Buy American To Eat Safe

by Phyllis Schlafly

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The globalists and the lobbyists are lining up to promote another so-called free-trade agreement that gives favors to foreigners while discriminating against American products, jobs and consumers. The Mainstream Media are allowing the deal, called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), to be negotiated in typically secretive closed-door sessions.

The globalists don't want public debate to reveal that the TPP's fine print will ban the "Buy American" provisions of current U.S. law. Since the 1930s, the U.S. government has offered preferential treatment to American producers in the awarding of federal contracts, and many states have similar preference policies.

This is a popular law because Americans believe U.S. taxpayers' money should be spent on U.S. products made by U.S. workers. If a domestic producer's products or services are more expensive than a foreign producer, the U.S. bidder can still be awarded the contract.

Some recent trade agreements have been adopted that give some other nations the same negotiating status as U.S. firms. Now the Obama Administration wants to grant that privilege also to Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Peru, Chile, Australia and New Zealand.

Although the text of the TPP deal is available to all those countries and to corporate "trade advisors," it has not been released to the American public. Yet, the TPP deal will allow large sums of U.S. tax dollars to be used to strengthen other countries' manufacturing sectors instead of ours.

China is expecting to join the deal soon, but meanwhile China will get TPP's benefits anyway by shipping from its plants located in Vietnam and Malaysia. China, which grows its shrimp in sewage and then doctors it with chemicals, is already transshipping 66 million pounds of its shrimp annually through Malaysia in order to avoid U.S. antidumping duties and the FDA's Import Alert.

The seafood consumed by Americans is 84 percent imported, including a large amount from TPP countries. The question the lobbyists don't want us to ask about TPP is, Do you think foods sold to American consumers should be required to meet U.S. safety standards?

The FDA has already issued 25 Import Alerts for Vietnam this year, with Vietnamese seafood detained for misbranding, E.coli, unusually high levels of antibiotic residues, microbian contamination, and other serious safety concerns. Vietnamese exporters readily concede that banned antibiotics are used in their aquaculture, and Japan is requesting enrofloxacin tests for 100 percent of shrimp from Vietnam.

According to a statement of the Southern Shrimp Alliance, "the presence of banned antibiotics and herbicides in shrimp imports reflects an intentional decision to use these harmful chemicals. Their presence is the product of a calculation to reduce the costs of producing aquaculture shrimp at the risk of the health and safety of American consumers."

The U.S. International Trade Commission projects that U.S. imports of Peruvian food will increase if TPP is implemented. The increase in beef imports is expected to be substantial.

Peru also has a major export fishing sector. FDA inspectors have rejected Peru's seafood for numerous reasons including filth, adulteration, misbranding, and various dangerous food-borne pathogens.

"Equivalence determinations" is a devious bit of language in these free-trade agreements. Those words mean requiring the United States to permit imports of meat and poultry products that meet only the safety standards of the exporting country, not the standards of the importing country, i.e., the U.S.

The United States used to be known as the world's bread basket, and surely nothing is so important as a country's ability to feed its own people. We became a net food importer for the first time in 2005.

The United States now imports $65 billion in food annually, and the vast majority is unexamined and untested. The FDA estimates that it conducts border inspections on only .6 of 1 percent of these foods at the border (vegetables, fruit, seafood, grains, dairy, animal feed).

The FDA inspects only 1.93 percent of seafood imports, and the inspection is mostly only visual. Only 11 percent of imported beef, pork and chicken is inspected at our border by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Our COOL law (Country Of Origin Labeling), passed in 2002, requires country-of-origin labeling on beef, pork, lamb, fresh fruits, vegetables, seafood and peanuts, but enforcement has been delayed again and again by intense industry lobbying. A study by Consumer Reports says that 92 percent of U.S. consumers support this law.

However, our busybody non-friends in the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled that this law violates free trade and must be repealed. In April, the WTO and Communist China blasted the U.S. for our non-compliance with WTO rulings, and Antigua and China launched criticism of the U.S. for failing to obey WTO's demand that we repeal our law against internet gambling.