

EDITORIAL

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

Gaps In Gatt (WTO)

BY RALPH NADER

The Rainbow Coalition, Public Citizen, the AFL-CIO and other civil rights, labor and progressive organizations oppose implementing legislation for the Uruguay Round of GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which would establish the World Trade Organization (WTO) based in Geneva, Switzerland.

We oppose it because it is not good for working people or their communities; it will mean more economic disruption, job loss and will probably add to the US trade deficit; it will aid countries and corporations seeking to exploit countries with low wages and lower standards of the developing countries. It will make

more vulnerable the rights of workers to associate freely and form unions; and it will make more vulnerable environmental, health, food and safety standards.

Big business, most Republicans, Conservative Democrats and the Clinton Administration are trying to "fast track" this legislation through congress before there is a democratic debate and the American people are informed about GATT and the WTO. Specifically, there are four reasons to oppose the WTO:

(1) U.S. Democracy And Sovereignty Will Shift To Unaccountable Trade Bureaucrats. Under the WTO, panels of three unelected trade bureaucrats will hear challenges by other nations to U.S. laws. If a challenged U.S. law is found to violate its trade rules, the WTO could direct the U.S. to change the law or face automatic economic sanctions. This would sub-

jugate laws passed by state, local governments and Congress to unelected, unaccountable trade bureaucrats representing multinational corporate interests. The multinational corporation would be sovereign and the nation-state would be subservient. This entire process would be closed to the press and public. Documents would be kept secret and would not be subject to the U.S. Freedom of Information Act.

(2) U.S. Food Safety At Risk. The rules of the WTO promote the lowering of strong U.S. food safety laws to weaker international standards. Also, U.S. food

safety standards, stronger than those of the WTO, could be challenged by other nations as illegal trade barriers. If successfully challenged, the U.S. would have to import contaminated food or pay economic sanctions to keep it out. Food safety laws at risk include: restrictions on the use of hormones, like the Bovine Growth Hormone in milk and beef; limits on food additives that cause cancer; strict food inspection requirements; bans on dangerous pesticide residues, like DDT; food labeling laws; and food irradiation restrictions.

(3) Congress' Hands Tied; Environmental Laws Undermined.

The WTO would limit legislators' ability to pursue certain goals on issues reaching far beyond trade. Tying Congress' hands with such international laws would limit Congress' ability to legislate in the best interest of the U.S. for instance, other nations could successfully challenge landmark U.S. environmental laws including the Marine Mammal Protection Act (which protects dolphins). The Clean Air Act, restrictions on hazardous waste, state recycling laws and other measures. Also, international environmental agreements, like the Montreal Protocol protecting the ozone layer, could be undermined by the WTO. A policy such as our CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency) standards and gas guzzler tax would be in violation of the trade rules, because it employs a means that is not "least trade restrictive," even if it's the only politically feasible alternative. Congress would have to change successfully challenged laws or the U.S. would face perpetual trade sanctions. The WTO's effects on U.S. environmental laws would be so devastating that even those environmen-

tal groups that supported NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) are opposed to the Uruguay Round.

(4) U.S. Consumer And Environmental Laws Targeted By Trading partners As Illegal Barriers to Trade. The European Union report, "Report on U.S. Barriers to Trade and Investment," targets the New Nutrition Labelling and Education Act, Proposition 65 (California requires the disclosure of carcinogenic hazards), and limits on lead in ceramic ware and wine. The European Union has already challenged the CAFE standards program and gas guzzler tax and the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act as illegal trade barriers.

Call or write your congresspersons today and urge them to delay passage of the WTO implementing legislation until the July, 1995 deadline. Don't let them sneak this legislation through. The American people deserve to be informed, and democracy deserves to be practiced through a congressional debate of the costs and benefits of the legislation.

Civil Rights Journal Prairies Island, Politics And Power

by Bernice Powell Jackson

I am told that as our native Americans ancestors made decisions, they considered not only the impact on their own generation, but on seven generations to come.

If only that decision-making mode had been used by our political forefathers (because there were few foremothers included), we would all be better off today. Certainly our water and air and land would be cleaner and less polluted and our environment would be much safer for all.

In Prairie island, Minnesota they know what I am talking about. At least the native American community there does. There is a story worth telling. There is a story which cries out for justice. There is a story which could happen to any of us.

Prairies Island, Minnesota is about 30 miles or so southeast of Minneapolis. Located in the Mississippi River, it also lies only across the river from Wisconsin. For 150 years it has been the home of native American Mdewakanton Dakota people. Despite the obstacles placed before them and a political climate which passed an 1863 bill placing a \$200 bounty on any "dead Dakota Indian" in Minnesota, these people have built their homes as well as roads, a day care center, a government center and a casino which is the only source of revenue for their community.

But for the past two decades Prairie Island has also been the home of a nuclear power plant run by Northern State Power Company. The Indian people of Prairie Island were never partners in the decision to place the power plant in their community and were promised that the plant would close in 20 years.

Now, two decades later, history is repeating itself as decisions about the storage of the nuclear waste from that plant have been made by Northern State Power and the Minnesota legislature while the representatives of the Dakota people were sitting in the hall. In the words of Darellynn Lehto, vice President of the Prairie Island Sioux Nation, in her testimony to the Minnesota legislature, "It is difficult to express to you the full extent of our community's anger and frustration. Our people will be affected by this decision more directly and profoundly than any other group in the entire State of Minnesota. Yet we have been ignored, overlooked, patronized and insulted throughout the legislature's consideration of this proposal."

The question facing the Northern State Power Company and the state of Minnesota is what to do with the waste left over from the Prairie Island nuclear power plant. It is a question not only facing this community, but some two or three dozen other communities with similar power plants.

The solution proposed by Northern Power and approved by the state legislature, is to store the

waste "temporarily" above the ground in dry casks at Prairies Island. Dry cask storage is untested and no environmental impact statement for permanent storage has been completed. In other words, no one knows whether such storage will be safe, or for how long. And while Northern State Power has said that it will be only temporary storage, there is no guarantee. Remember, too, the earlier promise that the Prairie Island nuclear plant would be operational only for 20 years.

The most troubling part of the story of the Prairie Island facility is the process the Minnesota legislature used to agree to the dry cask storage. Despite the possible impact to the environment, including the Mississippi River and the many states through which it runs, and despite the possible health hazards of storing nuclear waste above the ground, the Minnesota Senate held a special, unscheduled floor session to vote on this bill. This action was taken even after the Senate's own Environment Committee had turned down the Northern State proposal only two weeks previously.

It seems that after a meeting with Senate leaders and the Northern State Power Company, the Environment Committee reconvened and passed an amended version of the bill. A part of the amendment included a provision to authorize moving the members of the Prairie Island native American community from their 150 year-old land to another part of the county. All of this was done without including Mdewakanton Dakota representatives in the discussion.

A coalition of environmental, alternative energy, religious, peace and native American groups recently held a vigil for the survival of Prairie Island. Some 800 people attended this historic event, which received no press coverage. Still, this group pledges to continue to fight against the placement of the dry casks above the ground of Prairie Island. It is thought that the first casks will be filled sometime next spring.

The Prairie Island native American community deserves better from the state of Minnesota and from their neighbors, Northern State Power. Already they face a cancer risk six times higher than acceptable under Minnesota Health Department standards. Are they to risk losing their land as well as their lives?

We as a nation have avoided the hard questions about where to put radioactive nuclear waste materials. Too often our solution has been to put these hazardous materials in communities of people of color. We can begin by calling for justice for the Mdewakanton Dakota people. We can write to Governor Arne Carlson, State House, St. Paul, MN 55155. We can begin to look around at our own communities and our own nuclear power plants and find out where their waste goes. We can remember that what we do today will impact lives for seven generations.

BY DR. MANNING MARABLE

In the months following Ben Chavis's appointment as NAACP executive director, he moved quickly to establish a new direction for the organization.

He reached out to the Hip Hop generation, talking directly with gang leaders and rap artists. He pushed a more aggressive economic program favored by William Gibson, NAACP board president, which included pressuring corporations such as Denny's to sign agreements addressing employment and discrimination issues. Chavis explored the development of an international agenda, reviving the vision of W.E.B. Du Bois by proposing the establishment of a permanent Association office in post-apartheid South Africa.

But Chavis's greatest strength was his youthful energy and creative determination for the NAACP to re-establish its position as the central force building black solidarity in America. Chavis felt that no black leaders, however controversial, should be excluded from the process of dialogue. After the Congressional Black Caucus weekend conference in September, 1993, Chavis agreed to host a national summit of black leadership.

Meanwhile, Gradually, a coalition of interests began to emerge in opposition to Chavis's "new directions." Some opponents came from the Baltimore office of the NAACP National Headquarters. Chavis's selection of attorney Lew Myers as Deputy Director and Don Rojas, who had been the press secretary for the late Maurice Bishop, Prime Minister of Grenada, generated fears that he was incorporating black nationalist and leftist elements in the leadership of the Association. Opponents in

local branches began to pressure Gibson and Chavis to remove Rojas, in an attempt to deny Chavis his own staff people. Corporations which had provided support for the NAACP in the past, began to question Chavis's new initiatives. But probably the chief critics were traditional, white "liberals" who had a longstanding relationship with the integrationist posture and program of the NAACP, and ideological conservatives who strongly opposed any progressive, realignment of the African-American freedom movement.

Many of these white conservatives were connected with Commentary Magazine, The New Republic, and the Forward Newspaper. Intellectually, they made absolutely no distinction between "integration" and "equality." They never comprehended the desire of African-American people to be permitted the political and social space to discuss their own problems occasionally behind closed doors. They could not tolerate any organization which engaged in political dialogues with anti-Semites like Farrakhan. But most importantly, they feared being isolated from a new NAACP which was actively building a broad-based, black united front around an aggressive, post-civil rights agenda. This had profound implications for the entire American liberal-left community. As one prominent white publisher explained to me, "We would rather have a black leadership which goes nowhere, than a black progressive leadership which talks to Farrakhan."

Everything Chavis represented rang loud alarms within the white conservative establishment. The opening salvo in the assault against Chavis was a polemic in The New Republic in January, 1994 by Arch Puddington, an aide to the late integrationist leader Bayard Rustin. The article ominously entitled, "The

NAACP Turns Left," warned that Chavis was a leader "consciously identified with the Left," who "has not been above issuing a gratuitous attack on 'Zionism'." Puddington observed that Chavis had "begun to fill the NAACP staff with individuals who share his leftist political orientation." In short, Chavis was a dangerous presence within the civil rights community, an uncompromising radical who "championed Leninist political movements" and who had "adopted a relentlessly anti-Israel stance during the 1980s" A similar diatribe was written also in January, 1994, by The New York Times columnist A.M. Rosenthal, entitled "On Black Anti-Semitism." Rosenthal charged that Chavis and the NAACP, as well as other black leaders such as Jesse Jackson, were "willing to ally themselves with the salesmen for a new Holocaust."

Other criticisms against Chavis gradually began to surface. Chavis was attacked for his efforts to reach the Hip Hop generation, including engaging in dialogues with gang members. His quiet support for the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993 angered many leaders of black organized labor. But the simmering criticisms reached a boiling point when Don Rojas, Chavis's Communications Director, coordinated a special "invitation only" meeting with prominent black nationalists and pan-Africanists in Detroit. The private session, which was coordinated by the Detroit branch of the NAACP was convened to create "a deliberate mechanism for communications" between black activists and the Association. A controversy subsequently erupted over whether Gibson and other members of the board had been informed about this "private" meeting in advance. In the late spring, conservative critics on the board demanded Rojas's resignation, and a vote of "no confidence" in Chavis. This abortive effort failed, but created real tensions and an atmosphere of uncertainty within the Association's national headquarters in Baltimore and among

many branches across the country.

When it became obvious that Chavis intended to move the NAACP beyond the ideological boundaries of liberal integrationist, an orchestrated political attack emerged both within and outside the organization. One key black opposition figure was Michael Meyers. Meyers heads a paper organization, the New York Civil Rights Coalition, and previously served as a NAACP assistant director. Despite the lack of any genuine support or recognition by the black community in New York City or anywhere else, Meyers was repeatedly featured on national television and on the op-ed pages of The New York Times. Meyers' main criticism was that Chavis's quest for black solidarity directly contradicted the central purpose of the Association. Meyers asserted: "The NAACP has never purported to be an all-black 'big tent' organization dedicated to racial unity."

The June, 1994 Summit of African-American Leadership also increased the political attacks against Chavis. The majority of the African-American elected officials, trade union leaders and "traditional" civil rights leaders such as Joe Lowery, head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Coretta Scott King, refused to show up. By contrast, about one hundred black leaders representing organizations totaling millions of people did attend the historic gathering. As black scholar Cornel West observed, "this summit generated remarkable energy ... around the crucial issues of economic development, youth and community empowerment, and moral and spiritual renewal." Farrakhan was in attendance, but only represented one out of many different constituencies and organizations with a range of ideologies and political perspectives. Nevertheless, the showdown to determine the future of black leadership became inevitable.



Letters To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:
Editor, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

When considering what taxes are being used for, our tax system has run amuck.

It isn't providing enough monies for our schools, programs are being cut, high property taxes are putting people out of their homes, fees are exorbitant, and regulators of such are completely unreasonable. I could go on and on.

With initiatives getting harder and harder to get on the ballot, this

may be our last chance to reform the tax laws in Oregon. The 2% Equal Tax will generate more than enough monies for our schools and other services. It will do away with property taxes, state taxes plus 35 other fees and assessments and is fair.

The 2% Equal tax is not a pyramiding tax. Simple interest shows how it works. If you paid \$100 in a transaction it would cost \$102. If this transaction continued on, it would be \$102.04, the 2% doesn't pyramid.

Our local area would not lose tax money - the distribution would remain the same. Also, in the 2% Equal Tax Petition, Section 5, paragraph 6 states:

"Any funds generated by the Equal Tax above the base allocations and the appropriation fund, shall be deposited in the Equal Tax Stabilization Fund will be deposited back into the Fund. This Fund shall be used exclusively as a supplement for any temporary future shortfall of revenue from the tax."

For the first time, our state tax fund will have savings that can't be dipped into except for temporary shortfalls! Now, if there is a shortfall somewhere, legislators meet to decide whether to raise the cost of your vehicle licenses, property taxes, state taxes, etc. and you have no control over it whatsoever! Or they decide what necessary service to cut (such as police, ambulance, fire, etc.)

Let's do ourselves a favor and vote YES on Measure 10.

Sincerely, Richard Middleton