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The Tilted Playing Field

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FORUM

"What enables an intelligent government and a wise military leadership to overcome others and achieve extraordinary accomplishments is foreknowledge" (Sun Tzu, circa 500 BC).

THE TILTED PLAYING FIELD

Thomas R. Weitzel

During the 1980s, the concept of globalization was introduced. Some of the associates of the concept are: the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the European Community (EC), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and free trade. As coined by a professor at McGill University (unknown), the ultimate definition of free trade is "a willingness to sit on the dirt floor of one's thatched-roof hut and eat rice from a bowl with one's fingers."

The past three administrations utilized the term, "the level playing field," while structuring global trading relationships with a *laissez faire* attitude toward U.S. business interests. Concurrently, the Uruguay Round of the GATT has been stalled since its 1986 Punta del Este inception by issues of subsidy for French agriculture. Additionally, the French have staged vociferous demonstrations when a McDonald's restaurant and EuroDisney were opened in their country; and the recent riot by French fishermen was prompted by imported seafood.

Airbus Industrie, a European consortium manufacturing transport-category aircraft (37.9% of which is French-owned) has been dumping its subsidized product in the U.S. The Royal Dutch Airlines of the Netherlands, Kloninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij (KLM), has gained international landing rights at all U.S. airports in exchange for U.S. air carriers' landing rights at all airports within the Netherlands. A U.S. special relationship with the United Kingdom (UK) has British Airways gaining unfettered access to the U.S. aviation

market now in exchange for the possibility of future open skies in the UK and the EC. The EC and EFTA have been negotiating a 17- or 18-nation open market alliance, while the EC open market of January 1992 has trains continuing unimpeded treks (tracks) across the borders, accompanied by a few unimpeded trucks. (The movements of air carriers and numerous trade goods have been another matter).

In the spring of 1991, U.S. diplomats were arrested for bringing U.S.-grown rice to a Japanese trade fair. Japan, with MITI as a national instrument, reports an annual \$135 billion trade surplus; in the U.S., every \$45 billion in manufactured output equals 1 million jobs. If NAFTA moves ahead, more U.S. jobs will be exported with the resultant imported welfare, entitlements, and trade deficits--which produce budget deficits.

Trading blocs of countries across both the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans have been (and are being) formed to gain access to the world's largest free market--the U.S. Within those blocs, sovereign nations exist with mercantile interests that would

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colonize the Mississippi River. Geopolitical conflicts, and wars, have arisen since the beginning of time over trade issues and the mythical level playing field.

Japan and European nations have commitments to education that will foster economic growth through the development of ideas and human potential (Bowsher, 1989). The U.S. needs an educational "constancy of purpose" as defined by W. Edwards Deming (1986) to ensure competitive international trade opportunities for its corporations and its populace.

Issues concerning globalization and free trade (as well as ethics and the environment) are being discussed across the curriculum in the major U.S. universities. Beliefs and a philosophy of nationalism, not protectionism, should be developed by the teachers and principals of K-12 educational settings. The topics of the environment, ethics, and free trade should be imparted to the students as global values by these local educators, not

necessarily as part of the overt curriculum. In earlier generations of U.S. citizens, these values were generally imparted by the parents in the home. Today's K-12 product for postsecondary education is showing-up with little or no knowledge of these (and other) traditionally assumed-to-be present values. These values, in some form, should be in the curriculum prior to any postsecondary education, not only to facilitate the college life, but to facilitate a better U.S. society composed primarily of individuals not destined for a postsecondary education.

As stated by Schubert (1986) with reference to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement: ". . . the top 5 percent of students in all nations studied achieve on an essentially equal basis despite differences in the remainder" (p. 267). In its educational efforts, the U.S. really needs to pay attention to the other 95 percent.□

Thomas R. Weitzel earned a Bachelor of Science in Metallurgical Engineering from Illinois Institute of Technology, and a Master of Aeronautical Science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Mr. Weitzel is a pilot of Trans World Airlines.□

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