

Letters

Let's Take Back the Term "Free Trade"

May I make the following contribution to the *Free Trade* debate (with apologies for not having made it in time for the Edinburgh conference).

Is mankind in the grip of a severe mental decline — due to pollution, pesticides, etc., as convincingly argued in a recent book *Terminus Brain* — with a huge decline in educational standards perhaps contributing too? My first comment must be: I find it astonishing that the WTO's take-over of the term "free trade" should have been accepted by the public at large as it has, and not greeted with a howl of derision.

Clearly nothing that involves a contract (i.e. trade) can possibly be called "free" unless it is freely engaged in by *both* parties. Hence, what the WTO advocates is *imposed* trade, which can be no more taken as "free" trade than slavery can be regarded as a "free" engagement of labour.

Thus, whatever we decide to do about the term "free trade" in our title, our great task alongside that must surely be the elementary educating of the public regarding the falsity of the WTO's *stolen* term.

Our title should be part of our educational effort. The WTO's claim to free trade being so illogical, I confess I find it distasteful that the true free traders should be forced to retreat under a banner of such sheer illogicality. Hence, I am in full sympathy with Fred Auld, who said recently in *Land & Liberty*, "It ain't us that's got it wrong." However, I take Ole's point too, that we shall be looked at askance.

We might succeed in reconquering "free trade" for sanity if we managed (by throwing out the deluding term "tax") to knit more closely together the two parts of our title, so that free trade could be seen more clearly to be part of the bigger picture — as we know it to be. The best I can come up with to meet that idea is the simple slogan "Land Rent and Free Trade" — making Land RAFT... for a society which is certainly sinking on dry land! We must of course avoid G(round) RAFT!

This would, I believe, succeed in proclaiming more clearly to outsiders the original concept of free trade — while it would certainly go some way toward disentangling it from those entirely false embraces of the WTO!

— Shirley-Anne Hardy, *The Rocks, Pitlochry, Scotland*

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