

dysfunctional economies and functional ones, is much greater than anything we witness here. I've just been in Bangladesh doing some work on their electricity system and it's useful to contemplate that in Bangladesh there are 148 million people and 120 million of them have no electricity whatsoever. Eight out of 10 citizens have no electricity. There's a growth in demand each year of something like 20 per cent but supply isn't increasing at all. So that's a crisis and it needs reformation of government policies, of the funding mechanism, of international investment, of safety. You can't even have an investment in infrastructure until you have the rule of law and systems for incentives. You have to deal with problems of corruption and capacity building in government. The missing ingredient in developing countries is that there is no voice for civil society.

So, the dimensions of the challenges affecting developing countries, of international trade policy, the growth of sales of foods that incorporate genetically modified organisms without even telling consumers — those things are outrageous and they do require a response in justice, as well as a proper organised consumer response. Those are the issues that I'll be working on. Trying to make markets work internationally, as I've tried to do here. Trying to deal with the worst of consumer problems and bring international economically sensible solutions to the fore. Just a minor task!

I've worked in 29 countries over 20 years in this sort of area — for example, Egypt, the Philippines, Bangladesh — and I think a common denominator is that there is not a sufficient voice for the institutions of civil society such as consumers groups, women's groups, church groups. Governments aren't up to the task of adequately representing the demand side of the marketplace.

Effective rule making such as developing standards and policies, has long since left national geographic jurisdictions, and these decisions are now being made in international fora. Frankly, I don't see that as a frightening prospect as some do. Some fear the loss, or potential loss, of national sovereignty. I say that's a foolish fear for two reasons. One, there's no reason to suppose that decisions made at international fora are any better or worse than those made locally. And secondly, it

already happened 50 years ago when the Bretton Woods institutions, such as the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, were set up after the war. Rather than resisting or railing against globalisation, it's a matter of ensuring proper representation of those public interests in those international fora.

Will you have a continuing involvement with the ACCC?

Inevitably. I think a strong feature in the consumer movement recently has been the notion of interconnectedness, of networks. I'd be expecting to be working closely with the ACCC in many areas, and the FTC in the United States, as well as our sister organisations around the world. I also see something of a convergence of the interests and representation of governments, business and consumer groups. I think that's a sign that markets really are starting to work, in the sense of delivering that consumer sovereignty outcome that Adam Smith wistfully looked for two hundred years ago.

ACCC appointments

Professor Allan Fels has been reappointed Chairman of the Commission until 30 June 2004. The Treasurer, Mr Peter Costello, announced his reappointment on 2 November, saying it had been made with the support of all States and Territories. Professor Fels has been chairman of the Commission since it was formed in November 1995, and before that was chairman of the Trade Practices Commission from 1991 until 1995.

Also reappointed was Dr Tom Parry, chair of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales, as an ex-officio member until 6 June 2005.

Following his appointment as the Territory's inaugural part-time Utilities Commissioner, Mr Alan Tregilgas was also appointed as an ex-officio member of the Commission until 31 March 2004.