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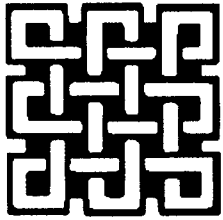
Author

Fox, Jonathan A

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Eighth Annual LASA Field Seminar in Nicaragua June 21-July 2, 1992

The LASA Task Force on Scholarly Relations With Central America will conduct a field seminar for LASA members in Nicaragua from June 21 to July 2 of this year. As was the case with the previous seven seminars, it is designed to introduce established Latinamericanists and advanced graduate students to a variety of people, institutions, resources, protocols and methods for studying Nicaragua, teaching about it and doing research there. Participants will become acquainted with social science "think tanks," academic institutions and research facilities.

A second objective will be to give LASA scholars a close-up view of the multi-faceted reality of contemporary Nicaragua. The group will have discussions and interviews with important political and social actors from across the political spectrum, including representatives of unions, churches, the media, the business community, women's organizations, the government and opposition leaders.

The seminar can serve as a general introduction to non-Nicaraguanists and as a refresher for the specialist. It should be of particular interest to scholars who have done work in Nicaragua but have not been there since the 1990 elections. Though much of the time will be spent in Managua, there will be trips to visit rural communities. The program will be tailored to the major interests of the participants and efforts will be made to accommodate individual interests through special interviews.

To understand how the seminar works in practice, prospective participants are advised to read the report of the 1991 seminar in the Fall 1991 issue of the *LASA Forum* (pp. 21-23). Unless there are unforeseen price changes, the entire seminar, including accommodations, most meals and in-country transportation will be about \$1050. Bona fide students will be entitled to a \$200 discount. (Flights from home port to Managua and return are not included.)

continued page 9

LASA 1992 Preliminary Program

Preliminary program materials for LASA's XVII International Congress accompany this mailing of the *Forum*. The schedule is provisional and subject to final adjustments, but every effort will be made to keep changes to a minimum.

Our thanks to Program Chair John Booth, his assistant, Steven Lohse, and other support staff of the University of North Texas for their timely production of this version of the preliminary program. Special thanks also to the members of the program committee who are also section chairs, for their fine efforts to date.

We encourage your attendance at LASA 1992. Preregistration packets have been sent to all institutions and individuals who were LASA members for 1991 and/or 1992. Please inform the secretariat if you have not received a packet by April 30. Preregistration deadline is *July 31*. LASA saves resources if congress attendees purchase tickets from Classic World Travel, so please try Classic first. See the preregistration packet for more details about LASA 1992.

IN THIS ISSUE

ARTICLES:

- Agriculture and the Politics of the North
American Trade Debate* by Jonathan Fox . . . p. 3
ARENA In the Arena by Daniel H. Wolf p. 10

Other Items of Interest:

- Accessing LASA's Electronic Job
Bulletin Board* p. 18
The NSEA p. 19
Wiarda Response To Timothy Anna p. 21
LASA Nominating Committee Slate p. 22

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Eighth Annual LASA Research Seminar 1	Labor Studies Working Group
LASA 1992 Preliminary Program 1	<i>by Russell E. Smith</i> 24
Agriculture and the Politics of the North	Endowment Fund Contributors 25
American Trade Debate 3	In Memoriam: Charles Wagley 26
<i>by Jonathan Fox</i>	Announcements 26
ARENA in the Arena 10	Employment Opportunities 28
<i>by Daniel H. Wolf</i>	Databases On Central America 30
Electronic Job Bulletin Board 18	Research and Study Opportunities 31
<i>by Glenn Sheldon</i>	Publications 32
National Security Education Act (NSEA) . . . 19	Forthcoming Conferences 33
Letter 20	Individual Membership Form 37
Nominating Committee Slate 22	Preregistration Form 38
	Institutional Membership Form 39

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How to contact LASA

William Pitt Union, Room 946, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260
Telephone: (412) 648-7929 Fax: (412) 624-7145 Bitnet: LASA@PITTVMS

Agriculture and the Politics of the North American Trade Debate:

A Report from the Trinational Exchange on
Agriculture, the Environment and the Free
Trade Agreement¹

Mexico City, November 14-17, 1991

by

Jonathan Fox

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Most discussions of the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement leave out agriculture and the rural environment. A major trinational exchange held last November began to fill this gap, bringing together a diverse mix of participants in an effort to share ideas and concerns about the implications of North American integration for the future of family farmers and farmworkers in our three countries.

The Trinational Exchange on Agriculture and the Environment was the first ever political exchange between national and regional family farm leaders of the three countries. Strong participation from environmental groups concerned with sustainable agriculture added political clout and a long-term focus to the gathering. Participants differed, both within and between each national delegation, over what political stance to take vis-a-vis the proposed NAFTA, but all were concerned with finding ways to sustain family farms and rural communities, politically, economically and ecologically, in the course of North American integration.²

Pushing for a unified stance towards NAFTA would have been premature, since the politically diverse groups were getting to know one another for the first time, but three general conclusions stand out. First, farmers increasingly came to view their counterparts not as competitors but as people grappling with common issues, laying the groundwork for further exchanges based on greater understanding of the trinational political and economic context in which they work the land.³ Second, in terms of policy, participants highlighted the need for policies to take into account the survival of family farms and rural communities. Third, participants agreed that "downward harmonization" (i.e., lowering) of environmental and food safety standards would be both unhealthy and undemocratic.⁴

Deere, Denise Dresser, Luis Hernández, Raúl Hinojosa, Mary Kelly, Monica Moore, David Myhre, Reid Reading and Helen Shapiro. I am especially grateful to Karen Lehmann, of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. The usual disclaimers apply.

2. This essay is a revised version of an introductory address to the conference. The Mexican hosts were: Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas (UNORCA) and the Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Cafetaleras (CNOC), with U.S. co-sponsorship from the Minneapolis-based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, the Texas Center for Policy Studies and Mexico-US Diálogos. Canadian co-sponsors were Common Frontiers and the Canadian Center for Alternative Policy. The gathering was kept small to improve the possibilities for frank discussion. U.S. groups included: National Family Farm Coalition, Kansas Farmers Union, Oklahoma Farmers' Union, California Association of Family Farmers, Idaho Sugar Beet Growers, Farm Labor Organizing Committee, Greenpeace, Catholic Center for Rural Life, Pesticide Action Network, Sierra Club, American Friends Service Committee (Cooperativa de Trabajadores Migratorios), Southwest Voter Research Institute and Yakima tribal development enterprise representatives (State of Washington). Mexican participants included the Unión Nacional de Trabajadores Agrícolas (UNTA), Central Campesina Independiente (CCI), Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos (CIOAC), Asociación Nacional de Uniones de Crédito del Sector Social, Asociación Nacional de Distribuidores de Fertilizante del Sector Social, Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT), in addition to regional leaders from the two national campesino networks which hosted the event from Sonora, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Oaxaca and Michoacán. Mexican environmentalists included the Grupo de Estudio Ambientales (GEA), Grupo de Estudios Regionales Ambientales, Red de Acción Mexicana contra las Plaguicidas (RAPAM), Greenpeace-Mexico, Centro de Eco-Desarrollo, Comité de Defensa y Preservación Ecológica (Durango), Grupo de Estudios Agrarios (GEA) and the Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos - Chihuahua (environmental project). Canadian participants included the National Farmers' Union, the Crop Improvement Association of New Brunswick, Catholic Rural Life Conference and the West Bank Indian Band. Researchers from the Colegio de México, UNAM, CIEASAS, Cornell and MIT also attended.

3. The broader meeting was preceded by precedent-setting sectoral exchanges on dairy and forestry issues, and was quickly followed by exchanges among family grain farmers. The Fair Trade Campaign, a national network doing educational and lobbying work on GATT as well as NAFTA, has played the key role on the U.S. side in most of these exchanges.

1. Several colleagues provided very helpful feedback on earlier drafts, including David Brooks, John Burstein, Wayne Cornelius, Carmen Diana

4. For more details about the gathering's conclusions, see the press release dated Nov. 17, 1991.

The conference began with an overview of the North American political and economic context, stressing that NAFTA is one more step in a long-term, inexorable process of continental integration. NAFTA gives it a name, the three presidents and their negotiators give it faces, but the process has been happening silently for many years, and it will continue for many years, with or without a free trade agreement. NAFTA would speed it up, presenting both challenges and opportunities. In the U.S., the "fast track" debate acted as a lightning rod to attract and focus national discussion for the first time about this longstanding process. The NAFTA process also forced groups in the U.S. finally to think about the Canadian experience—very late, but better late than never. In Canada, the NAFTA process reopened the question of how the costs and benefits of its agreement with the U.S. were distributed. In Mexico, a unilateral trade opening began several years ago, but the dramatic effects in agriculture went unnoticed in the U.S. and Canada until NAFTA provoked the creation of a trilateral political agenda.

In general, the NAFTA process provoked labor unions, environmental groups, family farm organizations, non-governmental development organizations, consumer groups and policy analysts to begin to get to know who's who in the other two countries. This process had already begun quietly three years ago, and one important lesson so far is that the cross-border counterparts for different social organizations are not obvious.⁵ The histories of social movements in each country are too different to have produced clear-cut trilateral counterparts. Business and government elites, in contrast, have known each other well all along, so social organizations have had to begin to catch-up quickly. With NAFTA, domestic politics became foreign policy and foreign policy became domestic politics.⁶

The trilateral political and economic context frames the key issues facing family farmers and farmworkers in the course of NAFTA negotiations, and it can be cast in terms of six general questions.

1. Trade inherently redistributes, but how do we determine who the winners and losers might be?

According to conventional economic theory, NAFTA would benefit the three economies overall, but would concentrate losses in a few specific sectors—especially those currently protected by trade barriers. Economic models repeatedly show what they call a "win-win" scenario. But few of the macroeconomic models treat agriculture as more than a single, homogeneous sector that behaves like just another industry. What happens when one starts to take into account agriculture's diversity? What if one acknowledges that agribusiness-dominated sectors behave very differently from

sectors where family farms are most important, for example? According to perhaps the most sophisticated binational economic model, if Mexico opens up the corn sector to U.S. imports in the short run, almost 850,000 heads of households will leave the countryside.⁷

NAFTA would most likely mean more industrial jobs for Mexico, taking into account both gaining and losing sectors, but if the peasant economy is opened to cheap U.S. exports in the foreseeable future, then the net employment effect for Mexico could well be negative.

5. One of the most important initiatives for introducing social organizations to one another across borders is the annual Trilateral Exchange, which began in the U.S. in 1988, meeting successively in Chicago, Austin, Washington, again in Chicago, and next in San Diego. The key convenors in the U.S. are individuals working with Mexico-US Diálogos, American Friends Service Committee, United Auto Workers, University of Chicago, University of California, San Diego and Travelers and Immigrants Aid (Chicago). For more information, see "Summary Report/Informe, 'Trilateral Exchange: Popular Perspectives on Mexico-US-Canada Relations: The Checkerboard Declaration'" Chicago, April 26-28, 1991.

6. For the most comprehensive analysis of this process, see Cathryn Thorup, "The Politics of Free Trade and the Dynamics of Cross-Border Coalitions in U.S.-Mexican Relations," *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 26(2), Summer, 1991.

7. This is the "worst case" scenario, representing 12% of the rural labor force. Six hundred thousand of those predicted to leave would go to the U.S. For comparison, according to this model, the U.S. currently absorbs 100,000 new Mexican immigrants each year. See Sherman Robinson, Mary Burfisher, Raul Hinojosa, and Karen Thierfelder, "Agricultural Policies and Migration in a U.S.-Mexican Free Trade Area: A Computable General Equilibrium Analysis, California Agricultural Experiment Station, Giannini Foundation, University of California, Berkeley, *Working Paper*, No. 617, Dec., 1991; also cited in Dianna Solis, "Corn May Be Snag in Trade Talks By Mexico, U.S.," *Wall St. Journal*, Dec. 27, 1991. The research was funded by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and the Mexican Foreign Ministry. Another study of agricultural out-migration impact foresees a more modest increase, and further predicts that migration would fall in the longer run as jobs are created in export agriculture (see Wayne Cornelius, "Free Trade Can Reduce Mexican Migration," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 28, 1992 and Wayne Cornelius and Philip Martin, "The North American Free Trade Agreement and Mexican Migration to the United States," June, 1991, presented at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, UC-SD). For an overview of Mexican export prospects, see Ted Bardacke, "Fresh Produce Exporters Look Beyond Barriers for Bountiful Harvest," *El Financiero International* Dec. 23, 1991. In Mexico, one analyst recently published a prediction of a disastrous integration scenario, but it is based largely on a static description of the existing imbalance between U.S. and Mexican agriculture rather than a dynamic analysis of how each sector might react. The book includes a useful round-table discussion with three national peasant leaders. See José Luis Calva, *Probables Efectos de un Tratado de Libre Comercio en el Campo Mexicano*, Mexico: Fontamara/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1991. Much more research needs to be done on the agricultural trade/migration question. Even less is known about how opening Mexico's corn sector might interact with the government's partial privatization of agrarian reform lands. One top official implied that this measure alone would displace about half of the rural population within one or two decades (cited in Tim Golden, "The Dream of Land Dies Hard in Mexico," *New York Times*, Nov. 27, 1991).

2. Who were the key actors behind the NAFTA initiative, and how does that affect the current debate?

The NAFTA proposal was an initiative of Mexico's president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari. After taking many dramatic initiatives to encourage new investment since he took office in 1988, the response from both foreign and Mexican business was disappointing. He needed to send a convincing signal that his dramatic pro-business policy changes were going to be permanently "locked in," regardless of who succeeded him as president. Bush quickly saw the need to bolster his ally, and took up the challenge of convincing the U.S. Congress that it should cede power to the executive to work out the details—the "fast track" process.⁸ It was only after a wide range of groups in the U.S. began to question whether the President would really take their concerns into account that broad U.S. business sectors really began to mobilize in support of Bush, Salinas and NAFTA.⁹ The result of this congressional debate was a "conditional fast track," according to the Gephardt amendment, which gave Congress the right to amend any proposed treaty. In this first phase of the NAFTA debate, governments set the agenda rather than simply responding to private pressures.

For family farmers, this state-structuring of the debate implies that one needs to be somewhat skeptical about official claims regarding which groups are pressuring for competing policies. For example, certain policy currents might try to pit the different farmer groups against each other when their interests may or may not really conflict, and then blame the foreigners for the positions they are taking. Corn is a good example.¹⁰ The Mexican government claims that it is being pressured by the U.S. government and U.S. producer groups to open up the corn sector—Mexico's last remaining major protected crop, along with beans. This may or may not be true. After all, Mexico actually represents a fairly small share of U.S. corn exports, and if the Mexican economy grows as much as predicted over the next few years, Mexican corn imports would probably increase without having to displace large numbers of peasant producers.¹¹ It would be more profitable for U.S. farmers to export less at higher prices, while the transnational grain trading companies are the actors most interested in exporting larger amounts at lower prices.¹² So who is really pushing to open up the Mexican corn sector? The question requires further policy research in both countries. For example, how is the U.S. negotiating position formulated? There are clear trade-offs between the economic/ideological arguments in favor of an indiscriminate opening, and the longer run political/"national security" case for a more selective agricultural trade opening.¹³

The social organizations in each country do not know enough about how each other's political and economic systems work to make assumptions about who is doing what

to whom in the trade debate. Those concerned with democratizing the debate over the distribution of the costs and benefits of free trade and adjustment need better "political maps" of the key economic and political actors in each country.

3. Supporters of NAFTA point to the European experience with integrating richer and poorer countries. Is North American integration like the European community?

European integration certainly is impressive, but there are five general reasons why NAFTA is not comparable, at least so far.

First, the economic gap between the U.S. and Canada vs. Mexico is much, much greater than between the EEC and Spain, Portugal and Greece. Whether one looks at wages, environmental protection or labor standards, there are very few parallels. Turkey is much more comparable, and the EEC is not rushing to include Turkey.

The second difference is that, even though the gap between richer and poorer countries is not as wide as in North America, the Europeans have created a range of compensatory social and economic policies to take the gap into

8. The "fast track" legislation was already due for renewal as part of the GATT negotiations, but NAFTA greatly raised its domestic political salience.

9. See, for example, the *Mexico-U.S. Report*, which covers the activities of the Mexican/American Free Trade Association. (i.e., 4(2), March-April, 1991).

10. One issue that remains unclear is the degree of substitution between white and yellow corn. Most U.S. corn exports to Mexico go to low-income urban popular consumption, consisting of the #2 grade yellow variety (used as animal feed here). Most corn grown by Mexican peasants on rainfed land is of the much-preferred white variety, so the two crops compete in slightly different market segments. If Mexico were to drop its current import restrictions, it would not be hard for Midwestern corn producers to shift varieties and produce more white corn for export and compete directly.

11. For a more general discussion of this issue, see Robert Paarlberg, "U.S. Agriculture and the Developing World: Opportunities for Joint Gains," in John Sewell and Stewart Tucker, eds., *Growth, Exports and Jobs in a Changing World Economy*, New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Books, 1988.

12. Grain transnationals profit significantly from the marketing, storage and handling charges, thereby benefiting greatly from increased export volume even if prices are low.

13. There are preliminary reports, for example, that the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture is divided along such lines.

account, ranging from massive investment plans to develop poorer regions to raising the lower labor and environmental standards, rather than "harmonizing downwards" the higher standards prevalent elsewhere in Europe.

Third, most of the EEC has been following very different national economic strategies, mainly centered around highly skilled, high wage industrialization (e.g., Germany). This is in sharp contrast to the U.S. and Mexican government's de facto industrial policies. Neither government is thinking strategically about job creation, preferring to leave that to the marketplace. National education budgets indicate that, by default, both governments, and perhaps Canada's as well, are following a lower tech, low-wage strategy, which could tend to pit workers against each other. According to a recent study by the National Planning Association (US), the U.S. and Mexico may have more in common in this regard than the U.S. and Japan or the U.S. and Western Europe.¹⁴ As a result, integration probably will not drive wages down in Europe, but it might for significant sectors of the U.S. labor force, since they are unskilled.¹⁵ This may be one reason why the Europeans are integrating their labor markets, while NAFTA excludes labor mobility and right to organize from the agenda.

Fourth, it is important to recall the highly gradual character of the European integration process, beginning in the 1950s. This has allowed time for democratic processes to work, within and between countries, which made it much more likely that the losing sectors would get some kind of adjustment or reconversion assistance.

The fifth difference is that European economic integration is accompanied by political integration, with a quite pluralistic European parliament. In the EEC, family farmers, labor unions and environmentalists have an institutionalized voice in the process, through their broad representation within both national and region-wide political institutions. The North American governments, in contrast, seem to see unions, family farmers and environmentalists more as obstacles than partners in negotiating the integration process.

To sum up, the EEC has recognized that economic integration holds great promise—as long as its negative effects are counterbalanced by active public policies that take them into account from the beginning.¹⁶

4. Why has agriculture and the rural environment been largely left out of the broader discussion of North American integration, even among critics?

First, the lack of a national voice for U.S. family farmers on North American integration should not be a surprise, since they are on the defensive politically in general and continue

to lose ground to corporate agribusiness. The single most important indicator of political weakness is the failure to promote a "supply management" alternative that would reduce both over-production and federal subsidies. To the degree that farm organizations focus on trade policy, they are highlighting GATT, which they see as a larger threat than NAFTA.¹⁷

The key question then is why has alliance-building between the city and the countryside been so difficult—at least in the U.S. and Mexico? Agriculture's relatively low profile in the NAFTA debates reflects the political and cultural distance that separates family farmers from other working people in the U.S. and Mexico. In Canada, family farmers are in much closer contact with trade unions and consumer groups. The gap is also especially deep between farmers and farmworkers in the U.S.—less so in Mexico, since so many millions of people are both part-time farmers and part-time farmworkers.¹⁸

Second, agricultural policy in general is far from "transparent" for people not directly involved. It is extremely difficult to democratize the policy debate because of the complexity of each government's agricultural policies, and the lack of clarity about who benefits from farm subsidies in each country.

14. See Peter Morici's balanced assessment, *Trade Talks with Mexico: A Time for Realism*, Washington D.C.: National Planning Association, 1991.

15. Most economic predictions indicate quite marginal and sector-specific losses for U.S. workers, but U.S.-Mexican integration already has had a broader, unquantifiable "political multiplier effect," since the threat to move to Mexico, often quite explicit, has a powerful effect on collective bargaining.

16. Some think that the EEC subsidizes its farmers because their elites share some abstract ideal of the "national interest." This might be true for some, but there are also powerful electoral coalitions behind their pro-farm policies (i.e., France, Germany, Japan).

17. The Fair Trade Campaign and the Ralph Nader-linked Citizen Trade Watch have recently begun to link farm, labor and environmental lobbies to influence the GATT debate. See also, for example, "Exploring the Linkages: Trade Policies, Third World Development and U.S. Agriculture," *Issue Brief*, Trade and Development Program, Fall, 1991.

18. Even though U.S. labor groups began to call for more democratic labor rights in Mexico in the course of the NAFTA debate, farmworkers, the most oppressed group of Mexican workers, have been ignored. They are one of the groups most likely to be affected by NAFTA, both in terms of potentially increased pesticide exposure with the growth of exports to the U.S. and in terms of increased displacement of family farmers into the migrant labor stream. Mexican farmworkers number between four and five million people, and like U.S. farmworkers, they lack influential allies. The most notable exception is the important initiative in cross-border farmworker alliance-building led by the midwestern-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee, which has worked with Mexican counterpart employees of Campbell's (with support from the National Council of Churches' Agricultural Missions).

Third, rural environmental issues are not the highest profile concerns among most U.S. environmentalists, many of whom focus more on urban industrial issues or the wilderness, but not on the countryside in between. Agro-chemical abuse is probably the single most important environmental issue that concerns farmers, farmworkers and consumers, but one needs to be aware of the potential to divide producers from consumers—this happened in the U.S. pesticide regulation policy debates several years ago. U.S. pesticide standards currently "favor" consumers over farmers and farmworkers, who face highly toxic pesticides at the point of production, which then break down quickly in time to reduce the exposure to consumers. Continuing this anti-farmworker bias, the official U.S. negotiating position considers the only relevant trade-related pesticide issue to be the amount of residues on imported agricultural products. In other words, when considering the health impact of increased Mexican agricultural exports to the U.S., possible pesticide exposure to U.S. consumers is a "legitimate" issue, but the increased exposure faced by Mexican farmworkers is not. Greenpeace has recently taken an important stand, calling on the U.S. Trade Representative to define the environmental and health impact of agricultural trade in terms that include Mexican farmworkers as well as U.S. consumers.¹⁹

5. Why has the nature of the debate been so different in each country?

The differences between the range of the debate and the types of positions similar groups take in each country is quite remarkable. These contrasts reflect different political histories, systems of government, political styles, and internal cleavages, all of which shape how each group sees its interests and its opportunities to influence policy-making.

In Canada, which has already experienced apparently dramatic job losses from its trade agreement with the U.S., major social and political forces favor abrogation. Their position can be strong because of the breadth and depth of opposition, along with an allied political party, the New Democratic Party, which now governs provinces with 52% of the nation's population. But the prospects for influencing trade policy probably depend on the balance of power at the federal level.²⁰

In the U.S., the congressional "fast track" debate provoked the formation of the broadest coalition ever of domestic social and economic groups around an issue of "foreign" economic policy. The coalition actually won some symbolic victories in terms of administration promises, but by the end of 1991 few had been kept.²¹ But this was a classic example of U.S. lobbying and coalition politics—it had breadth but not depth, and little is left in the way of organizing and concern that links Washington to the heartland of the country, at

least for now.²² This could change, but one limiting factor is that most Democratic Party leaders, internally divided on the issue, generally sidestep the complex NAFTA issue.

Some key Democratic Party leaders in the Senate strongly favor NAFTA, both as part of their business alliances and to avoid alienating the Mexican-American political establishment, which tends to favor NAFTA. Bush was remarkably successful at managing the spring 1991 debate to make "fast track" opponents seem "anti-Mexican," and some opponents made this easier by clumsy and insensitive behavior, especially among short-sighted protectionist forces in the labor movement. The next round of the debate will be more complex, since a much broader range of groups in the Mexican-American community are now involved in discussing the implications of NAFTA.²² In general, U.S. critics are divided between total opposition, many from a traditional protectionist stand, to criticism that calls for full inclusion of labor rights, environmental protection and adjustment assistance. So far, the Bush administration's track record may unite these two tendencies, since it has been unwilling to take the labor, environmental or trade adjustment concerns seriously.

19. On pesticide abuse in Mexico, see Angus Wright's comprehensive *The Death of Ramón Gonzales*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. On U.S. and international pesticide policy more generally, see also the Pesticide Action Network's *Global Pesticide Campaigner*. U.S. environmental groups could potentially become important allies for farmworkers on both sides of the border, but serious emphasis on the enforcement of pesticide use regulations would inherently require them to become involved in supporting the freedom to bargain collectively over working conditions. This has yet to happen in the U.S., where farmworkers remain excluded from most basic collective bargaining, occupational health, sanitary and "right to know" worker protection laws.

20. For a critique of the U.S.-Canadian Free Trade Agreement's impact in agriculture, see Michael Troughton, "An Ill-Considered Pact: The Canada-US Trade Agreement and the Agricultural Geography of North America," *ARRG Working Papers Series* (Agriculture and Rural Restructuring Group), No. 1, 1991 (Rural Development Institute).

21. The Bush administration tried halfheartedly to co-opt the mainstream environmental groups with promises of inclusion. For one representative reaction, see Mary Kelly, "A Response to the Bush Administration's Environmental Action Plan for Free Trade Negotiations with Mexico," May 10, 1991, Austin: Texas Center for Policy Studies, mimeo.

22. The Fair Trade Campaign and the Nader-linked Citizen Trade Watch are to some degree exceptions to this. The main Washington D.C.-based opposition network is the Mobilization for Development, Trade, Labor and the Environment (MODTLE), which works with Mexican and Canadian non-governmental organization networks. See their "Look Before You Leap. What You Should Know About a North American Free Trade Agreement," Washington, D.C.: Development Group for Alternative Policies, 1991.

23. The Southwest Voter Research Institute, part of one of the most broad-based Chicano political networks, has promoted major public forums which show quite a wide range of views on the NAFTA issue.

In Mexico, there has hardly been a national debate. The first major salvo was at the trinational meeting in Zacatecas in October, 1991, parallel to the official talks, but that came mainly from national leaders of the political opposition, rather than from representatives of major social organizations. Many Mexicans are concerned about what integration might mean, but there are three key factors which constrain their national debate on NAFTA. First, since NAFTA is a top presidential priority, it is widely assumed to be a "done deal." Mexico already opened up most of its economy unilaterally, so for most sectors free trade is already reality (at least in one direction). Second, most of the Mexican mass media have offered the public a very one-sided view of the implications of full integration. Third, the political cost of outright opposition is very high. The end result is that most major social groups which have concerns about integration express them in ways which do not question the general principle of NAFTA, but rather lobby discreetly for their particular sector. Most of the outright opposition to NAFTA is therefore associated—rightly or wrongly—with broader political and ideological opposition to the government (a much more serious proposition than opposing presidential priorities in the U.S. or Canada).

To sum up the kind of critical actors in each country, in Canada you have both the "head" and the "body" of a movement—a consolidated, national political party that can act strategically plus a wide range of major social organizations deeply rooted in society. In the U.S. you have a wide range of concerned social organizations, something of a "body," though with a very short attention span, but no rooted strategic actor, no "head," no national political leadership engaged in developing practical policy alternatives. In Mexico, you have a "head," in terms of critical nationalist political opposition, worried about what integration might mean (with some critics even inside the ruling party), but no "body," no wide range of social organizations engaged with the issue.²⁴

6. How might the broader political situation in each country affect the pace of the NAFTA negotiations?

The time-frame of the negotiations is a very sensitive issue for each respective government. The political context in the U.S. and Canada may affect the pace of the negotiations. The Canadian government is at a dramatic low point in the polls, and two-thirds of Canadians polled support renegotiation or abrogation of their treaty with the U.S.. In the U.S., president Bush's popularity turns out to be both soft and sinking, mainly because of a pervasive sense of economic insecurity among middle class and working people. The prospect of more jobs going to Mexico risks adding to this perception, as shown by the remarkable upset victory of a

liberal Democrat in the special senatorial election in Pennsylvania in November, 1991.²⁵ This was widely understood to be a signal to Bush, and it would not be surprising if his political strategists concluded that it would be better to let NAFTA wait until after the presidential election. The Mexican government, in contrast, is in a rush to conclude an agreement, mainly for "business confidence" reasons, to encourage productive private investment—which is still lagging behind expectations. As U.S. domestic politics began to intrude by the end of 1991, however, the Mexican government moved to dampen public expectations, in a damage-control effort.

The three governments, then, are deeply committed to economic integration, but without clear signs of a firm commitment to setting a social and environmental "floor" for the process. NAFTA advocates say that they recognize the need for adjustment assistance, reconversion and retraining for the "losers," but the three governments all lack track records that would give credibility to those promises. For those interested in understanding what integration will mean, the "winners" and "losers" in each country are not always obvious, especially for agriculture and the rural environment. Among the critics, the "political map" is very different in each country.

The NAFTA discussion should also be kept in the broader context. Not every trade-related problem can or will be regulated by a trinational trade agreement.²⁶ Moreover,

24. In February, 1991, Mexico's center-left opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas presented his "Continental Initiative on Trade and Development" to the America's Society, to be published in John Cavanagh, et al, eds., *Confronting Free Trade in the Americas*, San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy/Institute for Policy Studies, 1992. See also his remarks included as part of pluralistic range of views on U.S.-Mexican integration published in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 8(1), Winter, 1991.

25. NAFTA was not the main issue there, but it was a high-profile weapon in the political arsenal of a candidate who began 40% behind in the polls and ended up winning with 55% of the votes, with 63% turnout.

26. Trade legislation is a very blunt instrument, in that it is difficult to "fine-tune" positive social consequences. Even if the political will existed, it would be difficult to design specific trade legislation that could safeguard labor rights or environmental protection. Political linkage to other measures could be much more promising, such as a proposed "social charter" in conjunction with a broader continental development strategy. Economic adjustment, job creation and reconversion could be encouraged through the proposed North American development agency (if it were much more publicly accountable than existing multilateral agencies). See, for example, Albert Fishlow, Sherman Robinson and Raúl Hinojosa, "Proposal for a North American Regional Development Bank and Adjustment Fund," *Mexico Policy News*, No. 7, Winter 1992. This proposal has been read with interest by high-level policy-makers in the U.S. and Mexico, and has received growing attention in the California state legislature.

GATT may well overshadow NAFTA, depending on which set of negotiations is concluded first. In principle, GATT will probably set the framework for NAFTA, especially for agricultural and environmental issues.²⁷

In conclusion, the Trilateral Exchange permitted each group to learn more about the trilateral "political map," exploring diplomatically where each participant agreed and disagreed. Some participants found that they shared similar economic interests and political perspectives, while others did not; some focused more on the long-term, while others were more concerned with the immediate challenges. The political principle underlying the discussion was to agree to disagree about some things, in order to begin to find common ground and explore where each could work together in the future to defend sustainable rural development throughout North America. ■

27. So far, the GATT considers high local or national environmental standards to be illegitimate restraints on international trade. This was made clear when GATT recently ruled that U.S. domestic regulations on allowable dolphin kills associated with industrial tuna fishing were not allowed to interfere with tuna imports from Mexico. More generally, see, Mark Ritchie, "Trading Away Our Environment, Global 'Harmonization' of Pesticide Laws and other Environmental Regulations at GATT," Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy/National Toxics Campaign Fund, May, 1990, and Monica Moore, "GATT, Pesticides and Democracy," *Global Pesticide Campaigner*, 1(1), Oct., 1990.



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The facilitator will help participants prepare for the trip with all relevant travel/health/packing/general information and will arrange appropriate flights for each person.

Both times were among the most valuable experiences in my professional career.

—Professor Kenneth Mijeski
(a two-time participant in previous seminars)
Political Science Department,
East Tennessee State University

Participating in the seminar cut months from my research time. I made a variety of contacts and met many people who assisted me.

—Professor Patricia Chuchryk, Chair
Department of Sociology
University of Lethbridge, Alta. Canada

I was delighted with the array of interactions and with the concern of the organizers to arrange a program appropriate to the scholarly concerns of the participants.

—Professor Kenneth Coleman
Department of Political Science
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

For more information, write: Professor Richard Stahler-Sholk, Coordinator, Department of Political Studies, Pitzer College, 1050 N. Mills Ave., Claremont, CA 91711-6110. Telephone: (714) 621-8000 x3900, or (510) 655-4027; fax: (510) 621-8521; or, contact: Alice McGrath, Facilitator, P.O. Box 1782, Ventura, CA 93002. Telephone: (805) 648-4560; fax: (805) 653-6359. ■

