

In this issue of THE SOCIAL CONTRACT, we concentrate on the implications of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for U.S. population and immigration policy.

Let me try to state our position explicitly. We are concerned that under NAFTA as currently framed there will be a substantial increase in immigration from Mexico, and that this possibility should be forestalled by a specific side agreement. We have the same type of concerns that have already led to side agreements on environmental and labor matters. Several of the articles in this issue amplify these concerns.

First, the administration (as we go to press) is mounting the argument that NAFTA will discourage illegal immigration. In our lead article, Marshall Ingwerson contends instead that the "effect of NAFTA on immigration is neither clear nor simple to foresee." We agree with Espenshade and Acevedo (p.13) that the most likely effect in the short run, absent controls to the contrary, will be to increase immigration. Also to be considered: it is not usually the poorest of the poor who migrate, but those who have begun climbing the economic ladder. So another plausible effect of NAFTA may well be to give more Mexicans the financial means to migrate, as David Simcox and Harold Gilliam observe in their contributions.

Second, speaking as a farm boy who still keeps up a membership in the Michigan Farm Bureau, I'm concerned about how American agricultural prowess may dislocate millions of Mexican subsistence farmers, and where they will relocate. Perhaps history has something to teach us on this point. Senator Moynihan tells us on page 62 how a similar dynamic operated in Europe at the turn of the century, when American farm exports drove many people from their land. In the U.S., we are able to produce both the colored beans and the white corn that are favored in Mexico, and at about half the price that their farmers can. If those that are dislodged end up in the United States demanding bilingual education, health care, and other government services, on whose ledger will the expenses appear? Probably not NAFTA's.

Third, we also question whether the concept of a border for immigration purposes can be maintained even as the border for goods and services, information, monetary instruments and other items is eroded. In the European Economic Community (EEC), controlling the movement of people within the common external boundary is not even contemplated -- there is free migration of labor among the twelve member-countries, and they are working toward a common EEC passport. This is feasible because all these countries have roughly the same demographic regime: low birth rates and stable populations.

In its submission to the Uruguay Round of the GATT talks, Mexico wrote: "[t]he expansion of the service exports of developing countries and their increased participation in world trade in services depends on the liberalization of cross border movement of personnel covering unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labor, and such effective access to markets for their

service exports can mainly be realized through this mode of delivery." This unacceptable concept is present in NAFTA, but in muted form (see the fourth point below).

Isn't this the camel's nose under the tent? After all, moving U.S. jobs to Mexico or moving Mexicans to jobs in the U.S., while not equivalent, are pretty much two sides of the same economic coin. How long will it take before someone points out the irrationality of controlling migration while all else is opening? Eliminating the immigration stricture (weak as it is) would set us up as the population escape valve for Mexican fecundity -- and for everyone else in Latin America who could pass through Mexico. None of the developed countries can or will tolerate mass exports of surplus people from the Third World, as events from around the globe are now showing.

Fourth and finally, NAFTA explicitly starts nibbling away at our immigration laws, as detailed on page 20. Chapter Sixteen of the agreement covers "Temporary Entry for Business Persons." What is "temporary?" It is defined in the agreement as "entry into the territory of a Party by a business person of another Party without the intent to establish permanent residence." That couldn't be much more open-ended! Only as to "professionals" (see the list on page 21), are there any numeric limits. However, in establishing these numeric limits "the Party shall consult with the other Party concerned," and shall "take into account the demand for temporary entry," and after "three years, shall consult with the other Party concerned with a view to determining a date after which the limit shall cease to apply." In other words, it is to be a demand-driven immigration policy without numeric limits.

We conclude from all this that NAFTA, in its current all-or-nothing/take-it-or-leave-it form, should be left. The Bush Administration set itself up for this outcome when it insisted on fast-track negotiations which allow for no amendments. NAFTA should be voted down, to be taken up again only in a debatable and amendable form that will better reflect the interests and the time-honored political practice of the United States -- that of full, free, and open debate among our elected representatives, with the chance this offers for public input.

Persons with a special interest in trade issues and immigration from Mexico may wish to look at Vol.II, No.2 of THE SOCIAL CONTRACT, entitled "Immigration and Free Trade With Mexico," Fall 1991. Copies are still available from our office at \$7.50 postage paid.

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