

given to an Order-in-Council changing the SCFAIT mandate in a manner similar to the Finance Committee in the 1994-96 period. The Finance Committee was mandated to ensure full public hearings; it pushed NGOs and business groups to go first to Parliament instead of relying on private meetings with the Minister; it sought out small group meetings with MPs to find out personal and regional agendas; and it used the caucus committee system to air priorities and focus dissent.

Bill Graham thanked Mr. Walker, noting that it would be better if international trade and domestic politics were better integrated. The customary role for parliamentarians is after-the-fact consideration of trade treaties. With the 1999 SCFAIT exercise and recent hearings of the Standing Committee, Canada is moving to a model whereby parliamentarians are more involved in advance of important international developments. The parliamentary committees are engaged as well as the SAGITs (Sectoral Advisory Group on International Trade) and DFAIT - NGO consultations.

On the question of a parliamentary oversight body, there are a growing number of these sorts of bodies. The question is, what's the appropriate model for the WTO. The OSCE parliamentary assembly offers a model. It has its own budget and secretariat. Another, looser model is the recently-created FIPA (Inter-Parliamentary Forum for the Americas) which met for the first time earlier this year in Ottawa. Meeting locations rotate with the parliament of the host state paying the bills. There are other difficult questions to resolve, such as voting in an international parliamentary forum. In the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) there is a weighted voting formula; FIPA operates on the basis of two votes per state parliament represented. Another issue is the need to define the role of national opposition parties in the international parliaments. In Canada, participation in these supranational parliaments is financed by the Joint Inter-Parliamentary Committee (JIC) whose budget is voted on the basis of all party support.

Next, World Federalists of Canada Executive Director Fergus Watt reviewed international discussions held earlier this year leading to discussion of a standing parliamentary forum at the Ministerial Meeting of the WTO (see Appendix C).

From an NGO perspective, the case for a parliamentary body at the WTO is fairly straight forward. The WTO is a powerful institution. Decisions of WTO Tribunals have binding effect on member governments. Often these decisions affect other areas of public policy, beyond the customary confines of trade rules, such as environment, safety standards, investment rules, labour standards and other rights. Where there are competing public policy objectives and imperatives, the most common form of institutional body to reconcile these competing priorities is a parliament. An elected parliament for the WTO is not a viable option. Hence the growing interest in a consultative parliamentary assembly.

International meetings in April 2001 (under the auspices of the European Parliament) and June 2001 (under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union) each brought together