Twitter Thread by Jo Maugham QC



Jo Maugham QC
@JolyonMaugham

If you want to know what happens to populations living in austerity who trade with the US on WTO terms, take a look at Tonga. THREAD

I visited Tonga in 1981 and it was, like so many other Pacific Island nations, slowly adjusting to Westernisation. The people ate mostly fish and vegetables. /1

Now it has rates of Type 2 diabetes of up to 40%, life expectancy has fallen by 10 years and well over half the population is obese. So what happened? (stats https://t.co/1XQHdqL8o8) /2

What happened was that the US discovered that Tonga was a great dumping ground for a cheap and locally unsaleable product known as a Turkey 'tail', essentially a gland of 40-45% fat. /3

They were fatty and, because cheap, attractive to a poor population. By 2007, in another Pacific Island nation, Samoa, 20 kilos per person were being sold every year. But it banned them for public health reasons. https://t.co/2f1N8tuMp6 /4

Something similar happened with another poor quality fatty meat product, 'Mutton flaps', which were sold by New Zealand to the Pacific Islands but (on some accounts) banned in New Zealand. /5 https://t.co/onvCgJ9YX6

Samoa banned the import of Turkey 'tails' and 'Mutton flaps' in 2007 to improve public health. But problems were afoot. To become a trading nation it needed to accede to the WTO. /6

And the WTO insisted that a price of accession was Samoa dropping its bans, to the benefit of American turkey farmers and New Zealand sheep farmers, but the detriment of the local population. https://t.co/M8Rznfpjhq /7

As the World Health Organisation drily observed "The removal of the ban illustrated the potential for international trade agreements to stifle innovation in nutrition policy-making through constraining policy space." https://t.co/AkQBt4uiBH /8

The moral of the story is simple. If you feel in your bones that no good will come of the Government kneeling to the US organisations who fund the IEA's 'research' into a liberalized trade policy, you are right. /9

If you feel in your bones that it is not for the good of the people of the UK that US trade bodies are paying for the policies pushed by Liam Fox and his libertarian pals, you are right. /10

If you feel in your bones that a world of chlorinated chicken and hormone injected beef - and Turkey tails - is not going to be good for the people of the UK, you are right. /11

And if you wonder about, and you fear, the world those greedy bastards have in store for the vulnerable in this country, forced to get by on an unliveable minimum wage, zero hours contracts and slashed social security, you have me for company. /ENDS