

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 82 TRANSCRIPT

JIM HIGHTOWER & LORI WALLACH

STEVE SKROVAN: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. We've got an excellent show for you today, as always. And today we're going hard after the Trans Pacific Partnership. So fasten your seatbelts for that. We're going to be talking to Lori Wallach from Public Citizens Global Trade Watch. She's going to give the latest on what's happening on the TPP. And we're also going to be talking to an old friend of Ralph's, and I'm proud to say an old friend of mine, too. Speaker, author and one of the all around good guys, the incomparable Mr. Jim Hightower. We're going to hear the latest from our corporate crime reports, Russell Mohkiber, and we should be able to, this episode to get to more listener questions. Our shows have been so jam-packed lately it's been difficult to fit those in. But I, I think we're going to do it this time. David, introduce us to our first guest today, please.

DAVID FELDMAN: Steve, did you know that there's nothing in the middle road but a yellow stripe and dead armadillos?

STEVE SKROVAN: I did not know that.

DAVID FELDMAN: Did you know that the only difference between a pigeon and the American farmer today is that a pigeon can still make a deposit on a John Deere?

STEVE SKROVAN: I was unaware of that also.

DAVID FELDMAN: Did you know that the opposite for courage is not cowardice, it is conformity? Even a dead fish can go with the flow.

STEVE SKROVAN: Now well that sounds vaguely familiar to me now.

DAVID FELDMAN: Well, that is some of the wit and wisdom of our guest today. Jim Hightower is a syndicated columnist, national radio commentator, progressive political activist and author who served from 1983 to 1991 as the elected commissioner of the Texas Department of Agriculture. He is the author of many books, including “If the Gods Had Meant Us to Vote, They Would Have Given Us Candidates” and “Swim Against the Current – Even a Dead Fish Can Go with the Flow.”

STEVE SKROVAN: That’s where I heard that.

DAVID FELDMAN: He puts out a monthly newsletter called the Hightower Lowdown. He’s America’s number one populist. The late great political columnist Molly Ivins once said, “If Will Rogers and Mother Jones had a baby, Jim Hightower would be that rambunctious child. Mad as hell with a sense of humor.” Jim Hightower, it’s an honor. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour.

JIM HIGHTOWER: Well, it’s a joy to be with you, and quite a combination we have here. We have Ralph Nader and then Skrovan and Feldman. So this is seriously funny. Is that right?

RALPH NADER: That’s one of my favorite phrases, seriously funny. And that’s what you convey to your audiences all over the country. A few people Jim Hightower had spoken to so many live audiences in so many states, red states, blue states, he’s spoken before evangelically oriented people. You’ve spoken before hard rock progressives in New England. So this leads to my first question. When you put out your populist or progressive agenda for America and its relations to the world, do you really see that much divide between your southern audiences and say your Midwest or California or New England audiences?

JIM HIGHTOWER: Not really. And I know that Ralph, that you do the same thing. And the truth is, and I view the real political spectrum in America is not right to left, liberal to conservative. Those are theories. But rather, it’s top to bottom. That’s experience. That’s where people live, it’s their zip code. And they know, a good 80 percent of the American people know that they’re no longer in shouting distance of those powers at the top, whether those powers call themselves Democrat, Republican, liberal

or conservative. So when you talk to people in terms of just the basics of what's going on in America and what their situation is, when you talk to them about not just jobs but wages, when you talk to them about clean air and water, the opportunity for their kids to be able to go to college or to get a higher education or technical degree, or talk to them about any of the fundamentals in life including healthcare for everybody, they're with you. And it doesn't matter, again, whether you're talking to somebody who considers themselves conservative or considers themselves liberal.

RALPH NADER: Let me go to what I call the democracy gap. There is a lot of converging opinions by people who label themselves conservatives or liberals or progressives or libertarians, there's no doubt. I mean, I found 24 convergences, whether it's the civil liberties intrusions of the Patriot Act or a restored minimum wage or the Pentagon and military industrial complex enormous waste and corruption and even empire. There's an increasing conservative concern about sprawling military bases and interventionism. Rand Paul has expressed that, for example. And of course, top of the list is what the right wing calls crony capitalism and what we call corporate bailouts or corporate welfare. So tell us what you think are the best approaches to take this converging opinion about what kind of society, country, world we want to live in into political, civic action, electoral action. That's where the gap is, because look at that crew that's running for the Republican nomination. It's like a circus, and it's not all that much better on the Democratic side in terms of who the lead runner is with Hillary Clinton being the corporatist and militarist increasingly challenged by the progressive Senator Bernie Sanders. So let's talk about the democracy gap. What if someone stands up to an audience in Texarkana or Durham, New Hampshire, and says OK, Mr. Hightower. We agree, one, two, three, four, why aren't we organizing as a people? What are the obstacles? How do you overcome this lack of civic motivation going to the next step?

JIM HIGHTOWER: Well, I think there are at least two obstacles there. One is the lack of leadership from people in so-called leadership positions. So they don't want us talking to each other. And then they get the media to cooperate with them to say that we're all enemies. Well, we're not. We're natural allies. Labor with farmers, farmers with environmentalists, environmentalists with poor people,

you know, etc. And when we can just go out there and talk to people about specific issues as you've found, Ralph, then things begin to happen. People begin to nod their heads together. And so that's the first place to start, is what is it that we have in common? And you had that great meeting earlier this year in Washington with conservatives and with progressives coming together to talk about some of the things that we actually agree on. You mentioned your 24 points of convergence. There's at least that many. We see it happening right now with this Trans Pacific Partnership scam that Obama has kind of shoved down our throats. I mean, there's a supposedly liberal Democrat pushing through what's just a corporate wet dream for global corporations, in this case. And you know that the most disgusting thing about that, in addition to its actual provisions, is Obama continuing to say that with this TPP agreement, we are writing the rules of global engagement rather than letting the Chinese and other countries write it. Well, we're writing the rules to gut our own people. How disgusting is that? If they were writing the rules, we would expect that. But here he's saying we're writing the rules and those rules are going to work against the workaday people of this country.

RALPH NADER: You mean the corporations are writing the rules, in effect.

JIM HIGHTOWER: Oh, of course. You got five hundred corporate executives and lobbyists sat there with the trade representatives and wrote this document. And even a member of Congress couldn't be there to observe it, much less participate, and much less just regular folks of course were shut out. There's a saying in negotiation if you're not at the table, you're on the menu.

RALPH NADER: Well, let's take this example, because this is going to come up next year before Congress, probably, the Trans Pacific Partnership. For those who don't know much about it, it's a trade deal masquerading as a trade deal, because it isn't just tariffs and quotas. It basically damages seriously and displaces our democratic constitution, courts, legislatures, executive branch. It bypasses them. Any time we want to improve our labor, consumer, environmental standards, they can be labeled by some other, less developed country as a non-tariff trade where you're violating the agreement, and they take us

to these secret tribunals and we lose. So it's a pull-down trade agreement on our domestic standards of living, not to mention, as you implied, the shipping of whole jobs and industries to what I call fascist and communist regimes overseas. So let's take this. OK. The people should block this through their members of Congress. There are 535 members of Congress, fifty senators, 435 representatives. They put their shoes on every day like you and I and others. How would you start organizing a new, pot boiling watchdog group in every Congressional district? As you know, everything starts with one or two people, so they can increasingly take that opposition to this agreement by both left and right in their district and give it the laser beam focus on Capitol Hill? Already, you know, it's about a 50/50 split. I mean, we're not starting from zero. About half of the members already oppose it. But the arm twisting has yet to come from the White House and the corporate lobbyist. So let's get very specific. How would we start this rumble, this laser beam focus in every congressional district against the TPP? And if we beat the TPP, we're starting to roll back globalization. It would be such a stunning defeat for Wall Street and the White House and people like Thomas Friedman of the New York Times, the cheerleader of globalization.

JIM HIGHTOWER: Any movement starts when somebody moves. And the good news here is that this movement is already underway, thanks to Lori Wallach at Public Citizen with the Global Trade Watch program over there. She has been, and her staff of only eleven people, have made this thing an issue, but they knew just exactly what you're saying, by going out with roadshows and talking to other constituent groups that are going to be screwed by this deal, getting them involved, getting them talking to their members, and then also just going on the road and going into those communities, going to churches, going to your civic clubs, going to the pubs and the saloons, go to the coffee klatches, you know, go anywhere there are people and just show them what this thing is. You know, Lemon Yonson used to say you can't make chicken salad out of chicken manure. He didn't say manure, but nonetheless, a very good point. And that's how they've got to work with the proponents of this TPP, Trans Pacific Partnership. This thing is just a pile of manure for corporate interests against the public interests. So just presenting it to the people is going to be enough. Because anybody who sees it, anybody who takes a peek

at this thing, just has an automatic gag reflex. So we got to do that, and do that not just in the progressive congressional districts, but particularly out there with those Tea Party people. I mean, my God, they were elected on the basis of challenging business as usual in Washington. You cannot get more business as usual than this TPP scam. Why their members are mostly standing up for this so-called agreement, which we did not agree with, but nonetheless, they're the ones who are really pushing this thing through. And I think you can turn a lot of those people around by going to their own constituents and the local Tea Party leaders and that sort of thing. So we've got to not make assumptions about who people are. Just go out there and present these facts in every, the most forceful way that you can. One example is, you know, Donny Trump's already come out against this thing. So we start with a convergence of political outlook and parties on this thing. And as you say, we've got great numbers in the Congress already with us. So this is a very winnable thing, and we've just got to be the ones who go out there and hammer it home.

RALPH NADER: Yeah. And I think if they go to GlobalTradeWatch.org, which is Public Citizen which has developed efforts all over the country, they'll get a lot of material that they can use in clear English, very accurate, one, two, three material. For example, the Obama Administration hasn't even revealed the full text. It's still secret. There are little snippets that leak out here and there. But either they want to ram this down the throats of the American people and they're dragging their feet just like George Herbert Walker Bush and Clinton did on NAFTA and the World Trade Organization. So the next step, I think, Jim, is to have enough people in each congressional district to summon their legislators, to summon their senators and representatives to town meetings, where the audience shapes the agenda. That's why I use the word "summons." A citizen summons, I've even drafted citizen summons for people. And once they come back and they get an experience of what is in an informed audience, they're going to be pretty shaken. Because as you say, the only argument for the TPP is corporate supremacy over our country and the world. That's what it is. It's going to raise the price of medicines. It's going to empty out communities in terms of jobs. It's going to weaken air and water pollution controls. It's going to subordinate higher food safety and food labeling laws. It's going to even go into whether we can control the way banks

invest or not invest in neighborhoods. Let's take it to the next step. Let's say these members can't deny the summons, there's enough citizens on the petition where they can't deny it and they're people who are conservatives and liberals and that's what scares a lot of these lawmakers, when there's a convergence like that. So they're in a town meeting, more than one in their district during their congressional recess, etc., and the place is full, it's got very knowledgeable people. They've got material from Global Trade Watch and other sources, and the legislators standing or sitting up there on the stage or before a podium. Run it out. Let's say you were in the audience. What would be the next step to get them more committed? The ones that are already committed to become persuaders in the corridors of Congress with others who are not, their colleagues?

JIM HIGHTOWER: And important step in all of these kinds of campaigns, and I'll review, there's no need to go to Washington to talk to your member of Congress. They have district offices. They have meetings of their own, so show up, as Woody Allen says, is more than half of achieving anything is just being there and get in the face of power and grab these Congress critters by the short hairs. But I think an important step is for people to be able to see progress. And so the degree to which a member is affected by these meetings, these summonses and confrontations, the degree to which somebody from across the country that another Congress member is persuaded, that's information that has to get out, so people can begin to see the result of their actions. And then that emboldens them to do more. One thing that Lori Wallach and the Global Trade Watch people did was to have drop-ins and hangouts at congressional offices, district offices. In other words, a dozen or 30 citizens would show up at the office and hang out for like two days. Making the point that we're here, we're the citizens, you know? We pay taxes. We are the people you're supposed to be responsive to, not those Wall Street bankers. And just do that. And then create, the Global Trade Watch people, the actual trade negotiations that were taking place out in Hawaii earlier this year set a new Guinness Book of Records for the number of conch shells that could be blown at 6 a.m. in front of the luxury hotel where the negotiators were staying. They got a nice little wake-up call with 400 conch shells blowing their way.

RALPH NADER: There's a lot of fun in this. First in getting the members of Congress who are on your side to be more vigorous in persuading their reluctant colleagues in the Senate and the House, but also in making the ones that are really in the pockets of the corporations squirm. Because they're used to town meetings, you know, where people are not really up on the issues, where just some person just blasts forth emotionally without much factual content and they sort of smile and listen and cool them off. But with Global Trade Watch and the material you have, you're going to show that you in the audience know more than the member of Congress. I mean, when the World Trade Organization agreement was before Congress, we offered \$10,000 to the favorite charity of any senator or representative who would subject themselves in an open committee to ten questions about the text. And we got no takers until just ten minutes before 5, when it was the deadline that we gave them, Senator Hank Brown, Republican Colorado, said I'll take it. I don't want you to give \$10,000 to my favorite charity, I'll take it. So he reserved the Senate Foreign Committee room, and me and Richard Goodwin asked the questions. We asked him twelve questions. He got every one of them right, proving that he was the only member of Congress who even read this five, six hundred page agreement.

We've been talking to Jim Hightower, who is a great progressive communicator. He was formerly Texas Commissioner of Agriculture. He won a statewide election and was on his way to another reelection before a political smear against some of his associates dislodged him in favor of Rick Perry, who then went on to become a longtime governor of Texas. He just dropped out of the presidential race. Tell us about your newsletter, which is one of the most widely circulated newsletters, four pages, I guess, that is reaching tens of thousands of households. Why don't you describe its frequency, its content and how people can subscribe to it?

JIM HIGHTOWER: It's a monthly political newsletter. It focuses on these very kind of issues we've been talking about, populist perspective presented there, as succinctly as my little brain is able to condense things but yet convey the essence of what's really going on. You know, the establishment media, they're good at the who, what, when and where, but they never get to why. And that's what we try

to do in this. Why is this happening? What's really behind it and who is really behind it, in terms of the corporate powers? And then as you mentioned, it's only four pages, because we don't want it to be intimidating and be another thick magazine that you just have stacked up there. So it comes out monthly. Got more than 100,000 subscribers to it, and as you suggest, it's traded around. People take it to their meetings, they take it to work and circulate it. They send copies to their family and etc. So it's put on bulletin boards, that sort of thing. So the word gets out.

RALPH NADER: Tell the listeners how they can get it, and give them examples of some of the themes of recent newsletters. You have actually themes of hot issues that you really bore into with some pretty interesting satire once in a while to make it really humming.

JIM HIGHTOWER: And we always have a "do something" box, so it's not just get mad about this, it's here's a way to connect with other people who are doing something, other groups, about this. Well, the themes range from the deliberate privatization move against our public post office, and which alluding the canard that the post office is going broke. It's only going broke because an act of Congress under George W. Bush saddled them with \$5 billion a year in pension payments that no other corporation or government agency would have to pay. So it actually, the post office is making an operating profit. We took on the issue of for-profit colleges and how they are sinking students into an unbearable debt and then profiting by taking the student loan money the government puts forward for those kids. So that's another dramatic thing. And then we do things like on Labor Day this year we talked about the first Labor Day. Where did this come from? And the powers that be, the history books, try to say well, it came from Grover Cleveland, he was the president that got this thing through, making it a federal holiday Labor Day. Well, hogwash. It was three thousand people on the street in 1882, people, labor unions on the street with bands, with examples of their work that they did, with floats and all sorts of just, it was a gala event, but it wasn't just to celebrate, it was to protest. It went right up Fifth Avenue, right across the robber barons mansions there. Labor confronting them with the fact that they're making two dollars a day and having to work 12-hour days, six days a week. So that forged a movement, came out of that. And so we try to do

little bits like that, but tell the people's history, their real history that you're not going to get from history classes. And then this is available to everybody, it's only fifteen bucks a year, so it's cheap. It's fairly pithy, it's short and it's interesting because it's activist. So as I say, we got about a hundred thousand, more than a hundred thousand subscribers, and they're all activists. They call themselves Lowdowners. So there's anywhere I go in the country, any speech I give or whatever, they're there, they show up. Because they want to be involved in these issues and want to make a difference. So that's the type of newsletter it is. You can get it by going to JimHightower.com, and then also we've got the website of the Lowdown itself, which is HightowerLowdown.org.

RALPH NADER: You know, thank you, Jim, for telling the listeners how to get your newsletter. Like that issue you had on the first Labor Day, look how relevant it is today. Labor Day has now been turned into sales day. And then number of Labor Day parades has shrunken enormously, and even in a place like Detroit, major union town, there are only a few hundred in the parade. So when you look at the history of it and what is a day of protest, a day of turnout, a day of marching, a day of focus, a day of demand, you say well, if they did it in 1882, why can't we do it now, resurrect the whole spirit of Labor Day and stream some of these marches to even larger audiences? So that's the importance of history. I remember a couple years ago or more, you had a whole issue on the minimum wage. This was an issue that stagnated after 2008, despite Obama's pledge that he was going to raise it during the 2008 campaign. And then it didn't take more than the population of New Britain, Connecticut, in terms of marches and demos in front of Walmart and MacDonal'd's and Burger King, and some of the think tanks and some of our work and your work, to make it a national issue. It's a lot easier than we think to turn this country around. It never really takes more than one percent or less of engaged citizens on a major issue as majority support. That's the critical thing. If it has majority support, like a full Medicare for everybody and nobody out, and free choice of doctor and hospital, or restored minimum wage or cracking down on corporate crooks and not bailing out Wall Street, it takes less than one percent, wouldn't you think, Jim?

Isn't that the history of the United States? It's always taken less than one percent spearheading public opinion.

JIM HIGHTOWER: Yes. It's unreasonable people who speak out and take action, confront power, spread the word. And then lo and behold, people begin to get behind it, and as you say, people already are sympathetic to it. That happened with the minimum wage thing. The fight for fifteen. You know, that came from the lowest paid, the least educated, the most vulnerable workforce in our society, fast food workers, who dared to walk off the job for a lunch hour or any time during the day, hold a rally, and then come back. And the community stood with those workers. When they came back, a minister would go in with them, a local small business person would go in with them. A local labor leader, a politician would go in with them. So the corporation was confronted with, don't you dare fire these people for exercising their First Amendment rights.

RALPH NADER: And Jim, just to extend what you're saying, I remember we couldn't get Governor Cuomo to come out for a higher minimum wage in New York, which was stuck at \$7.25 federal. And now, look at the difference just because of what you described. He has now come out forcefully for a \$15 minimum wage for fast food workers.

JIM HIGHTOWER: I love that, yeah. It happens, and it's in Seattle, Los Angeles, all across the country. And a lot of these independent chains, fast food places, are saying of course, we can pay \$15 an hour. That's good. That means our people have got money in their pockets and they're going to spend it here or they're going to spend it here in our neighborhood and a real economy develops.

RALPH NADER: That's right. Before we conclude, let me get your take on the Democratic Party in Texas. It's been the minority party. It's dominated by corporatist Republicans in the state legislature and the governorship. Is there a resurgence coming in Texas by the Democratic Party, and how do you see it?

JIM HIGHTOWER: There is indeed a resurgence. And what happened in Texas was not that the Republicans were ascendant or that suddenly the people turned right wing. They quit voting. The people quit voting because my party, the Democratic Party, didn't stand up for them. It began to take those corporate checks and not talk about good jobs and good wages, not talk about the dirt farmers who were going broke and need public involvement, not talk about the healthcare for all, and etc. So you, if you don't stand up for people, then people aren't going to stand up for you. And that's what happened to the party. So we had, in the last congressional election, 2014, lowest voter turnout in America, 28 percent of eligible voters.

RALPH NADER: 28 percent?

JIM HIGHTOWER: Yeah. So that means these, Rick Perry, for example, you know, the guy who put the goober in gubernatorial, Rick Perry and all these right wing Republicans down here are getting elected with about 18 percent of the people of the state. And the pathetic thing is the Democrats have not been getting 19 percent. But now we're on the move by going out to, going back to classic organizing, back at the grassroots level. Yeah, you've got to have money for TV, but you don't have to have as much of it if you've actually got people on the ground who are doing the kind of democratic work that results in democracy.

RALPH NADER: Well, you know, the saying is if the American people are ready, willing and able, it's a lot easier for them to turn the country around and do it quickly than they ever thought possible. You got to be ready, willing and able to enter the civic and political arenas and you'll see that the preamble to the U.S. Constitution will continue to be "we the people" in reality, instead of what it is now, seemingly "we the corporations." Thank you very much, Jim Hightower, and his marvelous monthly newsletter, among other things, Hightower Lowdown. And I hope you subscribe to it and connect with other Lowdowners so that when push comes to shove, you're ready for a new type of justice and

opportunity in America and its more peaceful relations around the world. Thank you very much, Jim Hightower.

JIM HIGHTOWER: Great to be with you, Ralph, not only on this show but in the larger fight.

STEVE SKROVAN: We've been talking to Jim Hightower, America's number one populist. Go to JimHightower.com to sign up for the Lowdown, hear his radio commentaries and order his books. Now we're going to check in a moment here with Russell Mohkiber at the National Press Building. Russell?

RUSSELL MOHKIBER: From the National Press Building in Washington DC, this is your corporate crime reporter Morning Minute for Thursday, October 8, 2015. I'm Russell Mohkiber. According to a report in the New York Times, J. Michael Pearson has become a billionaire from his tactics as the head of the fast-growing Valiant Pharmaceuticals International. But consumers like Bruce Mannis, a 68-year-old retired carpenter from Grandville, Michigan, are facing the consequences. Mannis has been taking the same drug, Compramine, for 55 years to treat Wilson disease, an inherited disorder that can cause severe liver and nerve damage. This summer, Valiant more than quadrupled its price overnight. "My husband will die without the medicine," said his wife, Susan, who is now working a second part time job to help pay for the healthcare. "We just can't manage another two or three thousand dollars a month for pills." For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

STEVE SKROVAN: Russell does one of those every day, five days a week, and it seems like he never runs out of material. Thank you, Russell. Now Ralph, David has some new for us in terms of this show.

DAVID FELDMAN: We got word last week that there's a group of listeners in Portland, Oregon who are forming a meetup to discuss issues facing the country based on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. They are promising lively discussions, good snacks and wine, so if you are in the Portland area, why don't you Google the words, Meetup Ralph Nader Radio Hour and you'll find these people. And if there's anyone else around the country who is doing this or wants to create a listener meetup, we will do

whatever we can to promote your group. And you can submit questions to RalphNaderRadioHour.com, whether they are follow ups to past shows or fresh topics, and we'll do our best to have Ralph answer them on the air. We'd like to make this as interactive as possible, so thanks to Russell Shineberg in Portland for starting this meetup. What do you think of that, Ralph?

RALPH NADER: I think it's very encouraging, and once the conversation gets going, it'll eventually end up saying OK, what are we going to do here? How are we going to impact our members of Congress, our state legislature? So activism then becomes more contagious. So everything starts with conversation, and it's about time we had more serious conversation in an internet age of rather minor level text messaging.

STEVE SKROVAN: So we're going to move on now to our next guest, and our next guest was actually name-checked in our earlier segment with Jim Hightower. We are talking about the TPP. Lori Wallach is a returning guest on this show. She is the foremost expert in all of these global trade deals, the one who is pretty much ground zero from the beginning, all the way back into the 90's. Lori is the director of the Global Trade Watch from Public Citizen. Welcome back, Lori Wallach.

LORI WALLACH: Thank you so much.

RALPH NADER: Alright, Lori, we're going to present to our listeners exactly what is about to happen. The press reported that there is an agreement reached called the Trans Pacific Partnership with about a dozen Pacific Rim countries, including Canada, the U.S., Vietnam and others. We still haven't seen the full text, and don't hold your breath as far as how long it's going to take for the American people to see the full text of one of the greatest sovereignty shredding proposed agreements. Now you've been fighting NAFTA and World Trade Organization, you got the premier website, GlobalTradeWatch.org, for people who want clear, concise, what-to-do material on what it's all about. Can you give us a scenario of what we expect to see in the coming weeks and months as this agreement starts moving from the White House to Congress, which has to approve it?

LORI WALLACH: Well, the place to start is Ralph, where you just ended, which is folks, the stuff I'm going to talk about is downright scary. It's really a bad deal for all of us. But, it's only going to happen if Congress approves it. And that's where all of us, as citizen activists, can make sure we keep ourselves safe from this avoidable damage of the TPP. Congress is going to have to vote on it, and it's not going to happen until the beginning of next year. But the members of Congress are going to be making their decisions about what their positions will be soon. So they announced the deal, they haven't made the text public, they've been negotiating for seven years in secrecy. It's a negotiation that has some of the world's biggest human rights violators like Vietnam, like Malaysia, which everyone saw was in the news for the horrible human trafficking disasters, and these countries are now on with the deal, it's thirty chapters and they are keeping the text secret still. We suspect that maybe Congress will get to see the text in the next two or three weeks, but under the law, under the outrageous fast track law, they don't even have to make it public thirty days after they send it to Congress. And then sixty days after that they can sign it. Once the agreement is signed, which probably will happen in the beginning of 2016, because of that fast track mechanism it ends up like a legislative luge run. They can just try and railroad it right through Congress, and that's why all of us, between now and the end of this year, need to pin down every single one of our representatives. The biggest fight's going to be in the House.

And the overview of the deal is like this. It's everything bad that can happen with trade. More offshoring of American jobs, the incentives to offshore jobs that were in the NAFTA are in there, but worse. Downward pressure on our wages because it's going to throw American workers right in direct competition with workers in Vietnam. We're going to make less than sixty cents an hour. More income inequality. A bigger trade deficit, which slows down economic growth. All of that stuff is the trade part. It is bad news for jobs, for the economy. But the thing is, the dirty little secret, only six of this monster agreement's 30-hunking chapters have anything to do with trade. And Ralph, I hope you ask me what the other 24 have to do with, because it's like a trade agreement Trojan Horse of corporate impositions that

will make your food unsafe, your medicine too expensive, mess with your internet's freedom and let the banksters off their leash.

RALPH NADER: Well, you see, this is the biggest part of this so-called trade agreement is the displacement of our democratic institutions, which can be sidestepped by less developed countries who challenge our higher environmental, labor and consumer standards, calling them non-tariff trade barriers, violating this Trans Pacific Agreement. And this isn't decided in our courts. It isn't decided in our legislatures here. It isn't decided by executive branch. It's in secret tribunals, literally.

LORI WALLACH: Every country has to conform. It's domestic laws to all these retrograde rules literally in a so-called free trade agreement. They're new monopoly patent rights for the big pharmaceutical companies to jack up medicine prices and keep competition from generics and lower prices out of reach. There is a chapter in there that would ban buy local and buy America. That has nothing to do with trade. That's just like a corporate boondoggle. There is a chapter in there that would extend copyright monopolies and make textbooks more expensive, make the big publishers more profit. It could undermine our internet freedom. There is a chapter in there that could undermine financial regulation. All this stuff has nothing to do with trade. And then there is a chapter in there that sets up the international tribunals that could undermine our domestic laws. And that's the so-called investor state system where, thanks to TPP, if we don't all stop this, there would be nine thousand additional foreign corporations that are working in the U.S. that would have a new right to drag the U.S. government in front of some foreign tribunal of three private attorneys, not judges, private attorneys, who the next day could be suing government. And those three attorneys get to act as judges, and behind closed doors at these international tribunals, these guys are empowered by TPP to order us, the U.S. taxpayer, to compensate these foreign companies unlimited funds. Why? Because they don't want to meet our U.S. health or safety or land use or any other kind of law. Same laws our companies meet, those guys don't want them. They think it's a violation of their investor rights and it might undermine their future expected profits. And so help me God.

RALPH NADER: This agreement, Lori, Lori, let me interrupt you. This agreement has teeth. It has enforcement power. And tell us what the enforcement power is and talk about this decision overturning our country of origin label on meat products in your supermarkets.

LORI WALLACH: Well, number one, there's those tribunals I just talked about. And I was going to say, so help me God, they have corporations have as much power as a whole government. It's like being a country. It's not just corporate personhood, it's corporate statehood. Because it's basically elevating an individual foreign company to equal power to a whole nation state, to privately enforce a public treaty and raid our treasury just because they didn't like our laws. Outrageous new powers created by TPP if we don't stop it in Congress. But then the other thing, Ralph, is what you're talking about is, the way the enforcement works for all of these limits on imported food safety, like we're going to be flooded with shrimp from Vietnam that, I hate to say it, but is grown in ponds of poop. And then they throw antibiotics in because the poop makes the shrimp sick, and then you're eating poopy antibiotic shrimp. And we're not even allowed to keep that stuff out under this agreement, and if we would, and this is what you're getting at, we didn't challenge there's no legal trade barrier. And if we don't let that poopy shrimp in, make our kids sick, hell, kill people, then we have to pay trade sanctions. It's enforceable. Our actual limits on our democracy are enforced with sanctions. And if this sounds too far fetched, Ralph, what you're mentioning, there's a version of this at the World Trade Organization, and just two months ago the WTO, the World Trade Organization, said sorry, American consumers, you can't know where your meat and chicken comes from anymore. That law treats foreign and domestic meats the same. It just said, yeah, well, use that in the grocery store, the thing that says "product of" and it lists the country? Under the WTO we've been ordered to get rid of that. And if we don't, us taxpayers are going to face hundreds of millions of dollars in sanctions. So we can either know, we can have mystery meat or can have our treasury raided. And that is the future if we don't stop TPP.

RALPH NADER: Alright. Lori, well, listeners about at this point are saying, this is incredible. How could this happen? How could President Obama, who graduated from the same law school as you

did, Harvard Law School, be proposing this with enormous enthusiasm? What's in his mind, and why, secondly, aren't all these trade agreements deemed unconstitutional? Let's start with President Obama's mindset on this.

LORI WALLACH: Well, the first piece of business is there, I don't know if I should be heartbroken or infuriated, or maybe both. But he has taken this whole business on TPP hook, line and sinker. And another of our law school friends, also in law school at the same time, Mr. Michael Froman, he's the Chief Trade Ambassador. And he's a good friend of the President, and he's convinced the President. Every U.S. consumer group is against TPP. Every U.S. environmental group is against TPP. All the labor unions, all the human rights groups, all the church groups. Well, you know, the entire Democratic base that got Obama elected, they're all crazy, they're all wrong, they don't know what they're doing. And this is the part that gets darn infuriating, because he had been using the bully pulpit of the White House to push this. He's fighting harder for this, more than he did for healthcare, more than he did for the bailout, more than anything. And it is really disgusting. But, the thing that's great, Ralph, is there is this weird left/right coalition. I know you like that idea, the left/right coalition. And basically there are a lot of conservatives who don't want to see the end of Buy America or corporate tribunals in some foreign court throwing out U.S. laws. No one wants to see more jobs offshored or wages pushed down. You got a lot of progressive members who are saying, what the heck with the pharmaceuticals? It is constitutional if Congress approves it. It is stopped if Congress is not going to approve it. And so we are going to make sure that Congress doesn't approve it.

RALPH NADER: So your prediction is, when will this come to a vote next year, and what's your prediction? Right now, it's probably sort of split 50/50 or so in Congress. What's your prediction, and when do you think it's going to come to a vote? How much time do people have to go to your GlobalTradeWatch.org, get the brilliant materials, clear, accurate, action-oriented materials?

LORI WALLACH: And it's TradeWatch.org, we took the Global out. TradeWatch.org, so it's faster to type in. You get all the materials you need, or you can go to www.exposethepp.org, and you can get everything you need. We will have probably a vote in the beginning of the next year. But what everyone needs to know, this number, 202-225-3121, that's 202-225-3121, you ask for your member of the House of Representatives, you ask for the Chief of Staff. Even if you're not exactly sure who your House member is, you can just give them your address, they'll connect you. And we need to do that now. This is when they're making the decision.

RALPH NADER: We can win this. There's huge opposition left, right, in the country. It's just got to focus on those 535 men and women in Congress. Already about half of them are leaning with us. We can win this big and begin turning the whole tide against corporate globalization that's undermining our country and about everything we stand for. Thank you very much, Lori Wallach.

LORI WALLACH: Thank you.

STEVE SKROVAN: We've been talking to Lori Wallach from Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. Go to TradeWatch.org for more information, and call your representative at that number, 202-205-3121. That's 202-205-3121. We're going to take a short break, and when we come back we're going to get to your questions. Don't go away.

[music]

ANNOUNCER: From Pacifica, you're listening to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, www.nader.org.

[music]

STEVE SKROVAN: We're going to go to some listener questions. Our first question is from Dave O. Rama. He says, "Hi Ralph. Do you think that North American media has, over time, played a role in conditioning the public to accept the idea that institutionalized corruption is not only inevitable but also acceptable?"

RALPH NADER: Well, I don't want to generalize on North American media, because there's some good media like community radio and sometimes NPR, PBS, CBC Canada. But what they have done is not reported it sufficiently, and when they have reported it they haven't indicated what people can do about it. So that leaves people with the frustration when they see this corruption, say Pentagon contract corruption or with the drug companies are gouging incredible prices of patients, even though some of these drugs are developed with taxpayer money. They leave people discouraged. And that often leads to cynicism or apathy. That's my problem. So what we have to do is take the good programs that are often on 60 Minutes or CBC and tell them, tag it at the end of the program, tell us what we can do.

STEVE SKROVAN: Right, right. So it's not the reporting of it. For instance, we have Russell Mohkiber giving us something, you know, he's got something every day that he can put out there, at least five days a week. And it can get overwhelming, because you think well, boy, how can you stop this? Or yeah, this is just the way the game is played.

RALPH NADER: Well, it also, you see, there's far more exposes, even in the mainstream media, of corporate crime and fraud and abuse and raiding Medicare, etc., than we're doing about it as citizens. We always want more disclosure, more reporting. But we're not handling what is being presented to us so that we can call prosecuting attorneys and members of legislature saying you've got to have public hearing here, you've got to enforce the law here. It doesn't take that much to get these people moving, but it takes something.

STEVE SKROVAN: David, why don't you take the next question?

DAVID FELDMAN: Adam Adrian Crown writes, "The police have gone completely nuts and the prosecutors and courts are protecting them. What can we do to change that?"

RALPH NADER: Well again, that's a generalization, because in most instances day by day, the police bathe themselves. There are bad apples, and there are cover-ups of bad apples, but otherwise good police chiefs. So my proposal and many other reform groups are the following. There has to be a citizen

review board. You can't have the police regulate themselves when there is police brutality, excessive force, shootings, innocent people, who are not doing their job safekeeping the neighborhoods. They've been known in some instances to play hooky where they favor higher income neighborhoods and they don't patrol the poorer neighborhoods. Once you have a citizen review board, then you got to have it enforceable. And that's where the controversy is. The police don't want a civilian review board above them, and they don't want enforceability. They want to be able to have just a slap on the wrist or suspend the police officer with pay for five or six weeks. And that's the wrong signal. Good police have to drive out bad police, and a citizen review board helps do that. The other thing is if we have more community policing, we're going to have less police abuse. If the police live in the community, they know people, you know, the old image of Officer Clancy walking down the street and everybody talking to him and he knows the people's names and where their kids are going to school. We got to restore community policing.

STEVE SKROVAN: Dave Smeraglino, I'm sorry if I've mangled that, writes, "Should I believe Bernie Sanders doesn't take money from corporations? And if elected, do you believe he will continue the war on terror?"

RALPH NADER: The answer to the first question, he's set an all time record of small contributions, resulting in \$28 million so far that he's raised, and they're aiming for \$75 million. He has not, to my knowledge, gone to any of the Wall Street big fat cat fundraiser or any of these big fat cat fundraisers around the country. And in terms of his foreign and military policy, he's got to fill in the blanks. There are a lot of people who are wondering about him. He voted for every military authorization, though in the Senate he has not been particularly vociferous against what Obama has been doing and what George W. Bush before him has been doing over the country. And that's a question mark for Bernie Sanders, if he's going to really take on in the debates and on the campaign trail Hillary Clinton, who is a died in the wool militarist and corporatist. She overrode the Secretary of Defense opposition to toppling the Libyan ruler, Khadafy, and the disaster of that throughout Central Africa now, weapons, fighters,

chaos, deaths, injuries, explosions, that was Hillary's war. And she's never met a war she didn't like, never met a weapons system she didn't like. And that's what Bernie Sanders has got to go after.

STEVE SKROVAN: Now Carly Fiorina is rising as we speak in the Republican polls, and she's obviously a militarist based on what she said in the last debate. But she's also saying that we need a businessman or business person in the White House. What do you think of that?

RALPH NADER: Well, she was a disaster at Hewlett Packard. They fired her, it was unanimous on the Board of Directors. She made an acquisition of Compaq, big computer company that was on the way down, and that sunk a lot of Hewlett Packard's prospects and profits. The stock was down 55 percent. And then she has the nerve to say what America needs is someone who's experienced in business. I mean, this whole rise of Carly Fiorina is just a classic expression of what a circus the Republican presidential nomination is. Because what did she rise on? She rose on a couple of rhetorics about her looks and other things to Donald Trump. And she has this forceful, you know, presentation with some alleged facts, and the papers have gone over her fact sheets. She says things that are totally false, totally factually false, like the so-called video that has thrown Planned Parenthood to the wall, which is a doctored video. So that's the seamy, sordid state of American politics. And as an electorate, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves, regardless of our political persuasion, that we've allowed the deterioration to a level of rancid demeanors and rancid bad candidates driving out potentially good candidates. It's like Gresham's Law, bad money driving out good money. We've got all kinds of people whose names people don't know who have worked for decades prudently and smart, are equipped to take political office, but they don't have a chance in this kind of bizarre super-PAC dominated political circle, with the fate of the most powerful country in the world at stake. Come on. We got to start demanding, with higher expectations, what the candidates are putting before us. And we can do it one at a time, ten at a time, a million at a time. We just can't be spectators sitting back watching sports all the time, or fretting and wringing our wrists and being cynical and dropping out of democracy.

DAVID FELDMAN: Crystal Gohlich writes, “Hi Ralph. Here’s a crazy idea. You know how companies put obvious warnings on things like bags may cause suffocation. How about all weapons have to come with a warning on them saying all the ill effects it will cause when they’re used?”

RALPH NADER: Are you talking about weapons, did I hear you right?

DAVID FELDMAN: Well, she’s suggesting, for example, putting a warning label on guns, the same way we have warning labels on cigarettes.

RALPH NADER: Yes. Well, I would favor, for example, putting a label saying “Do not put this weapon in reach of a youngster or child,” which is another way of saying store it away. There have been thousands of deaths where a 7-year-old picks up a weapon in his or her home and shoots a little sister or little brother accidentally. So they certainly should come with a package of caveats and warnings.

DAVID FELDMAN: It’s impossible to sue a gun manufacturer in this country, right?

RALPH NADER: Yeah, just about. And that’s because they gun manufacturers and the NRA got a bill through Congress a few years ago because some plaintiffs’ lawyers were suing manufacturers for selling to known criminals or unscrupulous gun dealers, and they basically eliminated that remedy under tort law. So it’s almost impossible now because of an act of Congress to do that. So it’s just part of the growing immunity of corporates. They’re not just satisfied with limited liability or caps on damages, they want immunity. Which is another reason why we opened a few days ago the first law museum in America, the American Museum of Tort Law in Winsted, Connecticut.

DAVID FELDMAN: There’s no class action suit you could envision against gun manufacturers? There’s nothing you can do?

RALPH NADER: Not without repealing that law.

DAVID FELDMAN: Michael Farringer writes, “Ralph, why not a no junk mail list? Save trees, oil, landfill space and ID theft.”

RALPH NADER: Well, it depends on your definition of junk mail. If junk mail is just these advertising circulars, you might have a case. But my mother once wrote an article for the Post Office’s magazine saying she likes what is called junk mail from citizen groups asking her for money, because she gets caught up in what the environmental groups or the consumer, the labor, the civil liberties groups are doing. Because the letters are very well written usually and they’re very descriptive, and it was an education. And she said even though she didn’t contribute to every appeal, she contributed to some, it was an education. She refuses to call it junk mail.

DAVID FELDMAN: Does junk mail help the Post Office?

RALPH NADER: Yeah, that’s the argument for it. The third class commercial circulars, the advertising circulars are a major portion of the Post Office’s \$70 billion budget. So maybe we have to tolerate it and try to get more first class mail by learning the art of letter writing and teaching it to our children, which is what I try to do with my recent book, “Return to Sender: My Unanswered Letters to President Bush and President Obama.” It wasn’t just to inform people about what presidents, in my judgment, should be doing and saying and connecting with, but why not other people? I don’t think more than ten or fifteen percent of the American people have ever written, even when they were youngsters, a letter to their president.

STEVE SKROVAN: Well, thank you for your questions. Keep them coming. And I want to thank our guests today, Jim Hightower. Go to JimHightower.com and subscribe to the Hightower Lowdown, I do. And Lori Wallach, go to TradeWatch.org and let’s try to drive a stake into this TPP. For Ralph’s weekly blog, go to Nader.org. Remember to visit the country’s only law museum, the American Museum of Tort Law in Winsted, Connecticut. Go to TortMuseum.org. If you have missed any of this show on the radio, go to RalphNaderRadioHour.com or subscribe for free in iTunes or Stitcher. All of our shows are

archived there with valuable links to our guests and their work. Start a meetup group. Let's make this interactive. The producers of the Ralph Nader Radio Hour are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. On behalf of David Feldman, I'm Steve Skrovan. Talk to you next week, Ralph.

RALPH NADER: Thank you, thank you Steve, thank you David, thank you Jimmy, and let's rumble here. Let's get active as citizens. Talk to your neighbors, friends, spread the word about the program and all the active opportunities to reshape our country in terms of our own pretensions and ideals.

DAVID FELDMAN: From Pacifica, you've been listening to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, www.nader.org.

STEVE SKROVAN: Special thanks to John Richard, Matthew Marran.

DAVID FELDMAN: Our graphic designer is Jimmy Lee Wirt. Our editor is Jimmy Lee Wirt. Our board operator is Jimmy Lee Wirt.

STEVE SKROVAN: Oh, what the hell, let's make him our producer.

DAVID FELDMAN: Our producer is Jimmy Lee Wirt.

STEVE SKROVAN: And thanks to our executive producer, Alan Minsky.

DAVID FELDMAN: And most importantly, special thanks to Mr. Ralph Nader, www.nader.org.

STEVE SKROVAN: Our theme music, Stand Up Rise Up, is written and performed by Kemp Harris.

DAVID FELDMAN: If you're listening to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour as a podcast and would like to listen to it as a broadcast,

STEVE SKROVAN: call your local radio station and say I want the Ralph Nader Radio Hour.

DAVID FELDMAN: He's Steve Skrovan.

STEVE SKROVAN: I'm Steve Skrovan, he's David Feldman.

DAVID FELDMAN: Until next time.