



**Secret Courts for Corporations**

**Taxpayer Dollars for Foreign Polluters**

**Food Safety at Risk**

# A "Fast Track" Attack on America's Values

While the nation's attention is focused abroad, Congress is about to decide whether to abandon the core values that define us as a free society at home.

The House of Representatives votes tomorrow on a "Fast Track" trade bill that would undermine the vital Constitutional checks and balances wisely created by our nation's founders.

The trade bill calls for extending to 31 more nations a provision in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which empowers foreign corporations to sue the federal government in secret tribunals, demanding our tax dollars as payment for complying with U.S. health, safety and pollution laws.

While American companies would still have to play by the rules, foreign manufacturers of toxic chemicals could use these private courts to sue U.S. taxpayers if their products were taken off the market as unsafe, or if zoning rules kept them from building a chemical plant near a school.

Mexican and Canadian corporations already have access to these private proceedings under NAFTA. And American taxpayers already face hundreds of millions of dollars in claims. Specific cases, settlement

terms, even the identity of judges can be kept secret indefinitely.

If that's not bad enough, the Fast Track bill would also instruct U.S. trade negotiators to limit our safety inspections of foreign meat and produce, even as food imports soar.

Under NAFTA, for example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture no longer inspects Canadian meat products for dangerous residues of heavy metals. The meat is simply admitted and can be stamped "USDA Prime."

Some in the House leadership, including Tom DeLay, Dick Armey and Bill Thomas, want to extend such "rights" to every foreign-owned, multinational corporation in Central and South America.

But many members of Congress from both parties recognize it is unpatriotic to make secret tribunals available to foreign companies. They are also concerned about the potential economic impacts of this Fast Track bill, including the export of U.S. manufacturing jobs, a further deepening of the recession and the loss of our remaining domestic production capacity in defense-critical industries like steel.

Whose side is Congress on — foreign corporations or the American people? When they vote tomorrow, we'll know.

