

NETWORK

NEWS

Post-NAFTA Reflections

"... the NAFTA process and outcome provides a significant loss as well as new opportunities."

The impact of the public debate about The North American Free Trade Agreement is undeniable. For the first time, many U.S. citizens have come face to face with the real consequences of manufacturing in Third World countries. No longer is there the perception that products somehow appear magically from an unknown location. The print and electronic media's coverage of the lives of maquiladora workers and the surrounding communities has become common knowledge. Environmental justice and labor groups worked against NAFTA in Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. We asked some leading activists to reflect on those efforts and the future after NAFTA. Here are a variety of perspectives:

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Diane Takvorian, Environmental Health Coalition, San Diego *The Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) is a grassroots toxics organization working for environmental justice through social change strategies.*

From an organizing perspective, the NAFTA process and outcome provides a significant loss as well as new opportunities. Social justice organizers working to gain protections for border residents and maquiladora workers lost an unique opportunity, with the passage of a seriously flawed NAFTA, to leverage provisions that would enable these protections. Had labor and environmental issues truly been on the negotiating table, great progress could have been made towards redressing current and future damage.

On the positive side, as a result of the NAFTA debate and increased attention to environmental issues, activists on both sides of the border have been strengthened. Those in Mexico, particularly, are working hard to hold their government accountable for the promises made during the NAFTA debate. One major strategy is the fight for the "Right to Know" in Mexico. As a cornerstone of U.S. environmental and toxics laws, grassroots activists are dedicating much of their work to advocating for comprehensive "Right to Know" programs that will provide chemical inventories, emissions and waste generation data.

While started long before NAFTA's proposal, bi-national coalitions of labor, environmental and social justice organizations were strengthened during the debate.

Our challenge is to maintain these coalitions to monitor NAFTA's effects and to provide unified rebuttal to calls for relaxation of worker and environmental protections.

The Tijuana colonia of Chilpancingo is a pastoral, residential community established many years ago amidst farms and ranches. It is managed by an association that oversees the development of infrastructure needs like water, sewer, and roads. Starting about ten years ago a new item was added to their weekly meeting agenda: contamination from the neighboring industries.

Chilpancingo sits directly in the watershed that flows from the Mesa de Otay Industrial Park. Just one hundred yards up a rugged arroyo, over five hundred companies, mostly maquiladoras, manufacture goods from televisions and furniture to plastics and computer chips. Some are Fortune 500 companies like Johnson & Johnson, American Cyanamid, Panasonic and Sanyo, while others are small and medium sized assembly and manufacturing plants.

These plants have made their presence and tremendous growth known in several significant ways to the residents of Colonia Chilpancingo. Employing hundreds of low and semi-skilled workers, the maquiladoras have provided a plentiful source of low-wage jobs. However, this benefit has had a high cost.

An estimated seventy percent of maquiladoras produce products that use toxic materials in their processing and generate hazardous waste. The improper and illegal disposal of those wastes has become the focus of much of the debate regarding environmental degradation in the border area.

Residents of Chilpancingo report streams of chemical-laced effluent running down from the mesa through the streets of their neighborhood. A 1990 analysis of the water, conducted by students at the Autonomous University of Baja California, found it had high levels of lead, chrome, copper, cadmium and zinc elements. Giant yellow splotches dot the canyons behind the industrial park where acids have been dumped near homes and livestock.

Residents are also concerned about unusual illnesses and health effects which they believe are linked to exposure to toxics. Rashes, respiratory ailments and six documented cases of anencephaly are among the maladies reported.

Colonia Chilpancingo is only one of many communities damaged by toxic pollution. In Colonia El Florido, an abandoned lead smelter has left residents with 31 million pounds of lead slag adjacent to a dairy and chicken farm. Also in Mexicali, ten thousand residents were recently evacuated when a cloud of hydrochloric acid erupted from a nearby chemical plant.

These conditions and a myriad of others led many grassroots environmental justice activists to oppose the passage of NAFTA, as presented to Congress in November 1993. While NAFTA and its global counterpart, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), clearly stand to benefit multinational corporations, many believe that they are not in the best interests of the people of the United States or Mexico, the environment, or the democratic process.

Effective public outreach by NAFTA opponents hammered at the major concerns which included: the possible challenge of U.S. laws as illegal trade barriers; the unwieldy and inadequate "environmental side agreement" regarding mandates for enforcement of regulations by each country; no recognition of process-based trade standards; the ineffective "labor side agreement" which fails to address the dramatic wage disparity between the U.S. and Mexico or definition of minimal labor rights and standards; and no significant resolution for the serious, life-threatening environmental pollution problems along the border.

For people of color in the United States, workers in both the U.S. and Mexico, and for residents in the border region, the passage of NAFTA means business as usual. They are not surprised that their interests are, once again, considered unimportant by their elected representatives. And, business as usual continues with the discovery of two major toxic waste dumps in and near residential areas of Baja, just two weeks after NAFTA's passage. The residents of these communities will see little assistance from NAFTA with the clean-up and, as importantly, no provisions in the agreement will effectively prevent illicit dumping of toxic waste in the future.

IMMIGRATION AND GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS

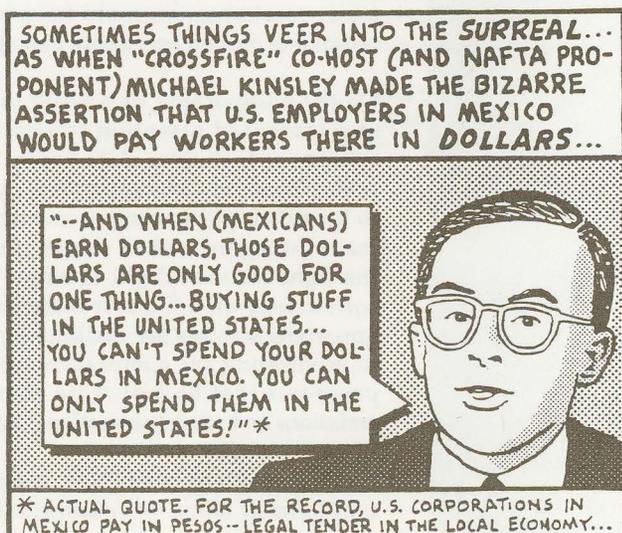
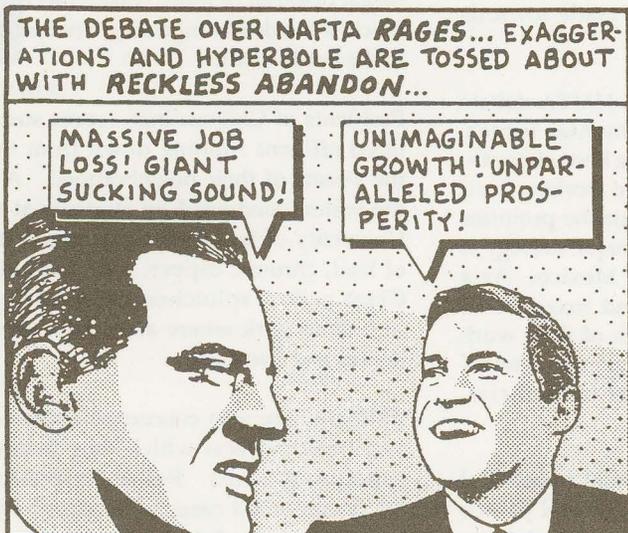
Reynaldo R. Guerrero, Center for Immigrants Rights, Inc., New York *The Center for Immigrants Rights, Inc. is an educational organization dedicated to furthering the rights of all immigrants. Guerrero is also a Trustee of the Boehm Foundation, which provides grants to organizations which advance democracy and human rights in the U.S., and peace and international human rights.*

NAFTA has recently formalized the internationalization of the economy. Over 15 years, the agreement will gradually lower tariffs and other trade barriers in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. It will affect all industries.

NAFTA will create the world's largest common market, extending from Canada to Mexico, comprised of 370 million people producing \$6 trillion worth of goods and services each year. As NAFTA provides the map for the restructuring of economic and social forces, the accountability of multinationals are being challenged by grassroots movements that have taken the lead in protecting the rights of working women and men.

NAFTA does not explicitly address illegal immigration or discuss the legal status of the permanent flow of migratory workers. Nonetheless, immigrant workers regardless of their legal status have become a key factor and have contributed much to the American economy and its restructuring. As immigrant workers face increased anti-immigrant sentiments, discrimination and workplace exploitation exacerbated by employer sanctions, grassroots movements of immigrant workers in major U.S. cities have emerged. In New York City, San Francisco and Los Angeles, immigrant workers associations have been organized to protect immigrant workers' rights.

While immigrant workers struggle for fair wages and safe working conditions, American workers strive to protect their jobs from being moved into less developed countries. The relocation of multinationals has resulted in the reduction of real wages, deindustrialization and an eradication of job security in the United States. Between 1990 and 1992, American



workers lost 1,351,000 manufacturing jobs. In response to the relocation of U.S. companies, networks are developing to counter the effects of economic restructuring.

Relocated U.S. manufacturing firms are now experiencing the cross-border organizing projects of various groups including American unions. The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers and the United Electrical Workers are working with independent Mexican unions to improve wages and working conditions of Mexican workers. Other organizing projects such as the American Friends Service Committee's Maquiladora Project support the organizing efforts of women maquiladora workers along the eastern end of the Mexico-Texas border to improve workplace conditions.

Thus far, economic restructuring has been largely determined by multinational corporations and financial institutions, with working women and men in all three countries bearing the burdens of this change. Unregulated economic restructuring has been particularly disastrous for rural and indigenous communities. Small farmers' and indigenous peoples' lands have been absorbed by large corporations and financial institutions because of the lack of access to credit and technology.

In Mexico, recent land and agrarian reforms have facilitated corporate investment and ownership. As a result, indigenous women and men in rural communities have been displaced. For example, Cholulans, one of the oldest indigenous communities in the Americas living in the state of Puebla, have already lost fertile land to the Mexican government.

A Mexican federal decree has expropriated more Cholulans' land. This primarily fertile agricultural land will be used to construct tract housing and small businesses. The Cholulans will lose the land surrounding their great pyramid which is larger than Egypt's Cheops pyramid and taller than the great pyramid of Tenochitlan. Such expropriations threaten the indigenous peoples' livelihood and undermines their culture as well. A grassroots movement of indigenous people has appeared to challenge this venture.

Supporters of NAFTA argue that free trade promotes democracy. However, in a competitive global economy, corporations are less willing to invest in localities where they must negotiate with workers over fair wages and safe working conditions. In the Mexican state of Oaxaca, for example, a grassroots movement of Zapotecas, an indigenous people, in the city of Juchitan formed a political group named Cocei. This party, comprised of a coalition of workers, peasants and students defeated the dominant political party in the local elections. It was successful in obtaining worker protection laws and improving living conditions in the municipality. Since then local administrators in Juchitan have had difficulty attracting investment as businesses have been averse to investment.

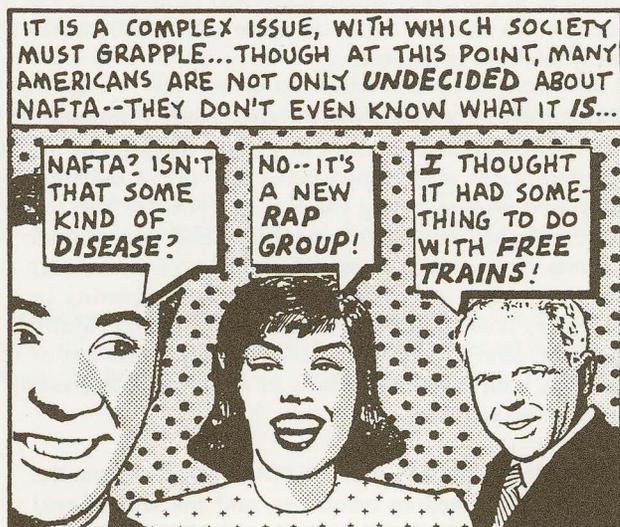
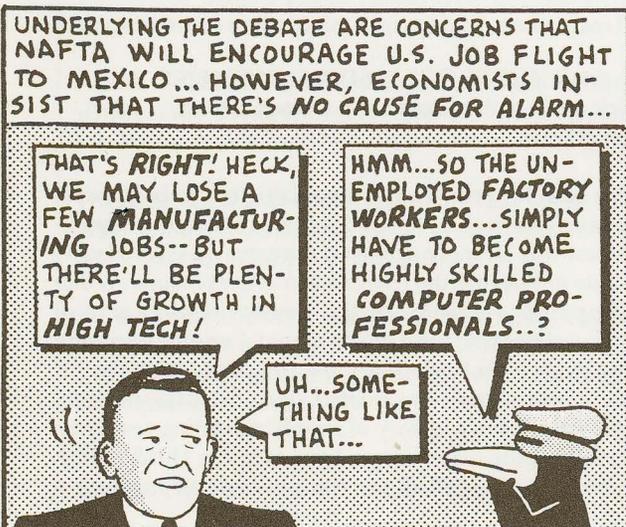
Democracy requires the accountability of multinationals as they have become the world's most powerful economic players affecting working peoples participation in shaping their future. Grassroots movements comprised of workers, religious and community organizations, unions in Mexico, Canada and the United States are arising to seek better health, safety, environmental and labor standards, and to counter this growing and inadequately monitored economic power.

LABOR

Susan Williams, Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network, Knoxville, TN *The Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network (TIRN), a community/labor/church coalition, works to keep and create decent jobs in Tennessee, respond to early signs of plant closings, and assist dislocated workers.*

Industrial jobs often provide reasonable wages and benefits to many Tennessee families, but in the last ten years, we have seen thousands of better-paying factory jobs move away. Many went to the maquiladora zone in Mexico for lower labor costs. At the 2,000 maquiladora factories with approximately 500,000 workers, wages are \$30-\$45 a week.

Left behind in Tennessee are workers who scramble to find jobs making even less. Often, they are unemployed for extended periods of time and end up with



lower paying jobs or several part-time jobs with no benefits. These people, struggling to survive, appear only in unemployment statistics or in articles about declining wage levels.

In 1991 nine women workers from TIRN went to the maquiladoras in Mexico to see the conditions there. We visited organizations, workers, and neighborhoods. We saw appalling living conditions and serious environmental problems, alongside large, modern factory facilities.

In preparation for this trip, we began to learn about NAFTA. We began to understand that what we saw in Mexico was an example of the kind of free trade NAFTA proposed — to allow corporations, banks and capitol the mobility to move around this hemisphere, looking for the lowest wages, the weakest environmental regulations, and the highest profits. It was an unfair trade scheme that took away the voices of workers and communities. For us, NAFTA became a larger issue than unemployment. It will affect our environment, our farmers, our sovereignty and democracy, and our relationships with neighboring countries.

Mark Your Calendars!

The 1994 Annual Conference will be held in Seattle, Washington October 27-30

As we learned about NAFTA, we made an effort to share our knowledge and information with the larger community — through mailings, newsletters, newspaper articles, and public events such as rallies and forums, and through a slide show of our trip to Mexico. We found a broad cross-section for people concerned and willing to work with us on this issue in Tennessee, including labor unions, religious representatives, community organizations, and environmental groups.

We brought people from Mexico and Canada to tell us their stories. From a Canadian we learned that since a 1989 Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and Canada, the Canadians had seen over 300,000 factory jobs move away and had seen their social standards threatened. From native Mexicans, we learned that the government was heavily interested in NAFTA and that it would pass despite concerns among many citizens there. With secret negotiations and the Fast Track process in Congress where there was limited time for debate, no changes could be made and NAFTA could only be voted up or down.

We joined forces with the Citizens Trade Campaign, an unprecedented network of groups throughout the United States who helped make the NAFTA debate a populist effort, raising the issue of NAFTA into the public light. This coalition coordinated educational efforts of diverse groups and served well to connect the grassroots efforts with what was happening in Ottawa, Washington, D.C. and Mexico City. Many groups, along with TIRN, asked for renegotiation of NAFTA, with input from a broader spectrum of interests in all three countries.

Our side very nearly won NAFTA's defeat, despite the limited time, scarce resources, and the lack of real debate. But in the last few weeks, we saw an amazing

display of corporate might go into a frenzy to win this vote, aligned with the Administration. The corporate pro-NAFTA group, called USA-NAFTA, spent millions of dollars on phone banks, on radio ads, on lobbying undecided Congresspeople. The government launched a massive public relations campaign, centered around the Perot-Gore debate (more like a squabble), and a message of "Hope, not Fear". And in the end, "yes" votes for NAFTA were bought not by the rightness of the issue, but by abject horsetrading — votes exchanged for tokens, such as a development bank, military cargo planes, and backing down on grazing fees and health-care tobacco taxes.

In fact, this was a vote around class, between the haves and the have-nots in all three countries. That is why in the U.S. there were groups from the right, groups from the middle and groups from the left against NAFTA — they all represented people who are being hurt by the economic decision-making in this country. The middle class, although not in control of the economy and steadily losing ground economically, became mightily confused about which side they should be on. Democrats did not want to oppose the first Democratic president in twelve years, although it was a Republican majority that won this vote.

This was an incredible issue and an incredible fight. It would behoove us all to examine the process closely, so that we can organize ourselves to deal with the new world order to represent our families and communities in broad alliances. Now underway is a new version of the global treaty called the General Treaty on Trade and Tariffs, or GATT — and the Uruguay Round of the GATT, completed in December, bears vast consequences for our world.

The Citizens Trade Campaign was a significant development that will continue. Trade agreements hopefully will now involve public discussion, as they should in a globalizing economy. The transnational nature of this network is especially encouraging. We felt bruised and burnt by this vote, but we take heart from the people's power that nearly won this important issue — and we take heart from the shirts worn by several TIRN members to their factories the day after the vote — "Don't ever give up".

... AND THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

Eric Mann, Labor/Community Strategy Center, Los Angeles

The plan for post-NAFTA organizing has to begin with an analysis of the pre-NAFTA fight. While our organization was strongly against the treaty, we were also — while not having the resources to actively work on that campaign — critical of the dominant discourse of many of the labor and environmental groups opposing the treaty. To begin with, the internationalization of the world market has existed since colonialism itself. U.S. firms have a history of simply extracting resources and dumping manufactured goods in the Third World, which has helped those companies and indirectly

Continued on page 9

Committee Report

The Philanthropic Reform Committee is off to an ambitious start. The first regional meeting of grantmakers and grantseekers was held in the Twin Cities on January 12, with 100 people in attendance. NNG collaborated with the Women and Foundations\Corporate Philanthropy — Minnesota Network, the Minnesota Council on Nonprofits, and the National Network of Women's Funds is co-sponsoring the morning-long dialogue around issues of accessibility, accountability, relations with grantees, and philanthropic reform generally. Ideas and questions drawn from the Evaluation Guide: What is Good Grantmaking for Social Justice? served as the basis for lively discussion.

The work of the Philanthropic Reform Committee revolves around assisting grantmakers in opening up their funding processes to grantseekers and helping progressive grantseekers gain equitable access. To carry out this purpose the Committee's focus this year will be in four important project areas: 1) Making the Evaluation Guide the standard in the grantmaking field by increasing its usage among funders; 2) Bringing together grantmakers and grantseekers in regional meetings such as the one held in the Twin Cities; 3) Developing a How-To Implementation Manual as a companion to the Evaluation Guide; and 4) Developing a Standard Application Process for NNG members and the wider philanthropic community.

Though the purpose of the committee remains the same, the overall structure has changed to efficiently

carry out these ambitious projects and to accommodate the time constraints of committee members. Each project area will constitute a subcommittee so the members' energies are primarily focused through a specific work group. Coordination between work groups is accomplished by a committee composed of representatives from each project along with this year's two co-chairs Carol Mollner (National Network of Women's Funds) and Ron White (Campaign for Human Development), as well as NNG's Executive Director, Terry Odendahl.

Contact Terry at the NNG office if you want to help promote the Evaluation Guide as a standard in the field. The Committee continues to urge every NNG member to use the Guide and give us feedback. Ron is looking for people to help organize regional meetings. Sarah Stranahan (Needmor Fund) is asking for assistance with the How-To manual. Christopher Mogil has an active committee working on a standard application process, which will be soliciting your ideas and suggestions in the near future. An advisory committee is being organized for members who have the time to read and evaluate material as well as give us advice, but lack the time for the ongoing effort of a regular work group.

The Philanthropic Reform Committee is at the heart of NNG's mission. We welcome all who wish to contribute their time, talents, connections or advice for work on any of our project areas. If you wish to help in any way please contact Ron or Carol.

1994 promises to be a busy and productive year for the Committee. Watch for further news as the year unfolds. ■

From the Co-Chairs

Dear NNG Members,

As we enter the new year, recent events have dramatically illustrated the inter-connectedness of our society and world. The peasant uprising in Chiapas, Mexico happened on the day the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect. The chilling legacy of the Cold War continues with the campaign to declassify records of our nuclear weapons complex and experiments.

Another phenomenon we are experiencing is a sense of *deja-vu*. We are only six years away from the turn of the century, 2000, yet we still witness practices that were prevalent one hundred years ago. Workers in the garment industry toil under inhuman circumstances and anti-immigrant hysteria is again being whipped up.

As the industrial revolution began over two hundred years ago, we are now in the midst of another incredible transformation which is the technological revolution. However, entire sectors of our society are being left behind in this sweeping change and the disparity between the have and have-nots is growing.

The sobering words which Suzanne Pharr spoke at the NNG conference still ring in our ears. "This century has witnessed two great social movements — the labor movement of the 30's, the civil rights movement of the 50's and 60's; and now the right-wing movement is unfolding in the 1990's."

We see these as challenges which make NNG's mission all the more relevant and urgent — to increase philanthropic support for progressive social change. The NNG board and staff takes this challenge to heart at a board retreat taking place as this newsletter goes to press and in the new NNG office in San Diego. We hope you join us in renewing our commitment to NNG and the communities it serves.

Miyoko Oshima

Larry Kressley

Changes in the Network

People

■ Bill Batson has left Teens as Community Resources in Boston. He is living in New York, considering his career options. He has resigned from the NNG Board. We will miss him and his contributions. Keep in touch Bill.

■ Mallika Dutt resigned from the Norman Foundation in New York to become Associate Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership in New Brunswick, NJ.

■ Ellen Friedman is now Vice President, Special Projects, of the Tides Foundation in San Francisco. Ellen chose to step back from departmental management responsibilities in order to have more time with her family.

■ Martha Gershun is leaving the Rockefeller Family Fund in mid-February. She can be reached at the ProChoice Resource Center (914) 381-3792. Her replacement has not been announced.

■ Anne Hallett has left the Wieboldt Foundation in Chicago, where she was Executive Director. She is moving on to head up the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. The Foundation is in the process of hiring a new Executive Director, but the deadline for applications has passed.

■ Lance Lindbloom has left the J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation in Chicago after serving as their President for over a decade. He is a Visiting Fellow at the International Human Rights Law Institute at DePaul University, College of Law. The Foundation will not be filling the position.

■ Jackie Schad is the new Director of the Grants Program at the Tides Foundation in San Francisco. Jackie joined the staff of Tides two years ago as a Program Officer, moving to the Bay Area from Chicago, where she served as the Executive Director of the Crossroads Fund for eleven years.



Larry Kressley and Ron White, Co-Convenors at last year's conference.

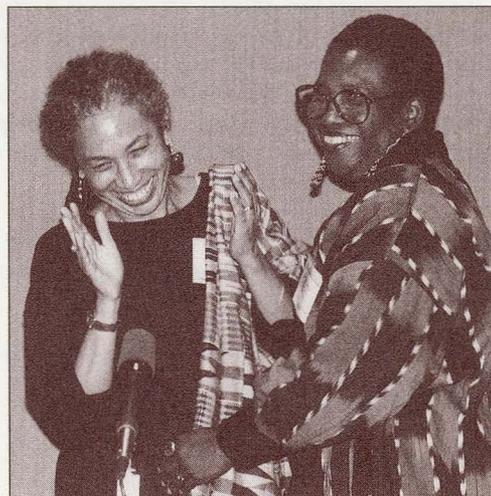
Photo by Jennifer Warburg

Jobs

■ The Ford Foundation has announced an opening for a program officer or assistant program officer in the Latin America and Caribbean programs in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Apply to Office of Human Resources, The Ford Foundation, 320 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017.

■ The Norman Foundation is searching for a new director. Address inquiries to 147 East 48th Street, New York, NY 10017, 212-230-9830.

■ The Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation has an opening for a program officer. The Foundation is seeking an informed generalist with a strong commitment to preserving the environment and sensitivity to issues of social justice and equity. The closing date is February 15, but particularly well-qualified applicants may still be considered. Send a letter, resume with salary history, names of three references and a writing sample to Stephen Viederman, President, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, 16 East 34th Street, New York, NY 10016.



Adisa Douglas, committee member and Byllye Avery, keynote speaker at the 1993 conference

Photo by Jennifer Warburg

1994 Annual Conference Committee

- Mirabai Bush, Seva Foundation
- Donna Chavis, Native Americans in Philanthropy
- Steven Cheifetz, Stewart R. Mott Charitable Trust
- Alice Ito, A Territory Resource (ATR)
- Alan McGregor, Sapelo Foundation
- Alan Rabinowitz, ATR and Pequod Fund of Tides Foundation (Co-Convenor)
- Tarso Ramos, McKenzie River Gathering
- Gregory Ratliff, MacArthur Foundation
- Gary Schwartz, Fund of the Four Directions
- Gail Small, Native Action
- Michael Warsh, CS Fund
- Ingrid Washinawatok, Fund of the Four Directions (Co-Convenor)

Immigration in Perspective

Mallika Dutt

This overview, drawn from my opening remarks during the Immigration Panel at NNG's 1993 Conference, frames an analysis intended to integrate immigration issues into a broader agenda, demonstrating the connections between immigration and other progressive concerns. The world is in serious chaos. The demise of the Soviet Union has resulted in a power vacuum and an outbreak of ethnic and nationalist wars. There is continuing conflict in many parts of Africa: like Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia and Kenya. There is turmoil in Asia, with China embarking on new economic paths and continuing political repression, as well as instability in Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka. Dramatic political changes have occurred in South Africa, Palestine and Israel. North America and Europe are experiencing economic decline. Latin and South America are gradually emerging from bloody years of military rule, and in the Caribbean, Haiti continues to simmer.

An international global economy has resulted in the growth of transnational corporations, pitted the wages of workers against one another, created environmental degradation with devastating consequences, and redefined the notion of state sovereignty. Recent agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade have further consolidated the power of transnationals. Multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have pushed structural adjustment policies which have balanced budgets and

facilitated foreign debt repayment on the backs of the most exploited groups in society. An underlying principle for the success of this global economy requires control of population mobility by borders, while capital is completely mobile.

A parallel trend to the globalization of the economy has been that of religious fundamentalism. From Christianity to Hinduism, Islam to Sikhism, the world has seen attacks on minority groups, women, gay and lesbian people along with a redefinition of family, state and nationalism which is repressive, but which can mobilize large numbers of people.

The result of these global and national trends is the massive dislocation of peoples around the world. People are moving in unprecedented numbers because of repression of a political or religious nature, because of drought and famine, because of civil war, because of poverty, or simply to seek a "better life" in another country.

The basic social structure of the United States is based on immigration — from the earliest genocide of Native Americans by Europeans. Today, immigrants continue to arrive by the thousands. U.S. foreign policy, both in its support of repressive governments and in its economic policies, is directly linked to the flow of immigrants. Haiti provides the best current example. Another example is the replacement of the Soviet Union as "bogeyman" by Islam.

At the best of times, recently arrived immigrant groups face oppression and exploitation. However, worsening economic conditions have resulted in increased scapegoating of immigrant groups. The changing



U.S. Border Patrol thwarting Mexican immigration.

demographic composition of the United States exacerbates the situation because European-Americans feel under siege. Racism allows certain groups to be more targeted than others. For example, the increasing perception that "hordes" of Latin Americans are coming into the country has made control of the Mexican border and tightening of asylum laws the present national obsession. That this obsession has dove-tailed with negotiations over NAFTA is no coincidence.

Other examples of anti-immigrant hysteria include the Zoe Baird fiasco. The outrage over her hiring of an undocumented woman reflected an explosive intersection of sexism and racism. Invisible in the discussion was the plight of undocumented domestic workers in this country, many of whom lost their jobs following Baird's removal from the Attorney General process. The blindness to the economic exploitation of undocumented and immigrant workers whose working conditions are worsening, provides the basis for increasing exploitation of all workers. This can be seen with the national rise in contingency work and decrease in wages.

The increase in Christian fundamentalism and the power of the Right has made immigrants an easy target. Racism has resulted in a collapse between legal and illegal immigrants and at its heart, the discussion is really about people of color. There has been large increase in hate crimes as a result. However, the framing of the issues and economic conditions allow the Right to use immigrants to further their agenda which ultimately hurts immigrant groups. The recent school curriculum battle in New York is a case in point. There, immigrant groups and people of color fought against a multicultural curriculum which also addressed lesbian and gay lives. When the curriculum was defeated, immigrant groups were left with a Pyrrhic victory.

The changing demographic composition combined with racism and the economy has also resulted in an increase in tensions amongst different ethnic groups. African-American people who are brought here in slavery have a different understanding of their history than the Koreans who came as a result of the Cold War. Older immigrant groups want to keep out newer ones to protect their jobs.

Unfortunately, what should be a national discussion about the kind of society we want to construct is further undermined by the media whose propensity to put out meaningless sound bites distorts reality. For example, although asylum applicants are a tiny percentage of immigrants to the United States, the media would have one believe that hundreds of asylum seekers arrive here

every day. Instead of pointing to the practices of corporate America and government policies as the real source of job loss, the media sends out the message that African Americans are in poverty because they are losing jobs to immigrants. A complex interplay of the interests of politicians at the local, state and federal level complicates the issue.

This background has been provided to demonstrate that immigrant communities and immigration issues are an integral part of all discussions about creating a just world. ■



Photo by Carmella Castrejon

NNG is Moving!

As of February 21st
our new address will be
1717 Kettner Blvd.
Suite 100
San Diego, CA
92101

*P.O. Box address will
remain the same and calls
will be forwarded*

Post-NAFTA Reflections

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many U.S. workers. The "running away" of U.S. transnational manufacturing to the Third World since the 1970s has angered many U.S. unions, which are now feigning a new-found internationalism. This is nothing more than blatant protectionism.

Similarly, the environmental organizations that have done little to focus on toxic dumping on the West Coast of Africa or in Mexico suddenly became pious about the absence of environmental standards in Mexico — as if the U.S. E.P.A. has done little more than rubber stamp existing levels of toxic emissions from U.S. multinationals. And finally, the condescending criticism by U.S. liberals and even progressives of the absence of democracy in Mexico as an effort to discredit NAFTA serves to deflect attention away from the growing structural undemocratic practices in our own country, as well as the active role U.S. multinationals and government play in propping up and even managing repressive governments from Mexico to El Salvador to Thailand.

While the flight of U.S. capital to Mexico is not to be simply uncritically endorsed, there are progressives in Mexico who welcome that foreign investment and see the new highly capitalized firms as targets for labor and environmental organizing, not just exploitation.

This chauvinism and protectionism did little to serve the building of the left, but instead, allowed the demagogic rightist Ross Perot to seize the issue as the protector of "American working people." Thus, the main defeat was not the passage of a regressive treaty, but the failure of progressives to take the leadership in an effective critique of the behavior and policies of U.S. based transnationals. It is in the context of this critique that post NAFTA strategy must be discussed.

We have to find colleagues in Mexico and Canada who are attempting to develop national policies that directly challenge the domination of multinationals and market-based social policy. Our organization is working to develop greater ties to the movement in Chiapas — a critique-in-action of a plan for post NAFTA policy — as well as activists in the labor movement who are willing to challenge the PRIs domination of the workplace.

I heard commentator Harley Shaiken observe that for the past year, when national spotlight was on Mexican labor conditions, the suppression of workers' strikes and protest in the Maquila zone was worse than ever and actual wages declined. One wonders if the AFL-CIO will give a damn about labor conditions in Mexico now that NAFTA has passed. Progressives have to develop a conscious strategy of working with Mexican labor organizations and pressuring U.S.-based multinationals for a workers' bill of rights in Mexico.

We are also working with groups in Ecuador in a common fight against the Texaco Corporation because of its policies of environmental degradation in both

Los Angeles and abroad. A lesson here is that "North America" should not be the sole focus of international work. Both GATT and "normal" U.S. trade and industrial policy must be attacked as it impacts Asia, Africa and the rest of the world.

Again, the collaboration between U.S., Canadian, and Mexican workers more than the specific program is essential, but environmental campaigns proposing the banning of toxic chemicals within all three countries would be an important start. Our organization is focusing on air pollution issues in Los Angeles, working with the Canadian Auto Workers to begin discussions about alternatives to the single passenger fossil-fuel driven auto and beginning to search out groups in Mexico City sharing our strategic objectives of changing both industrial and transportation processes.

Tragically, many of the unions critiquing Mexican environmental standards have been actively subverting those standards in the U.S., such as my former union, the UAW's, consistent opposition to even stringent fuel economy standards for gas guzzling automobiles. A labor strategy for the U.S. must involve a labor reform and labor insurgency component, to challenge the trade union bureaucracy that is too often suppressing both the simple trade union urges of rank and file workers, and those articulate and courageous dissidents, such as Jerry Tucker.

Finally, a post-NAFTA strategy has to find ways to develop popular movements against the flight of capital that are truly argued in terms of sustainable and regional economic development, with a particular emphasis on the needs of low income people of color in our major cities, not in a protectionist mode. Many of the "U.S. jobs" in our cities that are not running away, are low-wage jobs in service industries, retail sweatshops such as K-Mart and Walmart, hotels, restaurants, and industrial throwbacks to the 19th century labor conditions such as the garment, electronics, and furniture industries. For those workers, unionization and environmental standards would encourage their employers to run away from Third World cities such as Los Angeles and other Third World countries such as Mexico. The idea of developing popular movements for the taxation of corporations, high environmental standards, high minimum wages, the banning of permanent replacements and integrating that with campaigns against capital flight will be the cutting edge of reconstructing an international labor strategy in the post-NAFTA period.

The Labor/Community Strategy Center report, *Restructuring Los Angeles from the Bottom Up*, develops these ideas in far greater detail. (Reconstructing, \$10, is available from 3780 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90010, 213-387-2800.) ■

*This newsletter issue was prepared by NNG's
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Jill Pittsford is our designer.*

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