

OPINION/PAGES

GUEST VIEW

Rephrase it *'Most favored nation'* is a trade misnomer

From *The Minneapolis Star Tribune*

If asked which countries enjoy the most favored tariff treatment from the United States, a majority of Americans would identify those that have been granted MFN status — "most favored nation" — by the U.S. Congress. They would be mistaken.

It's true that MFN countries (the designation includes all but a small handful) get a substantial break on exterminate tariffs required by the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930. But Canada, Mexico and Israel get much more beneficial treatment under free-trade agreements they have worked out with the United States.

Developing nations also enjoy a special trade status more beneficial than MFN. The Caribbean Basin Initiative and the Andean Trade Preferences Act treat countries in those regions to similar advantages. Most favored nations aren't most favored.

Nor does MFN actually describe the country whose trade relationship to the United States is being discussed. For example, if a decision is made to grant MFN status to China, it means simply that the United States will extend to China the best general tariff deal it extends to any other nation — the most favored one. As almost all countries have received that guarantee from the United States, the MFN designation allows normal trade relations, not special benefits.

But that's not what the term implies to many Americans, with unfortunate consequences. Regularly, U.S. trade policy is warped by the mistaken notion that MFN ensures some very special relationship.

Unschooling in the nuances of the MFN designation, members of the public — and some political leaders — resist what they think about unwarranted U.S. blessings for nations whose policies are antithetical to U.S. interests and values.

Getting rid of the misunderstanding that MFN generates would be simple if the problem were recognized as linguistic. The U.S. Senate did just that: It unanimously approved legislation co-sponsored by all 20 members of the Finance Committee that would substitute the phrase "normal trade relations" for "most favored nation." Seldom does such a small change, endorsed by so many across such a wide span of political philosophy, offer so much.

A prime mover behind the legislation, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., made the essential point: "Since the 18th century, American trade policy has been one of nondiscrimination; the vast majority of our trading partners receive treatment equal to all others. Not most-favored treatment, but normal treatment. And, hence, we proposed the term 'normal trade relations' in hopes that it will lessen the confusion when we discuss trade matters."

As Moynihan took pains to emphasize, the change in terminology does not affect American trade policy at all. It merely brings the language used to describe that policy in line with reality. The House can embrace common sense and encourage rational discourse by joining the Senate in this move to remove "most favored nation" from the country's trade lexicon.

MEHSLING'S VIEW



Sonia
HOLLIMON

Big city blitz

Relief's spelled N-E-B-R-A-S-K-A



"I'm certainly not ungrateful for my trip to Los Angeles, don't get me wrong.... But all that schmoozing and boozing will wear a body out."

Let the Muppets take Manhattan — I'll stay right where I am.

I just spent an all-expenses-paid week in sunny California, and it was everything TV said it would be. I got to ride around in limos with big network news people like ABC news anchor Carole Simpson and executives at the top of their fields — people who could get me a job. A real job. I stuffed myself with free daiquiris (virgin, of course, like a good Nebraska girl), shrimp cocktails, pate, crab puffs, stuffed mushrooms — a real finger food fantasy.

The servers at the banquets even put my napkin — linen, naturally — on my lap for me, and I never paid for a taxi because I quickly figured out that if I rode with an executive, their expense account would cover it. There were palm trees lining the streets, as well as homeless people lining the palm trees. There were even hors d'oeuvres and drinks on the chartered bus for our free trip to Disneyland.

So why wasn't I impressed? Perhaps it all started with the plane ride. I was stuck between some retired Air Force guy from Texas who wanted to give me a tour of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado from his window seat, and a woman from New York who had just been to Jean Louis David.

Needless to say, I was toast for two hours from Denver to L.A. International. She kept whispering "I wish he'd shut up! All this chatter is ruining the effects of my aromatherapy." Then she would

moan a little and rub her scalp — careful not to muss her hair, though. Captain America, on the other hand, kept trying to point out the Air Force Academy and Pike's Peak. From the plane. It was so very Brady.

Between the two of them, I was grateful for the safety talk and the blessed distraction of breakfast. Veggie special for her, charred flesh

on a biscuit for him. I opted for a fruit cup.

I'm certainly not ungrateful for my trip to Los Angeles, don't get me wrong — the shopping in the Fashion District was my ticket out of Christmas shopping at the mall this year, and I've never been one to turn down free food. But all that schmoozing and boozing will wear a body out. I used to want to be a lobbyist, but now, I know better. High heels everyday and (gasp!) makeup all the time. My mom threatened to disown me if I took my overalls. With the holidays so close, I figured it was better to lose the battle.

So after all the glamour and the glitz, I was surprised that I was so eager to come home. I didn't even tell anybody at the conference where I was from. Well, not after I told this one guy and he yelled, "Go Huskers!" for all to hear. Ah, the never-ending effect of the Big Red rash.

While I enjoyed lunch at the Rodeo Drive Cafe, and Beverly Hills was nice, I longed to come home and rake up a big pile of my neighbor's leaves and jump in them, or grab some fries from Runza and plan a trip to go out to the pumpkin patch to fight over who's gonna get the biggest pumpkin with my friends. Even though I made sure to get my name on the back of my Mickey Mouse ears, I guess it's true what they say — there is no place like Nebraska.

Hollimon is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

EDITOR
Doug Kouma

OPINION
EDITOR
Anne Hjermsman

EDITORIAL
BOARD
Doug Peters
Matt Waite
Paula Lavigne
Mitch Sherman
Anthony Nguyen

EDITORIAL POLICY

Unsigned editorials are the opinions of the Fall 1996 Daily Nebraskan. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, its employees, its student body or the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. A column is solely the opinion of its author. The Board of Regents serves as publisher of the Daily Nebraskan; policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. The UNL Publications Board, established by the regents, supervises the production of the newspaper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student employees.

LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor and guest columns, but does not guarantee their publication. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject any material submitted. Submitted material becomes the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Those who submit letters must identify themselves by name, year in school, major and/or group affiliation, if any. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448. E-mail: letters@unlinfo.unl.edu.

P.S. Write Back

Send letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588, or fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail <letters@unlinfo.unl.edu>. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.