

Been There! Done That!
And Did a Damn Good Job!

Creating a Virtual Think Tank: IATRC, 1980 - 1995

Observations and Reflections By
Maury E. Bredahl

For the 30th Anniversary Theme Day
Sunday December 12, 2010



Challenge: Making (ancient) history interesting and a review useful.

What happened? A synergistic, and very productive, relationship developed with North American academics and technocrats of the Economic Research Service and of the Foreign Agricultural Service as the key actors. Add in a handful of economists from outside North America and even fewer private sector economists.

What **events** led to the demand for its services? **Who** was important?

What did the think tank do?

Why was it so successful?

New Zealand Agricultural Minister early 1980s.

In a surprise (unprecedented?) move instigated the OECD Trade Mandate Study

Led to *Tim Josling* visiting the Ag. Secretariat to introduce the concept of PSEs. And it led to the development of the *Trade Mandate Model* with David Blandford playing an important early role.

The quantification of protection and support changed the tenor of the discussion there and created a growing demand for analytical skills.

Clayton Yeutter: 1985-89 Special Trade Representative and 1989-91 Secretary of Agriculture.

A strong free-trade agenda and a great deal of influence in Washington. Changed the views and attitudes of FAS. Staff who had viewed academics as unpredictable 'loose canons', now realized they needed some analytical support.

The acceptance of AMS/PSE was not of their making, but they had to take it on. Also, true for the SPS negotiations.

What did the think tank do?

Produced highly influential commissioned papers.

Bringing Agriculture Into the GATT:

	Negotiating a Framework for Action CP-1
1988	Assessing the Benefits of Trade Liberalization CP-2
	Designing Acceptable Agricultural Policies CP-3
	Tariffication and Rebalancing CP-4
	Potential Use of an Aggregate Measure of Support CP-5
1990	Reinstrumentation of Agricultural Policies CP-6
	The Comprehensive Proposals for Negotiations in Agriculture CP-7
1991	Reviving the GATT Negotiations on Agriculture CP-8
1994	The Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture, An Evaluation CP-9
1997	Implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture and Issues for the Next Round of Agricultural Negotiations

At about the same time:

Embargoes, Surplus Disposal, and U.S. Agriculture

In October 1985, the IATRC was asked by USDA's Economic Research Service to lead a congressionally-mandated study "to determine the losses suffered by U.S. farm producers during the last decade as a result of embargoes and the failure to offer for sale on world markets, commodities surplus to domestic needs at competitive prices."

USDA, ERS, Agricultural Economics Report 564

Recipe for success:

1. Government technocrats who are intimately familiar with the negotiating issues plant the seeds for analytical exercises carried out by a mix of government staff and academics.
2. Many of the commissioned papers were identified with IATRC as an entity, and not with particular contributors. On only one or two occasions did individuals take pieces for their own agendas. Sometimes, government staff did not want their names attached to certain pieces of analysis. Unselfish contributions was a key!
3. Consensus was very important, even mandatory. The only international aspect of the IATRC was the name; with few exceptions, everyone worshiped regularly at the alter of free trade.
4. People, big and not so big were, were critically important.