



Industrial Division

James D. Clark, President

May 10, 2006

Dear Senator:

I write to express my concerns with the Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers-Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA), together representing over 600,000 Americans, stands in strong opposition to this deeply disturbing FTA.

Having monitored the Senate Finance Committee hearings closely during the mock markup of the CAFTA, I feel it incumbent upon myself to remind the distinguished members of the committee that under Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), trade agreements are not amendable. Some senators proposed amendments during these "mock markups" and some were indeed passed. However, these amendments passed by the committee do not appear in the text of the agreement because TPA doesn't allow amendments to trade agreements. Congress gave up this critical right to pass fast track (TPA).

Additionally, some senators seemed to be under the impression that side letters they obtained were considered to be enforceable. This is simply not the case. I have bargained scores of contracts affecting the 70,000 members I have the privilege to represent and I would not be doing my job for these hard working Americans if I were to agree to such non-enforceable language.

Furthermore, the Sultan of Oman can essentially do what he pleases when changing the laws of Oman. If the Sultan is indeed serious about strengthening the labor laws of Oman he would have done so. Even if this does happen, there is nothing within the Oman FTA to prevent him, or a future Sultan, from weakening the labor laws of Oman at any time he wishes as the Oman FTA contains the exact same "enforce your own labor law" language outlined in the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

The CAFTA model of trade agreements is completely unacceptable. Congress and this administration must do better as we have seen our trade deficit swell to unsustainable levels. This is not "protectionism" as some pundits say; this is logical, compassionate and fair.

We would be happy to support Fair trade agreements and we remain open to discussing what constitutes a Fair trade agreement. The Oman FTA does not fit the definition of Fair trade and we are asking you to oppose the Oman FTA regardless of any side letters or personal assurances you may receive from the Sultan of Oman. We must do better. Thank you.

Sincerely,

James D. Clark
IUE-CWA President

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