The WTO Woke Us Up In Seattle

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Seattle, the home of Microsoft and Boeing, was supposed to be the Gateway to the Global Economy. Shattered shop windows and tear gas made it instead the gateway to Americans' knowledge about the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The United States was put into the WTO by a Clinton-Dole-Gingrich deal exactly five years ago in a lame-duck session in 1994, after the landmark Republican victory on November 8 but before the new members took office in January. Almost a third of those who voted for the WTO had already been rejected by their constituents.

The WTO is a 14-page charter that was surreptitiously added, without debate or publicity, to the 22,000-page revision of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). WTO is not a trade agreement at all but a stealth treaty inserted into GATT in order to evade the constitutional requirement that treaties need a two-thirds "advice and consent" majority in the Senate.

WTO's origin grew out of the Bretton Woods Conference at the end of World War II, when a three-legged plan was proposed to control the global economy. The World Bank, which makes loans to developing nations, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which makes loans for foreign reconstruction and development projects, were born in December 1945 and have been bleeding the U.S. taxpayers ever since.

The third leg, then called the International Trade Organization (ITO), was blocked by U.S. Senators who concluded that it would diminish U.S. sovereignty and interfere with U.S. domestic laws. GATT, which is simply a contractual relationship among sovereign nations, then became the basic multilateral agreement on global trade and has been negotiating rounds of tariff reductions ever since.

When the final Uruguay Round of GATT Multilateral Trade Negotiations was signed in Morocco on April 15, 1994, the globalists returned to their 1947 plan of creating an actual organization with the power to

control world trade. The WTO charter was then slipped into the GATT document that Congress passed.

The WTO is a supra-national body in Geneva that sets, administers, and enforces the rules of global trade. It includes a legislature, called the Ministerial Conference, consisting of 135 nations each with one vote; an executive branch consisting of a Director-General and an unelected multinational bureaucracy with a secretariat, committees, councils, dispute panels, and review bodies; and a supreme court of trade called the Dispute Settlement Board that decides trade disputes and whose rulings cannot be vetoed by any nation.

The WTO is based on the one-country-one-vote pattern. The United States has only one vote out 135, the same vote as Somalia, Haiti, Cuba or Rwanda. We have no veto.

Most of the 135 are dictatorships and not our friends. They look upon international organizations as vehicles to finance their socialist economies and ruling classes out of U.S. wealth and technology.

The WTO's procedures are dramatically different from those used in prior years by GATT. GATT required a consensus decision to impose a penalty recommended by a dispute panel, and the United States could reject rulings that intruded on our interests.

Under the WTO, unilateral action is forbidden. The United States must abide by the judgments of WTO's Dispute Settlement Board, which deliberates and votes in secret.

WTO is a direct attack on our sovereignty because it can force us to change our laws to comply with WTO rulings. Article XVI, paragraph 4, states: "Each Member shall ensure the conformity of its laws, regulations, and administrative procedures with its obligations."

The WTO has the final say about whether U.S. laws meet WTO requirements. The WTO can impose financial penalties and sanctions if WTO decides that our laws don't fully obey its dictates.

The WTO is touted as the road to free trade and cutting tariffs. But we don't need the WTO for that. Tariffs were dramatically reduced under GATT, and besides, free trade is not a truthful label for trade that is controlled by a bureaucracy in Geneva.

The multinational corporations like what WTO does and the way it does it behind closed doors. WTO makes it safe for them to shift their operations anywhere in the world, where there are no fair labor or environmental regulations and 50 workers can be hired for the wage of one American, and then enjoy duty-free access back into the United States.

You don't have to be against free trade to see that relinquishing our right to control our own trade policies to a bunch of foreign bureaucrats in Geneva, accountable to no one, is a prescription for international mischief. No secret global organization should be controlling U.S. trade, investment or technology, or making decisions about our jobs, production, labor standards, environment, or security.

In the televised Republican presidential debate last week, reporters didn't ask a single question about the WTO, the merits or nonmerits of U.S. membership, the controversial admission of Communist China, or demonstrators' demands that its secrecy be ended. The riot kept some people sleepless in Seattle, but others seem to be just closing their eyes to a vital American sovereignty issue.