

who was popular in Congress, might similarly be the man of the hour.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the European Union, some questioned whether the chief EU negotiator could actually go beyond the still-inadequate package on the table: Is the EU negotiating posture a charade, it was rhetorically asked? If not, what does Commissioner Mandelson have to do to get a change? In response, it was pointed out that, while the EU negotiating process is indeed cumbersome, the history of the Uruguay Round shows that movement is possible. The 1992 reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) engineered by Commissioner McSherry made the Uruguay Round agreement possible, as Roundtable participants were reminded. The McSherry plan, it was observed, arose as a result of international pressure placed on Europe during the Uruguay Round (Blair House being the key meeting that set up the EU move). Importantly, it was further argued, the farm situation in France, which has been the key stumbling block for CAP reform, is changing. Popular sympathy for the CAP had historically been based on the notion that it helped small farmers; in reality, the CAP funds flow mainly to large farmers (In fact, it was indicated, the Queen of England and the Prince of Monaco have been identified as major beneficiaries). This is becoming increasingly understood, which is causing a shift in public opinion. The European poor are the main losers from the CAP and consumer attitudes against high food prices are hardening. At the same time, French farmers are becoming aware that they can become competitive (including through greater use of genetically modified crops). The French support freer trade by a margin of 60-40, it was asserted, preferring the movement of goods to the movement of people. The EU debate is thus changing and chances of a breakthrough should not to be entirely written off. However, timing is uncertain: as is the case with tectonic plates, pressure builds up and then there are sudden shifts, the timing of which is hard to predict.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: These hopes were dashed shortly after the Roundtable when Ambassador Portman was appointed Director of the Office of Management and Budget in June 2006.