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[Fast Track Questions and Answers] [loose]

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Q: Doesn't Rep. Gephardt have a point in saying that if we don't deal with labor issues in trade agreements there is no other place to do it?

A: Fast track is about opening markets to ensure that U.S. workers can compete on equal terms. The first issue we are concerned about is improving the competitive prospects for U.S. workers. If we don't set the agenda for trade negotiations, the rest of the world will go ahead without us, and the losers will be our workers and companies. We have worked to address labor conditions in a number of international arenas, and will continue to do so. We are interested in securing progress in all of these areas -- and progress on environmental or labor issues cannot be achieved in any measure by failing to move forward with fast track.

Q: What about calling for wage level increases in trade agreements as prosperity increases in developing countries?

A: Trade is increasing prosperity at home and abroad. We know that 95% of the world's consumers live outside the United States. Each year, among 30 million annual additions to the "middle class," three-fourths live in emerging markets, low and mid-income countries. Trade helps countries develop economically, and so is clearly a force in improving wages internationally. If the real concern is to see international wage rates increase, we do nothing to accomplish that goal by restricting the U.S. trade agenda.

Q: Environmental advocates point to the Nafta as a reason "side agreements" won't work and are calling for explicit trade sanctions related to environmental issues. How do you address their concerns?

A: We are working to ensure that we can make progress on both fronts -- trade and global environmental conditions -- and it is important to recognize that not having fast track will do nothing to advance global environmental objectives. The key is how do we advance the interests of trade and preserve the ability to negotiate global environmental accords. We are looking at a range of options. Also, Nafta is the first trade agreement that addressed environmental concerns. After just three years we are seeing some major water treatment, sewage plants, and pollution control projects installed along the border, and the Border Environmental Commission and the NAD Bank are making a difference. Without the Nafta and its side agreements, there would be no basis for further environmental progress along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Q: Critics contend that trade expansion might be good for American agriculture but consumers are paying a price in reduced food safety?

A: The United States has the world's safest food supply. Trade agreements apply the same food safety standards and conditions to imports as we apply to domestic agricultural products. Additionally, the Vice President's five point plan to improve food safety includes new testing procedures and will expand food testing. FDA tests have consistently shown that there is virtually no difference in health risks between domestic and imported foods. [If asked specifically about Mexican strawberries... The source of contamination for the frozen strawberries originally imported from Mexico is unknown. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the California Department of Health and the California Department of Food and Agriculture are still conducting an investigation to determine whether the strawberries were contaminated in Mexico, the U.S. processing plant, or some other location.

Q: What's the status of the President's Fast Track Legislation? Will you get a vote before the year's out? Did you wait too late? Did you kill it by making the wrong call on labor and the environment? What about Arme's call to delay Fast Track until census-sampling and school vouchers are addressed?

A:

- President is committed to securing authority he needs to negotiate agreements that open markets, provide job opportunities for American workers. **Made that case clearly to AFL-CIO in Pittsburgh September 24.**
- Continue to believe legislative sequencing is on target: securing balanced budget agreement, extensive consultations with Congress have set the stage for legislative process that will result in bill that commands bipartisan support from majority of both houses.
- We share goal expressed by Senator Lott, House Leadership to have floor votes in both houses before Congress adjourns this fall; believe they're committed to that goal. Leadership will set schedule of when those votes take place.
- **Ambassador Barshefsky met with Congressmen Archer, Dreyer, and Crane September 24 to discuss legislative process; agreed to hold Ways and Means hearing next week, mark-up bill the following week. Process clearly on track.**
- Cong. Arme's an economist – he knows how important this legislation is for opening markets and providing opportunities for America's workers and businesses. Expect he, rest of House leadership, will press forward on their goal of voting on Fast Track during the fall session.

From: Erin Ennis
To: EDDLEMAN LINDA
Date: 9/18/97 2:47pm
Subject: Fast Track -- Qs and As -Reply

Q&A

Several of the items you requested I do not have electronically. Here's what I have.

>>> Linda Eddleman 09/18/97 10:19am >>>

Erin--Thanks for letting me review the Fast Track binder. I have made copies of quite a few of the Qs and As for use at OEOB. Because the Qs and As are so numerous, it would be great to have as many as possible on disk so that word searches could be done to locate the necessary information quickly. Listed below are the principal topics of interest:

- 1) Questions related to the bill (e.g., meaning of "necessary and appropriate")
- 2) Principal negotiating objectives: labor and environment
- 3) Fast Track Proposals: Business, Daschle, environmental community
- 4) NAFTA--environmental issues, food safety, impact on US economy, job losses, labor, NADBank, BECC, Side Agreements
- 5) Chile --generally
- 6) FTAA--process and Latin America Qs and As.
- 7) Labor
- 8) Environment

If there's a lot of work involved in collecting the info on disk, let me know and I can contact the relevant people directly, follow up, etc.

Note that Bob Kyle, Eric Biel, etc. have prepared some additional Qs and As based on questions raised during briefings (e.g., the response regarding the term "trade related" included in the binder was prepared by Bob.) I will collect them and send them via E-Mail.

Thanks again for your help.

CC: USTR.USTR_DC(R), USTR.USTR2(HUENEMANN JON),