

NAFTATHOUGHTS

A Newsletter on the North American Free Trade Agreement

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NAFTA SUPPORTERS AND CRITICS JOCKEY FOR POSITION IN ANTICIPATION OF NEGOTIATED PACKAGE

The debate has already begun on the NAFTA "package," which will include the supplemental agreements on labor and environmental issues, as well as import surges, even though negotiations on those accords continue. The New York Times reports that, under pressure from the Clinton Administration, Congressional leaders are "toning down" their criticisms of NAFTA. This pressure followed a statement by Budget Director Leon Panetta on 26 April that NAFTA is "dead for the time being."

House majority leader Richard Gephardt has urged Democrats to avoid taking a position on NAFTA until after the supplemental agreements are completed. He stated that NAFTA could gain Congressional approval if those accords have "real teeth." Republicans, on the other hand, caution that the Administration could lose their support if the side agreements go too far. The Clinton Administration hopes to have the supplemental agreements completed by July so that it can introduce the package to Congress in August. Under fast-track procedures, Congress would then have 90 legislative days to vote yes or no on the implementing legislation.

Not all Members share Rep. Gephardt's desire for patience. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), just back from a trip to Mexico (see article, p. 8), said, "I don't think this is the time for us to let the debate wallow, it's time for us to sharpen the debate." Rep. Sherrod Brown, also from Ohio, agreed, asserting that "now is the time to really scuttle the agreement." A recent Gallup poll shows that the U.S. public supports Kaptur and Brown's view. That survey, conducted in March, found that 63 percent of Americans oppose NAFTA, up from 57 percent in September 1992.

These statements come in the wake of a split in the environmental movement. On 4 May, seven U.S. environmental groups (Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund) sent a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor defining "those provisions which if included in the supplemental agreements would secure the support of all of our organizations for the NAFTA."

These provisions include: the establishment of a North American Commission on the Environment (NACE) with "meaningful responsibility and the resources to undertake its role," including the "ability to discuss, evaluate, and report on important environmental and conservation issues;" authorizing the NACE to hold public hearings on enforcement of national environmental laws and to turn cases over to NAFTA dispute-resolution panels, with the possible subsequent imposition of trade sanctions; the establishment of a "dedicated source of funding for NACE, border infrastructure and cleanup, and conservation programs;" a provision for "meaningful public participation in the environmental aspects of the NAFTA, including the NACE;" and clarification of certain ambiguities in the NAFTA text, particularly those related to technical standards. The letter concludes that a NAFTA with these provisions "would lead to significantly better protection of the environment than would result if the NAFTA were defeated."

Meanwhile, some 80 Canadian environmental groups signed onto a letter expressing a very different position, stating that they "are very

(Continued on page 2)

NEGOTIATED PACKAGE (Continued from page 1)

concerned that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) will have devastating impacts on our environment. NAFTA repeats the environmental mistakes of the FTA by accepting the growth led development model which is accelerating our planet's demise." The groups state that they do not believe these negative impacts can be fixed by the supplemental agreements, which they believe will not include a legally binding enforcement mechanism. In the United States, Cam Duncan of Greenpeace commented, "By attempting to narrow negotiations to border and enforcement issues, the administration is getting lost in the symptoms of unsustainable development rather than dealing with its causes."

Other U.S. environmental groups, while praising the conditions set forth in the 4 May letter, suggested that they were insufficient. John Audley of the Sierra Club insisted that industries must be held accountable for their actions, stating that "NAFTA signatories must embrace the Polluter Pays Principle as a means of securing funds for environmental cleanup." In a separate letter to Ambassador Kantor, Jane Perkins, President of Friends of the Earth (FoE), insisted that the supplemental agreements include provisions to clarify and enforce re-export requirements for hazardous waste and echoed Greenpeace's demand that the supplemental accords address natural-resource conservation issues. She also insisted that trade-related enforcement of labor standards be included in the NAFTA package. Perkins added that FoE would withhold its judgement on the final NAFTA package until the supplemental agreements are complete, "at which time we will either support or oppose the agreement, based on its content and breadth." •

Sources: "Trade-Pact Opposition Eases a Bit," *New York Times*, 11 May 1993; "Free Trade Pact Wins Wide Range of Support," *New York Times*, 30 April 1993; "Free Trade With Mexico," *National Journal*, 1 May 1993 (in *TRADE.NEWS*); 4 May 1993 letter to Ambassador Mickey Kantor from seven environmental organizations; 5 May 1993 letter to The Hon. Michael Wilson from 80 Canadian environmental organizations; "Clinton Stonewalls on NAFTA's Natural Resource Impacts," *Greenpeace*, 4 May 1993; "Sierra Club Reiterates NAFTA Position, Calls for Greater Environmental Protection in Trade Agreement," *Sierra Club Press Release*, 4 May 1993; 4 May 1993 letter to Ambassador Kantor from Jane Perkins, FoE.

MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE OPPOSES PREEMPTION UNDER NAFTA

by Larry Weiss, Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition

On 6 May, the Minnesota Senate passed, by a 41-18 margin, a resolution expressing concern that many state laws (including those related to workplace health and safety, agricultural standards and support, environmental standards and business development and assistance) could be preempted under NAFTA. The resolution instructs Minnesota's U.S. Congressional delegation to oppose NAFTA if those troublesome elements of the Agreement are not removed by the time it reaches Congress. The resolution will be voted on in the Minnesota House of Representatives later in May and is expected to pass there, as well.

The Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition approached Bill Luther, Assistant Majority Leader in the Senate, in January to request that he commission research into the preemption problems in NAFTA regarding Minnesota laws. He readily agreed, as did Rep. Pat Beard, who ordered House staff to conduct similar research. The result was a series of brief reports detailing how various types of Minnesota laws would be vulnerable to challenges under NAFTA. Luther and Beard then wrote the resolution with the support of the Coalition, which along with the Minnesota AFL-CIO donated lobbyists' time and generated grassroots phone calls in support of it. •

NAFTATHOUGHTS

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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MEXICAN STORY: AN INTERVIEW WITH CARLOS HEREDIA

Carlos Heredia, Director of International Programs for Equipo PUEBLO, a Mexican NGO, is working with The Development GAP in Washington, DC through April 1994. Formerly an economist with the Ministry of Finance, Carlos will be spending much of the next year working on the issues of NAFTA and democratization in Mexico. Karen Hansen-Kuhn spoke with him recently about his work on these and related matters.

KHK: Why have you come to Washington? What do you hope to achieve here?

CH: Through an agreement with The Development GAP, Equipo PUEBLO decided to send me up to the United States because we believe that, as a part of the corporate globalization process, we're moving towards a trinational body that will rule over trade and investment in North America. So we believe that NGOs and citizens' movements also have to change their composition and the way they structure their work and increasingly work with partners in other countries. In the same fashion that I'm coming up here, we expect to have people from the United States and Canada going down to Mexico to join us in our work down there.

Another reason is that an increasing number of decisions that affect Mexico are being taken in Washington by the U.S. Administration and by multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank and IMF. So we want to have a foothold here, a presence by which citizens' organizations in Mexico can have a say and can disseminate our points of view. And also because in this partnership with The Development GAP we have a common agenda in terms of trade and development and fighting adjustment and the conditionality that comes with it, reinforcing the links of citizens' movements in our two countries, and trying to put together a proposal for a different strategy of economic development.

KHK: I've heard you describe your work as "citizens' diplomacy." What do you mean by that?

CH: For us it means mainly to engage in a process of dialogue with our colleagues outside of Mexico. We believe that governments are becoming increasingly alienated from their own peoples. We want to engage in this process of communication in which we can have workers of the same corporations in different countries communicating directly and sharing ideas on what their situation is, what kind of problems they're facing, how they're trying to solve them. So it would be an approach that implies people-to-people communications. Also, Mexican organizations must go outside of the country and speak about the current situation in Mexico, which is not well understood because there has been an enormous public relations campaign by the Salinas Administration to sell the idea that we are living another success story in Mexico, which is far from being true. We are also thinking about getting our points of view across through our colleagues in the North, especially those in the United States, who can work with us in having access to the U.S. Congress, to the U.S. Administration and to the multilateral organizations. Since governments have a foreign policy and banks and big corporations have their lobbying offices to influence the policymaking process, we also want to do that, but mainly through our partners from the progressive movement in the North.

KHK: What have you been doing on the issue of NAFTA?

CH: Equipo PUEBLO has played a major role in organizing around NAFTA. We were one of the founding members of the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC). We have done three different kinds of work through the RMALC: organizing and popular education with grassroots organizations and NGOs; putting political pressure on our government and maintaining open lines of communication with top officers at the Ministry of Commerce; and, finally, networking with sister coalitions in the United States and Canada, which has led to an unprecedented level of communication and exchanges among our three countries.

(Continued on next page)

KHK: What organizations do you work with in Mexico?

CH: Equipo PUEBLO works with a number of popular organizations, including the Democratic Peasant Front in Chihuahua, the Coordination of Peasant Groups in Morelos, and with the national coalitions of the urban popular movement. Aside from our work in the RMALC, we have also been working with the Convergence of Civil Organizations for Democracy and the Citizens' Movement for Democracy (MCD), a coalition of pro-democracy groups. At the international level, we work with several Latin American NGOs, such as IBASE in Brazil, CRIES in Nicaragua, and DESCO in Peru, and we have a three-year old partnership with The Development GAP.

KHK: What are the goals of "pro-democracy movement" in Mexico?

CH: They are two-fold. First, to completely overhaul the electoral system in Mexico, because, since Mexico is not a democracy, we just don't have clean, fair elections. The pro-democracy movement, including the Convergence, the National Accord for Democracy, and the MCD, have all advocated five points for a complete reform of the electoral system. These are: first, that elections be organized and voting lists be compiled by an independent body, not by the government; second, that all parties have equal access to the media, or at least that they have access in proportion to their size or number of votes and that the media not be completely biased, as it is now, in favor of the official party; third, that the electoral laws be completely rewritten to incorporate citizen involvement in the organization, oversight and observation of elections; fourth, we want to have an independent tribunal or court to which to take our pleas, because right now there's not an independent judiciary in Mexico, and even if there were, according to the Constitution, it could not do anything about political affairs; and fifth, we would also like to see changes in terms of campaign financing, in order to stop the practice of unlimited funding to the PRI from the government.

The other aspect of the pro-democracy movement is to democratize everyday life, and this implies fighting for democracy in the unions, in the ejidos, in

the school boards, everywhere, because we believe that even if we have clean elections, we still have a lot to do in terms of democratizing the representative bodies with which people are in touch in their daily lives.

KHK: How does the issue of democracy relate to NAFTA, or does it?

CH: I believe there is a strong relationship, although there are differing opinions on that within the pro-democracy movement. The two are intimately linked because, first, the economic model that has been imposed on the Mexican people in the last ten years relies on an authoritarian regime being in place. There are no checks and balances in the system, and the power of the president is unlimited. So the whole economic model is an imposition on the Mexican people, who are bearing the costs of structural adjustment and of foreign debt.

Second, the whole process of negotiation of NAFTA was completely led by one person, the President, without open public debate, without any kind of outside consultation. This means only talking to those who belong to the PRI and who belong in the corporatist system.

Third, I also believe that the alienation of government vis-à-vis the people has brought a situation in which the people have to go through their representatives in Congress, which in the case of Mexico is completely useless because the legislative branch of power just does not have any clout. It does not represent the people, it represents the president, who has appointed all of its PRI-affiliated members, who hold a two-thirds majority. So NAFTA in Mexico depends on the will of one person. There's no process of ratification, it's only formal ratification that doesn't involve public scrutiny. Finally, I think that the current conditionality that was imposed by the World Bank and the commercial banks in agreement with the local giants of Mexican business is extremely undemocratic, and it favors a steep concentration of wealth and income. And we all know that democracy cannot really flourish in poverty and misery. •

TRI-NATIONAL BRIEFING AND MEETINGS HELD IN WASHINGTON

The Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART) and Citizen Trade Campaign (CTC) sponsored a series of meetings on NAFTA from 25-27 March in Washington, DC. Participants came from around the U.S. and from Mexico and Canada to inform Congress, plan organizing strategies and discuss alternatives to NAFTA.

The events began with an all-day briefing on NAFTA for Members of Congress which was introduced by Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH). Panelists from the three signatory nations spoke about the various problems in the agreement and the devastating impact it could have on many sectors.

On 26 and 27 March two meetings were held concurrently: CTC convened a meeting of U.S. organizers; and ART hosted a trilateral meeting. The focus of the trilateral meeting, which included representatives of ART, CTC, the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC), the Action Canada Network and the Quebec Coalition on Trilateral Negotiations, was to discuss the elements of an alternative approach to continental trade and development. Participants broke into discussion groups on labor, environment, agriculture, and human rights and migrant workers. The RMALC was ahead of its Canadian and U.S. counterparts in that its members had already prepared proposals in each of the four areas.

Each discussion group later reported on areas of agreement and disagreement, and which topics required further discussion. The meeting then asked John Cavanagh of the Institute for Policy Studies to draft a document summarizing the areas of consensus on alternative continental trade and development strategies. The first draft of this document was later distributed to citizens' groups in the three countries for their comments and changes.

The trilateral meeting also included panel discussions on two areas on which the networks had not focused before: development funds and public-sector issues. On the development bank panel, Nikos Valence of the U.S. Fair Trade Campaign discussed the need to enforce the Community Reinvestment Act, which requires banks to make loans in the communities from which they receive deposits. He stressed the importance of developing democratic regional institutions that are accountable to local groups.

Ken Traynor of Common Frontiers (Canada) emphasized the need to view development-bank proposals in their political context, i.e., their role in supporting the passage of NAFTA. If we are serious about funding to eliminate regional disparities in development, he said, we must deal with capital flight and commercial-debt relief. Funds for border clean-up are necessary, he added, but the corporations producing the pollution should supply the money rather than further burdening taxpayers.

Ignacio Peon of the Mexican Pacto de Grupos Ecologistas discussed the need for funding for agriculture, job retraining and environmental cleanup in Mexico. He stressed the importance of the involvement of citizens' groups in the management and evaluation of these funds. He said that any development or compensatory funds must include both national and international monies, that they must take into account regional, not just national, poverty levels, and that they must promote conservation of natural resources and sustainable development.

Carlos Marentes of the Rural Coalition, a group that works with people on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, commented that current development-bank proposals seem to be directed to the border area and particular institutions, but that no one is asking the people living in those areas what they really want. There is underdevelopment at the border, he said, not because of the lack of funds, but because of low and falling wages and workers' inability to organize.

The participants did agree, however, on the need to develop some type of redistributive mechanism to reduce the inequalities among regions and countries in North America. A working group was established to continue discussions on this complex issue.

The March meetings were the latest in a series of trilateral deliberations by citizens' groups on NAFTA. This process has led to increased understanding among participants of common goals, as well as viewpoints particular to each country. Another meeting is planned to follow the release of the NAFTA "package", which will include the supplemental agreements now under negotiation. •

Copies of the Mexican alternative proposals are available from The Development GAP. Contact John Cavanagh at the Institute for Policy Studies, (202) 234-9382 (phone), (202) 387-7915 (fax), to review the trilateral alternatives draft. Comments are required by 28 May.

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A National Coalition for Just and Sustainable Trade Policies

The Clinton Administration has acknowledged that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is flawed in several areas. It proposes to resolve certain labor and environmental problems in NAFTA through the negotiation of supplemental agreements. While we recognize the problems NAFTA would create in those areas, there are many other problematic aspects of the agreement that need to be addressed. This paper is the first in a series of issues briefs on the other questionable features of NAFTA not being addressed by the supplemental talks.

NAFTA AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Under NAFTA, when any member country determines that another country's practices put it at a competitive disadvantage, it can challenge those practices in NAFTA's dispute resolution system. Many social programs, labor laws, consumer product safety and environmental laws and programs could be subject to challenge as unfair barriers or subsidies to trade. However, violations of these laws are not themselves subject to challenge on the same grounds. Further, the process for handling these challenges is riddled with problems.

1. NAFTA establishes three differential levels of dispute resolution:

* **Strict and detailed enforcement rules in the Chapter on Intellectual Property.** Article 1718 establishes swift, rigorous mechanisms to inspect and confiscate at the border articles suspected of being produced in violation of intellectual property rights. They also provide for compensation to the property right holder once a determination of violation is made.

* **Mid-level enforcement rules for anti-dumping cases (Chapter 19).** "Dumping" means selling goods abroad at prices below production costs in order to drive competition out of the market. Under NAFTA, "the Parties shall replace judicial review of final anti-dumping and countervailing duty determinations with binational panel review."

* **Rules for all other disputes over interpretations of the agreement (Chapter 20).** This chapter outlines relatively complex complaint, response, consultation, mediation and arbitration procedures under a trilateral, cabinet-level "Free Trade Commission."

2. Each of these mechanisms uses a secretive, undemocratic dispute resolution process:

* **The "Parties" in these cases are only federal governments.** States, local governments, companies, unions and environmental and human-rights organizations cannot participate in dispute-resolution cases.

* **Dispute-resolution panels will be made up of persons with expertise in trade law and commercial affairs. NAFTA does not require that panelists have expertise in labor, environmental or other social concerns.**

* **While NAFTA does permit dispute-resolution panels to turn to advice from outside experts, including scientific experts, it provides no guarantee that experts will have access to the proceedings, or that persons directly involved can present testimony or expert witnesses.**

* Dispute-resolution proceedings are confidential, and much of the evidence presented is secret. While the decisions are published, there is no reporting of the proceedings leading to those decisions.

3. Product-related disputes have standing denied to process issues. Problems such as the production of goods in an environmentally harmful way or in a manner that violates labor rights, are not grounds for challenge as unfair trade practice under NAFTA, despite their effect in externalizing costs and distorting trade.

4. The US-Canada Free Trade Agreement has already demonstrated the problem with this type of dispute-resolution process:

* The U.S. successfully challenged a Canadian fisheries program that promoted conservation of herring and salmon because the data-collection requirements were deemed to be trade-restricting.

A more equitable and just dispute resolution process would include the following:

1. Those seeking resolution of unfair trade practices should be able to do so in the best arena in which to effectively assert their claims and seek remedies. For example, Mexican workers alleging violations of NAFTA standards by a U.S. multinational corporation operating in Mexico should be able to pursue their claims either through Mexican or U.S. agencies or courts or directly through NAFTA dispute-resolution mechanisms.

2. The trade agreement's dispute-resolution procedures and mechanisms should be democratically designed to encourage an upward harmonization of standards.

3. Proceedings should be open to the public, except when specific proprietary information is being disclosed.

4. Interested parties, including workers, environmental groups and human rights organizations should be given standing to bring cases before dispute-resolution panels.

5. Dispute-resolution panels should include persons with expertise in a variety of areas, including labor law, the environment, agriculture and product safety.

6. Labor rights and environmental and other social concerns should have the same legitimacy as intellectual property rights as bases for unfair trade practice challenges and sanctions.

This brief was produced in consultation with the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade and Common Frontiers (Canada).

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WOMEN MEMBERS OF CONGRESS REPORT ON FACT-FINDING TRIP TO MEXICO

From 29 April to 4 May, Reps. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Helen Delich Bentley (R-MD), Cardiss Collins (D-IL), Leslie L. Byrne (D-VA), Eva M. Clayton (D-NC), Pat Danner (D-MO), Karan English (D-AZ) and Nydia M. Velazquez (D-NY) travelled through Mexico to examine the "human face of trade". The following is an excerpt from the Members' public statement on their trip, issued on 5 May.

"...The delegation began its journey in Mexico City by first meeting with Minister of Commerce Jaime Serra Puche. The delegation also met with a broad array of environmental, human rights, religious and labor organizations comprised of ordinary citizens in both Mexico City and on the border.

While in Mexico City, our delegation conducted the first-ever binational meeting of women legislators from all political parties from both the U.S. and Mexico. This event occurred at the home of U.S. Ambassador to Mexico John Negroponte.

The delegation visited barrios in Mexico City and colonias on the border in Matamoros and Reynosa, and spoke at length with the people who live under appalling conditions. The delegation discussed border-area issues with residents, maquiladora workers, local government officials, industry leaders, and Governor Ann Richards of Texas, who made special efforts to fly down to Mexico and join our group for an evening of discussion about the proposed NAFTA agreement.

Our delegation returned from our mission to Mexico with these major findings. First, it is absolutely necessary that the United States and Mexico take the time necessary to shape a continental agreement that encompasses the full range of economic, social and political issues attendant to such an investigation. The dislocation already created in the U.S., Mexico and Canada by unregulated trade confirm the dangers of continuing a "hands-off" approach to trade that does not address these broader issues. This is especially true where wage disparities and living conditions are as divergent as the U.S. and Mexico.

The majority of our meetings were with Mexican women, who have been the most affected by trade policy. Mexico's rising unemployment rate and falling real wages have severely jeopardized the ability of millions of Mexicans to feed and house their families.

High-wage manufacturing jobs have been drained from communities across the U.S. to low-wage maquiladoras operating in Mexico. We visited many of these runaway plants along the border. But in Mexico, these jobs have not resulted in rising standards of living for maquiladora workers but have resulted in a double tragedy because of the subsistence wages workers are paid here.

El Pacto, the wage agreement between the leaders of government, industry, and its official unions has held wages to one-tenth U.S. levels -- at the same time as maquila productivity in many firms has risen to U.S. levels. In fact, workers in Mexico have seen their real wages decline over the last decade. We met apparel workers in Mexico City who earn 40 cents an hour. We visited people in Mexico City's neighborhoods who asked us to help them in their efforts to gain "The Right to Food" as a part of Mexico's constitution because so many of their friends were hungry.

Further, it became clear to us that U.S. companies operating in Mexico along with Mexico's own domestic firms, have enjoyed the additional advantages of extremely lax enforcement of environmental and labor regulations. For anyone with a conscience, it is disturbing to view the conditions under which the majority of Mexico's people lives.

Our delegation would like to highlight these specific findings:

- Access for Mexicans, including all of its elected representatives, to information on the ongoing trade negotiations. That information is now tightly controlled by the Mexican government, inhibiting informed policy-making.
- A request that Congress pay more attention to the human impact of Mexico's recent economic policies, which has gone largely unreported in the U.S. These impacts include unemployment that is approaching 40%; changes in Mexico's agricultural land-ownership system that will drive 10 million people off the land; the inability of wage growth to keep pace with inflation, which is 15%; and Mexico's foreign debt, which has recently climbed from \$89 to \$103 billion.

(Continued on page 9)

CANADIANS TRAVERSE COUNTRY TO PROTEST CORPORATE AGENDA

"Corporate-sponsored federal policies are ripping Canada to shreds before our very eyes. Canadians are taking to the streets -- and highways -- to protest," declared Tony Clarke, Chair of the Action Canada Network (ACN). ACN has coordinated two caravans, one starting in the west on Vancouver Island on 16 April and the other beginning in the east in Newfoundland on 23 April. Participants took part in a variety of activities in some 100 communities across Canada, culminating in a mass demonstration in Ottawa on 15 May. In some towns, workers led tours of factories closed as a result of free-trade policies, in others, activists held meetings with local mayors and politicians.

Clarke says that both the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA are designed to prevent democratically elected governments from managing their economies for society's benefit. "If you look around Canada," he stated, "the major institutions that hold this country together are under attack. Communities have lost their post offices, train routes have disappeared, government services are being chopped. We're going backwards instead of forwards."

ACN is demanding the cancellation of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and opposing the ratification of NAFTA. It urges the Canadian government to listen to its constituents. Some recent opinion polls show two-thirds of Canadians think that NAFTA will be harmful to Canadians if it is implemented.

Despite that concern, the Agreement is being rushed through Parliament. The 4,300 pages of implementing legislation received just six-and-a-half hours of debate on second reading before being approved by the House of Commons on 31 March. It was then sent to committee for review, which was completed on 11 May. No citizens' groups were allowed to testify at these hearings, only government officials and technical experts.

New Democratic Party Member of Parliament and Trade Critic Dave Barrett asked, "How can this committee competently cover all this legislative ground in just a few days? Why rush it through

before the Americans even finish their hearings on the agreements? Why is the government so against advertising the existence of these hearings -- as they were about the Commons Standing Committee hearings -- to the Canadian public? The U.S. is televising their hearings. What's the government's agenda? Why are they rushing NAFTA through?" ACN members will continue to raise those questions into the upcoming electoral campaign. •

FACT FINDING TRIP (continued from page 8)

- A request from concerned Mexicans for U.S. scholars to investigate the structure of Mexico's stock market, which they claim is controlled by Mexico's wealthiest families, allowing them to manipulate it for profit.
- A complaint by border communities that the Mexican government assesses a housing tax on maquiladora workers, which amounted to \$62.5 million last year, but these funds are not returned to the border area, where housing is desperately needed.
- A request that the Congress give more attention to the Mexican government's preparation of its environmental inspectors, which may be inadequate to train them to recognize instances of noncompliance.

The North American Free Trade Agreement as negotiated will not contribute to the promise of raising standards of living for the families of the three nations....We invited the Mexican women parliamentarians from all parties to continue discussions with us on these important questions. We will reissue that invitation.

Our delegation intends to continue meeting as a working group. We are in the process of preparing a detailed report on our findings that we will use to report to our Congressional leadership, Members of Congress, President Clinton and other Administration officials. We also hope to work with the Office of the Trade Representative to ensure that negotiations on NAFTA's parallel agreements fully address our concerns. This fact-finding mission to Mexico was the first step on a journey that will not end until we forge an agreement with Mexico that will truly benefit the families of both of our countries." •