THE PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY REPORT

Trump Puts Economic Nationalism on the Agenda

by John and Andy Schlafly

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When President Trump pulled the United States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in January, he was fulfilling a campaign promise. During last year's campaign, Trump had repeatedly called the TPP a "disaster" for American workers, while ridiculing Hillary Clinton for calling it the "gold standard."

"This wave of globalization has wiped out totally, totally our middle class," Trump said last June to blue-collar workers at a scrap yard near Pittsburgh. "It doesn't have to be this way. We can turn it around and we can turn it around fast."

Despite Trump's tough talk on trade during the campaign, many thought it would be back to business as usual for the "shadow government" of bureaucrats who run the government no matter who is elected. The multinational companies and international financial institutions have dominated our nation's economic policy since the end of World War II.

The recently concluded meeting of G20 finance ministers shows just how different the Trump administration is going to be. The G20, or group of 19 industrialized countries plus the European Union, has been meeting annually since the 2008 financial crisis in an effort to decide economic policies for the whole world.

Representing the United States at the G20 meeting was newly installed Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. The former Goldman Sachs executive was not previously thought to be an economic nationalist, but he effectively delivered the president's views to startled finance ministers of the other G20 countries.

The other members of the G20 wanted the United States to sign a joint statement declaring that "We will resist all forms of protectionism." That sentence had been included in previous joint statements, and everyone thought it would be non-controversial.

Everyone, that is, except Donald Trump's Treasury Secretary, who recognized the word "protectionism" as a slap at the president's pro-American policies, and would

not stand for it. The message Mnuchin delivered was that the new administration intended to follow through on Trump's campaign-trail promises.

"I understand what the president's desire is and his policies and I negotiated them from here," Mnuchin said at a news conference at the conclusion of the G20 meeting in Baden-Baden, Germany. "And we couldn't be happier with the outcome."

While Mnuchin was meeting German officials in Germany, President Trump was receiving German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Washington. "The United States has been treated very, very unfairly by many countries over the years," Mr. Trump said before meeting with Merkel. "That's going to stop."

Trump tweeted, "Germany owes vast sums of money to NATO & the United States must be paid more for the powerful, and very expensive, defense it provides to Germany!"

At the G20 meeting, Mnuchin succeeded on behalf of Trump in replacing the offending sentence, "We will resist all forms of protectionism," with this improvement: "We are working to strengthen the contribution of trade to our economies."

Germany's finance minister expressed his frustration: "Sometimes you have to limit yourself at such a meeting to not asking too much of one partner. You cannot force partners to go along with wording they are not okay with. You can't ask too much of him because he would then simply not agree to it."

One of the most vocal advocates for preserving the anti-protectionism language was China, which is by far the most protectionist member of the G20. China does not obey the rules of free trade, but is perfectly willing to dump its merchandise on the United States as the world's consumer of last resort.

The G20 finance ministers' meeting is the precursor to another G20 meeting this summer in Hamburg, which President Trump is expected to attend in person. By that time, the United States will have reexamined old trade agreements that Steven Mnuchin said "need to be renegotiated."

We got a clue about the Trump administration's agenda when the president's chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, spoke to the annual CPAC conference last month. Bannon said that the president's goal is "deconstruction of the administrative state" consisting of the bureaucrats who set policy no matter which party is elected.

The “corporatist, globalist media are adamantly opposed to an economic nationalist agenda like Donald Trump has,” Bannon said. “I think if you look at the opposition party and how they portray the campaign, how they portrayed the transition and now they’re portraying the administration, it’s always wrong,”

Contrary to the globalist ideology, Bannon told CPAC, “we’re a nation with an economy — not an economy just in some global marketplace with open borders, but we are a nation with a culture and a reason for being.”

“If you think they’re going to give you your country back without a fight, you are sadly mistaken,” Bannon said in reference to the media and opposition forces. “Every day, it is going to be a fight.”

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) whose 27th book, **The Conservative Case for Trump***, was published posthumously on September 6*.