

W O R C

Western Organization of Resource Councils

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 4, 2004

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Trade Agreement Outsources American Cowboy

Deadwood, S.D.—While President Bush warmly greets Prime Minister John Howard of Australia in a show of support for the Australian Free Trade Agreement, ranchers from the Western Organization of Resource Councils wonder why President Bush is trading away the American cowboy.

“The agreement with Australia would add ranchers and cowboys to the long list of Americans – including manufacturers and computer technicians – whose livelihoods are being outsourced in the name of so-called “free” trade,” said Gilles Stockton, Grass Range, Mont. rancher and chair of the WORC Trade Issue Team.

Stockton said the Australia agreement has at least three serious flaws. “First, it will put many family livestock producers out of business. Second, it gives even more economic power to multi-national corporations. Finally, the negotiation and ratification process is blatantly undemocratic.”

Stockton said that rather than “free” trade, this country needs fair trade practices that honor our democratic values. “To have fair trade, we need to establish conditions that foster fair market competition,” he said. “This, in turn, requires more – not less – democracy. Corporations must be held accountable to the people and places where they do business.”

“They’re selling me out and the only way I can have a seat at the table is if Congress votes ‘no’ on this agreement,” said Donley Darnell, a New Castle, Wyo. rancher. “Proponents of the agreement claim this is not controversial. Bull! Out West we are very concerned about what this will do to the domestic cattle industry. The big three beef packers have nothing to lose in the outsourcing of cowboys. The packers are positioned to control foreign beef as tightly as they currently control ours. They don’t care about the beef’s country of origin.”

“Any agreement negotiated for the benefit of corporations without regard to the negative impacts on producers and rural communities is wrong and Congress must vote it down,” said Dena Hoff, Glendive, Mont. livestock producer and chair of the National Family Farm Coalition trade task force. “It looks like the next major outsourcing to accompany the cowboy will be the democratic process, because it does not seem to be in play here at home.”

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WORC is a network of grassroots organizations from seven states that include 8,750 members and 49 local community groups. WORC helps its member groups succeed by providing training and by coordinating regional issue campaigns. Members are farmers, ranchers, and consumers.