION AND CDS: Why your favourite music is being ruined

It is reasonable to expect that you have purchased CDs before. Hell, you wouldn't be reading this otherwise, would you?

So, let's say you've just gone out and bought the latest album by your favourite artist. You take it home, slap it into your stereo and prepare yourself for some music. But wait a minute, nothing's happening! For some reason your stereo won't read the CD.

So, you take it over to your computer and give it a shot, only to find that, after problems reading the disc, you have to install a specialised player just so you can listen to your CD at an extremely low bit-rate (very low quality audio).

Right about then you notice it. There, on the CD case in tiny print, 'Copy Controlled, Playback problems may be encountered on some equipment'.

## Welcome to the world of copy protection.

So what exactly is this 'copy protection' and why can't I listen to my CD?

The music industry, faced with the 'problem' of piracy and driven by a lust for even more profits, felt the need to do *something* about people ripping music tracks and making illegal copies of CDs. So, after much time and effort spent trying to safeguard their products, a cheap and easy solution was reached: corruption of discs. Yes, you read right, record companies are intentionally corrupting the CDs they are selling to you.

## Angry yet?

In most cases, the professional copy protection is nothing more than a section of bad data at the start of CDs. This bad data, *in theory*, prevents the playing of CDs on com-

puter systems, so that people can't make copies of them. Unfortunately for both parties involved (Record companies and you) this does **not** work properly.

The corrupted data can, and does, cause problems in more than just computer systems. Problems have been encountered in Car stereos, game consoles (Playstations, XBOX, etc.), DVD players, portable players (discman, etc.), home stereos, and other audio equipment. Oh, and as for its ability to stop the acts of ripping and/or copying: nearly non-existent. Many programs work around 'copy protection' with no problems.

So, why should the people who pay for these CDs suffer? Why should you have to put up with faulty CDs when you're *supporting* the music industry and artists by buying them? Why should **you** have your music spoiled by industry fat cats out for a quick buck?

Join the fight against corrupted audio and faulty CDs! Boycott any new releases that are marked with this 'copy protection' and return any CDs already purchased that have it, making sure to explain just why you're returning them.

If you want things to change, stand up and voice your opinions. Tell the record companies what you think by boycotting their faulty products!

To learn more head to: <http://ukcdr.org/issues/cd/quick/>



Angry? Want to get involved?  
[www.onesolutionrevolution.org](http://www.onesolutionrevolution.org)  
[contact@onesolutionrevolution.org](mailto:contact@onesolutionrevolution.org)

Revo Stalls and meetings,  
Every Saturday,  
Bourke St Mall, 11am-1pm

**REVOLUTION**  
socialist youth movement