

28" October, 2001

Citrus Industry Enquiry,
Productivity Commission,
Locked Bag 2,
Collins Street East Post Office,
Melbourne 8003.

Dear Sirs,

I am an grange picker paid \$45.00 per tonne less tax. For me and for many pickers who I *know this* equates to less than \$10,00 per hour and then less tax. Sometimes I meet young people who drive here and then have to pay high accommodation rates which means that they never come again. Some complain that they work for minimal wages alongside people who draw welfare AND work. I try to placate them (and myself) by saying that without the dole there would never be enough orange pickers at current rates,

Starting about two years ago I wrote to the local newspaper and then to the local Federal member about what appeared to be a simple solution - a selective tariff on imported concentrate. The political message was "definitely not - there must be a completely level playing field."

Meanwhile more farmers were bulldozing their trees so I tried again and this time used some information I heard on an Allan Jones report. The next letters - this time copied to a citrus representative - included such comments that the percentage of Brazil's world exports to Australia were so small that they would probably not even notice if they were to disappear. Allan Jones also pointed out that the average tariff by Australia on Brazilian goods is far lower than the opposite case.

Soon afterwards the newspapers reported that the political and citrus representative tide had turned but neither party indicated that I could put in a submission. It was my current employer who told me about it, I wonder if Allan Jones has been invited?

By nature I am an optimistic person who believes that the share market has bottomed and that Australia will not become irrelevant on the world economic stage provided that we vote economic managers into Parliament. However after reading through the verbiage of "The Issues Paper" I am not hopeful of any changes to the citrus industry within the next five years.

It will be interesting to see how many manhours and dollars go into a study of the effects of soldier settlement. That took place 80 years ago. Does a committee need to review that?

My thinking was that a political decision could be trade based on data on the reduction of orange grower incomes. It is unlikely that anyone would have any data on the wages and conditions of orange pickers because they will never be a pressure group.

"This project has been given to the Productivity Commission who should have had all of the issues raised in the paper as an ongoing exercise. If this means that they will be starting from scratch it will take years of data collection and analysis.

The real kybosh is summarised in Box 2.1 Some items are:

"... safeguard action is intended to provide breathing space...

".... measures are justified only after a public inquiry has demonstrated that imports have increased, .. and that increased imports have causedserious injury....."

"... any remedies may only be put in place for a limited period, must be liberalised over time....."