

AMERICA BETRAYED

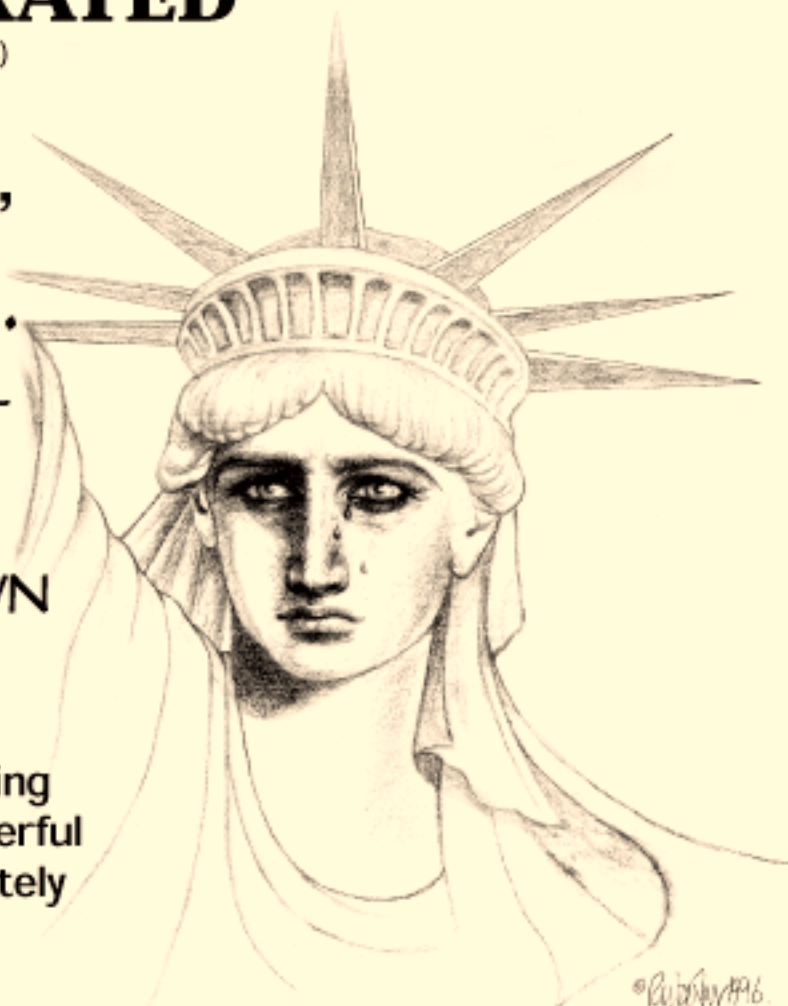
(This is #10 in a 10 Part Series)

THE ITALIANS CALL IT "ESTATO CORPORATIVO" - THE CORPORATE STATE.

WHEN THE STATE BECOMES THE SERVANT
OF CORPORATIONS, IT'S CALLED FASCISM.

WHEN CORPORATIONS CREATE THEIR OWN
SUPER-STATE, IT'S CALLED THE WTO.

Created by international treaty in 1995 and now boasting membership of 134 nations, the WTO is the most powerful system of global governance on the planet. It is completely undemocratic, answerable only to itself.



The WTO:

- was formed for the purpose of creating a global free market in which trade constraints are minimized;
- is non-elected and meets in secret;
- has the power to invalidate laws created by sovereign member nations (including the US) that are deemed by the WTO to be "in restraint of trade."

What is free trade and who benefits?

Free trade means markets that are freed of all restrictions, including laws designed to protect the environment, working conditions and public health and safety.

While this may be optimal for the profits of transnational corporations, it is ultimately not beneficial to the majority.

What are the rules of the WTO?

While individual countries can challenge the WTO, cases are heard by three trade bureaucrats, usually corporate lawyers. There are no rules on conflict-of-interest, judges meet in secret at undisclosed locations and times. Documents are kept confidential, closed to public scrutiny. There is no appeal to anyone outside of the WTO.

As Ralph Nader's *Public Citizen* states: "At the request of transnational corporations, the WTO can and will repeal any nation's environmental protections, public health or safety regulations."¹

What has the WTO actually done to threaten the global environment?

- overturned part of the US Clean Air Act to allow the import of low-quality gasoline with a high potential for air pollution;
- declared environmental regulations illegal that require imported shrimp and tuna be caught by methods that minimize harm to endangered sea turtles and dolphins;
- ruled against the European Union (EU) ban on the sale of hormone-treated US beef, requiring these countries to pay \$150 million each year as "compensation for lost profits";
- ruled against an EU law requiring genetically modified food to be labeled as such.

For three decades, environmentalists have worked to halt the contamination of the planet with industrial poisons like DDT, PCBs and synthetic compounds of lead and mercury. Now the WTO is using its power to overturn environmental protections in the interests of "free trade."

By shifting the burden of proof in determining environmental hazards

from corporations to the public, the WTO has replaced the idea of "better safe than sorry" with the idea of "show us the dead bodies."

Meanwhile, we are horrified by the fact that 40-50% of us will suffer cancer during our lifetimes. The increasing incidence of sickness and disease, particularly in our children, is an unspoken outrage of the 20th century.

What is the position of the Clinton/Gore administration?

The Clinton/Gore Administration has led the way for global free trade, through securing passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and through their ongoing support for broadening the scope and powers of the WTO.

When the European Union (EU) sought to ban the sale of hormone-treated US beef, the Clinton/Gore administration challenged the EU before a WTO tribunal. When the EU called for labeling of genetically-engineered foods, the Clinton/Gore administration challenged again.

France wants to ban asbestos, Denmark wants to ban lead compounds, and the EU wants to ban lead, mercury and cadmium in electronic devices. Presidential contender Al Gore, who professes environmental credentials, opposes consumer protection from these highly toxic substances, calling such protection an "illegal restraint of trade."

But isn't the WTO making us richer? The answer is "NO!"

In the past two decades of globalized free trade, culminating in the WTO, the world has experienced:

- reduced standards of living for most people in both the developing and the developed world;
- growing unemployment worldwide;
- massive environmental degradation & natural resource shortages;
- intensifying political chaos;
- a global sense of despair replacing hope and optimism for the future.²

The United States, the preeminent power in the WTO, now suffers the most dramatic inequalities of wealth of all the industrialized countries and a democracy that is moribund. 25% of our children and 60 million of our people live in poverty. 1% now own 45% of the wealth while 60% own no tangible assets at all. Cynical about a campaign finance system that greases the palms of special interests, only about a third of the eligible electorate even bother to vote.

It's time to wake up - at stake is our national sovereignty, our democracy, and our increasingly fragile planetary environment.

The purpose of the WTO "Millenium Round Ministerial" in Seattle, November 30 through December 3, is to further expand the agenda of corporate globalization. **Do we want a world in which transnational corporations make and enforce the rules through a secret tribunal?**

IT'S UP TO US TO SAY NO. IT'S UP TO US TO STOP THE WTO.



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US Trade Representative Charlene Barshevsky
Phone: 888-473-8787
USTR, 600 17th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20508.

Tell her withdraw the U.S. from the WTO.

¹ Lori Wallach and Michelle Sforza, *Whose Trade Organization?: Corporate Globalization and the Erosion of Democracy* (Washington, DC: Public Citizen, Inc., 1999). ISBN 1582310017, (202) 588-1000.
² *ibid.*