

Voice for sustainability unheard with a vote for NAFTA

By Nicholas Veluzzi

The North American Free Trade Agreement is an international trade accord between the United States, Mexico and Canada aimed at creating the largest single trading bloc in the world.

The proponents of NAFTA tout that its passage will result in a win-win-win situation throughout North America. The prescribed formula includes economic growth, more jobs, reduced costs of goods, added consumer choice and increased competitiveness.

This new set of rules will accomplish this by removing as many restrictions as possible, which include, but is not limited to, tariffs, subsidies, and non-tariff trade barriers (e.g. environment regulation). Although many issues have been raised concerning labor and the environment, not much media time has been given to the effects NAFTA's structure will have on the population of North America. Essentially, NAFTA isn't so much about trade as it is about the consolidation of power in the hands of few.

Consider the process in which NAFTA was negotiated. Of approximately 100 members on the boards of the U.S. trade representative, one represents labor, three represent the environment, and 996 are corporate representatives and trade economists. Additionally, the negotiation process was conducted in secret and public input wasn't given the time of day. This process is indicative of the interests NAFTA represents.

NAFTA, if passed, will become international law. As a result, any federal, state or local law which conflicts with NAFTA (or any such law which conflicts with a ruling by a NAFTA dispute resolution panel) may be undermined. Trade agreements take power away from states to regulate commerce and give power to transnational corporations and supranational bodies in this arena.

NAFTA also gives national governments a means to undermine the power of community-based efforts to create laws and



regulations that would lead to an increased quality of life, such as alternative energy innovation, the protection of natural resources, or confronting a fac-

The proponents of NAFTA tout that its passage will result in a win-win-win situation throughout North America.

tory's discharge on hazardous waste.

NAFTA promotes resource extraction and increased non-renewable energy consumption rather than support for sustain-

able development and conservation or alternative energy research and development. So, NAFTA protects government subsidies for oil and gas exploration, while leaving government support for energy and conservation programs open to attack as unfair trade barriers.

While the Mexican Constitution prohibits most foreign investment in the state-owned oil industry (PEMEX), many fear it's only a matter of time before escalating U.S. oil reserves. Similar provisions exist within the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement, approved in 1989, resulting in aggressive U.S. business moving to secure contracts on Canada's energy resources.

Consider the James Bay Hydroelectric Project in Northern Quebec. The project will flood an area the size of Vermont to export the majority of

26,000 megawatts of electricity annually to the U.S., which will not only have catastrophic effects on the environment, but will devastate the land-base, life and culture of Northern Cree and Inuit who inhabit the region.

In Mexico, proponents say, an increase in jobs will increase the standard of living of working Mexicans, which should enable them to buy more U.S. products, thus producing jobs in the U.S. After intensive study of this agreement and the maquila sector, which is a model for what the accord is based upon, I find no evidence of accuracy to this statement.

Due to a complex political economic history in Mexico, real wages, with the help of government intervention, decreased approximately 60 percent during the 80s. The Mexican govern-

ment maintains that tight control over organized labor through its Confederacion Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM). Typically if a worker tries to organize a union independent of the CTM she/he will pay a high price. The costs range from incarceration, receiving threats and their life. The reality is that this situation is integral to maintaining the "good business climate" in Mexico.

The central goal of NAFTA is to maintain the current "good business climate" in Mexico and the remainder of Latin America to be setting the rules, neo-liberal trickle-down economics, in stone. Saying "no to NAFTA" isn't saying "yes to protectionism". Economic integration between the U.S. and Mexico is inevitable.

After all, it has been going on for over 30 years. There are alternatives coming from the Fortune 500. Grassroot-based coalitions in Mexico, Canada, and the U.S. have been coordinating efforts to oppose NAFTA and have come up with the alternative integration proposals based upon democracy, equality and environment sustainability. If the currently proposed NAFTA passes, we can be sure the voices for sustainability will never be heard.

Nicholas Veluzzi is a senior in the International Studies department.

Cash

For Textbooks
Mon.-Sat.

Smith Family
Bookstore

768 E. 13th
1 Block From Campus

345-1651



Sherrie Barr and Mary Seereiter

in

TwoDance

Friday, November 19 and
Saturday, November 20
8:00pm

Dougherty Dance Theatre
Gerlinger Annex, University
of Oregon

General-\$6
Students and Seniors-\$3

Sponsored by the UO
Department of Dance 346-3386



CELEBRATE STYLE\$AVER MONTH.

Free Gifts with every Stylecut.

Get your best look this month with our \$13.95
Stylecut-- shampoo, cut and style-- satisfaction guaranteed.
During StyleSaver month receive these free gifts:

- Free Paul Mitchell 2oz. Fast Dry Spray
- \$5 in StyleSaver Bucks to be applied to your next perm or color

PAUL MITCHELL

We use & recommend Paul Mitchell Products.

THIRD DIMENSION CUTS
HAIR STYLING SALONS

3333 W. 11th
Fred Meyer Center
345-2592

Santa Clara
Fred Meyer Center
688-8123

Offer ends 11/30/93