QUESTIONS TO ASK CONGRESSMEN ABOUT GATT

November 24, 1994 *by: Phyllis Schlafiy*

The first post-election battle in Congress will take place at the end of this month on the legislation to approve GATT/WTO. Here are some questions the American people should ask their Senators and Congressmen.

How can you vote on such an important bill - one that will affect the jobs and economic future of most Americans - in a lame duck session in which more than 80 Members of Congress were defeated on November 8 or retired? Doesn't fairness toward the voters demand that this decision be postponed so that the newly elected Members can make this momentous decision?

How can you vote on such an important bill under the devious, dubious procedure called "fast track," which means that no amendments are permitted, the House gets only 90 minutes of debate on each side, and the Senate is limited to only 20 hours and cannot filibuster?

How can you vote for a $31 billion budget buster, in violation of the Budget Enforcement Act? If Republicans vote for this budget buster, it shows that their campaign promise to pass a Balanced Budget Amendment is a fraud.

How can you bypass the constitutional requirement that treaties, to be valid, must receive a two-thirds majority vote of Senators? By any standard, GATT/WTO is a treaty. Even though President Clinton shows contempt for the Constitution in attempting to substitute a simple majority vote in both Houses of Congress, his actions don't excuse the Members of Congress who participate in this constitutional travesty.

How can you vote for legislation which turns the power to change U.S. federal and state laws over to a foreign bureaucracy? Article XVI, paragraph 4, states that the United States "shall ensure the conformity of its laws, regulations and administrative procedures with its obligations as provided in the [GATT /WTO] Agreements."

How can you insult the intelligence of the American people by telling them that you have "fixed it up" to preserve American rights, when the text of the WTO itself states clearly in Article XVI, paragraph 5: "No reservations may be made in respect of any provision of this Agreement. "

How can you vote to put the United States into a World Trade Organization, a sort of World Government of Trade, in which the United States of America will have only one vote out of 123 nations - the same one vote as Haiti or Castro's Cuba? The majority of those nations hate us and consistently vote against us in the United Nations.

How can you vote to install a whole new layer of international regulation over the U.S. economy and dare to call it "free trade"? GATT/WTO is NOT free trade -

it is managed markets, the same kind of global regulation that Clinton tried to install over the entire health care industry and, fortunately, didn't get by with it.

How can you vote to lock the United States into an international dispute procedure in which foreign tribunals will meet and decide the fate of U.S. jobs and businesses in secret, star-chamber proceedings? Who gave you the authority to sign away American standards of due process and the right to confront our accusers?

How can you vote to encourage U.S. businesses to move their plants and jobs overseas, where they can hire *50* workers for the wage of one American worker?

How can you vote for a $2 billion subsidy, secretly inserted into the implementing legislation, to benefit the Washington Post, the Atlanta Constitution, and a consortium of powerful insiders? Only if you postpone the vote until next year can you eliminate this outrageous payoff to Big Media that are beating the drums for GATI/WTO.

How can you vote a $218 million subsidy to the Washington Post, which has been such a virulent enemy of Republicans and everything Republicans stand for?

How can you vote for the GATI /WTO implementing legislation which eliminates the guaranteed minimum interest rate on U.S. savings bonds? Is this a sign of how GATI /WTO will ride roughshod over our own domestic laws?

How can you vote for the GATI /WTO implementing legislation which changes the constitutional right of American inventors to get patents? It is an outrage to diminish this constitutional right, when many foreign countries make a regular practice of stealing U.S. patents.

How can you vote for the GATI /WTO implementing legislation that requires every newborn American baby to get a Taxpayer Identification Number at birth? What business is this of foreign countries?

How can you insult the intelligence of the American people by telling us we are safe from the bad effects of GATI /WTO because the Clinton Administration has agreed that the United States will be given a chance to withdraw from GATI/WTO once every five years? That's worse than the text of the WTO itself, which in Article XV gives us the right to withdraw at any time for any reason upon six months' notice.

Every Senator and Congressman should provide his constituents with answers to these crucial questions before the GATI/WTO vote, now scheduled for November 29 in the House and December 1 in the Senate.