NAFfA

My interest in NAFTA was piqued when a C-SPAN caller asked if any of the press persons on the panel had read it. When the answer was an embarrassed no, and one expert said he didn't see any necessity to read it, I read the treaty myself, more than a thousand pages of it.

The first thing I discovered is that "free trade" is a misnomer for NAFTA. That's the rubric under which the treaty is peddled, but that's not what NAFTA is. We are told that NAFTA will open up a great market of Mexicans. According to NAFTA advocates, 80 million Mexicans are standing south of the border, ready to buy American products, and NAFTA will make this possible by creating a free trade zone.

Of all the products that those 80 million Mexicans might like to buy from the United States, used cars would be near the top of the list. The average Mexican worker couldn't even dream of affording a new automobile rolling off the assembly line in Detroit, but he could hope to buy one of the old jalopies that more prosperous Americans have traded in.

But under NAFTA, Mexicans won't be allowed to buy U.S. used cars freely for 25 years! There won't be free trade in used cars until the year 2019 (although some U.S. used cars will be allowed to be exported to Mexico on a detailed schedule beginning after 15 years).

There's a name for that kind of an agreement, but it certainly isn't free trade. Call it a thousand pages of specific advantages for some powerful financial interests and disadvantages for others. As another example, **NAFTA** will eliminate tariffs on Mexican corn imports to the U.S. in five years, while Mexico is allowed to keep its tariff on U.S. corn for 15 years.

No wonder NAFTA was written in secrecy and kept from the American people until it was a "done deal," and no wonder its advocates have rigged the procedure for putting it through Congress so that it must be voted on as a package without any chance to amend it.

For many years, certain establishment groups with close ties to multinational corporations and international bankers, such as the Committee on the Constitutional System, have been holding conferences and writing articles to promote major changes in our governmental structure. One of their complaints about our U.S. Constitution is its requirement that treaties, to be valid, must be ratified by a two-thirds vote in the Senate.

The NAFTA advocates have devised a plan to circumvent this constitutional requirement. Although NAFTA is the most far-reaching treaty ever signed by the three big nations of the Western Hemisphere, it will not be submitted to the Senate for ratification, but is greased to pass by a simple majority vote in both Houses of Congress.

That's only the beginning of NAFTA's assault on the U.S. Constitution and, indeed, on our whole fabric of self-government. It's an ingenious plan to replace American sovereignty and what's left of states' rights with a frightening array of three-nation councils, commissions, secretariats, tribunals, arbitral panels, review boards, evaluation committees, dispute settlement panels, working groups, and administrative offices. That means a tremendous new growth in Big Government.

The persons who serve on these new bodies won't be elected, nor will they be subject to Senate confirmation. They will be exempt from taking an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution, which is required of all government officials. No wonder Henry Kissinger called NAFTA a giant step forward for the New World Order.

NAFTA would override all sorts of U.S. laws. For example, it provides that 65 categories of professionals from Mexico can bypass our immigration laws and take U.S. jobs, and it forbids us to modify the extravagances of our own Clean Air Act.

All the talk about the tremendous Mexican market that is waiting to buy U.S. products is as phony as a $3 bill. People are not a "market" nless they have money in their pockets, and the average wage of the Mexicans is only 15 percent of ours. The only way that Mexico becomes a "market" is through the con game called "foreign aid," by which massive U.S. foreign handouts provide Mexicans with the money to "buy" our products. NAFTA is completely intertwined with a multi-billion handout to the World Bank, another multi-billion handout to the Inter-American Development Bank, and a third multi-billion handout to clean up Mexico's environment (which Mickey Kantor calls "new and unique").

We could create a new "market" right here in the United States by just handing out $100 bills in our impoverished inner cities, but that would be a little too obvious for the liberals to get by with. When the handouts are funnelled through international agencies, the American people lose track of how they are being ripped off.

The Democrats have nicely positioned themselves to avoid responsibility for the bad effects of NAFTA by inducing Republican leaders to round up the votes to pass it. In Congress, it's a lose-lose situation for Republicans: if NAFTA passes, Clinton will claim the victory, and the Republicans will have forfeited their great opportunity to recapture the votes of the Reagan Democrats and to outflank Ross Perot's presidential candidacy.