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Productivity Commission  
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Dear Sir

I attended, in Toowoomba, at a meeting convened by the NCP representatives held on 12 July 1999. The object of this meeting was to take submissions from interested parties.

I understand that I am able to make a written submission to you for consideration. In general terms I support the arguments put forward by representatives of the QFF and the National Party. On the other hand I could not agree with the sentiments put forward by Mr Richard Wood, representative of the local chamber of commerce and industry.

My strong objection to the national competition policy is that the main parties, certainly Federal, have jettisoned any consideration or compassion towards the many thousands of farmers and those who depend on them, in determining NCP attitudes. To me the reasons appear to be the following:

Voters are mainly to be found in the coastal fringe, the capital cities and other large centres of population. The main parties are only interested in the number of votes they can command. Therefore, to them, it is essential that they gain the most benefits from what is put forward by the NCP, ie. Cheap food and other cheap imports. This means inevitably reductions in Tariffs and, if possible, to extinction. This in turn has a very detrimental effect on farmers, especially family entities. Their products no longer become competitive in the face of cheap imports from "bowl of rice" countries.

Prime examples of this policy have been the unprofitability of the citrus, pork, sugar and now other industries in danger of going the same way. The coalition's rural policy seems to be based on easing farmers off the land if not considered viable. Further they are quite prepared to allow private farming to run down to extinction. There is no thought of compassion or understanding – a natural projection of economic rationalism. It is my firm belief that the family owned property will disappear to be replaced by big multi-national corporations, owning vast tracts of land and using vertical integration to market their produce.

Another aspect of N.C. policies is the proposed deregulation of the dairy industry. Without detailing this, suffice to state that the farmers are no better off; the housewife pays more for her milk and other byproducts whilst the retailers – inevitably the big three, Woolworths, Coles Myer and Franklins make all the profits. Where is the equity there?

The main political parties firmly adhere to the above mentioned policies. They are content to agree that many on the land will be hurt and suffer pain, but maintain that this is inevitable and the only way. I do not subscribe to this negative thinking. It is true that rural debt has reached a crisis level – the attached papers confirm this. The solution lies in para 2 of paper 2 attached. All that is required is the will of the politicians to institute this loan structure. Further this was illustrated most convincingly recently when the western Queensland local government association met, comprising 15 western Queensland local authority shires and unanimously carried a motion supporting the reserve bank power to issue credit at 1% over 20 years for rural based enterprises.

Finally, I understand that there are moves to privatise almost everything, including electricity, prisons, education and even big enterprises such as the Snowy Mountain Authority. When will this madness end.

If what is proposed by the NCP is the only way, God help us all as a nation.

Yours sincerely

John Crowther