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NAFTA's Broken Promises: The Border Betrayed

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numbers, as described above. Rather, indigenous people are given a degree of political autonomy, including the means and resources to protect and use their language in the community and in institutional settings.

In his conclusion, deVarenes asks, why should human rights be used to protect language? He then resolves that human rights are not, and have never been, concerned with safeguarding languages. This study attempts to determine how certain well-established human rights can impact the burdens and benefits of a state's linguistic policies or restrictions on the private use of language.

Ester Martin

PUBLIC CITIZEN'S GLOBAL TRADE WATCH STAFF, *NAFTA'S BROKEN PROMISES: THE BORDER BETRAYED*, Public Citizen, Inc., Washington, D.C. (1996); (\$15.00); ISBN 0-937188-03-4; 82 pp. (paperback).

NAFTA's Broken Promises attempts to answer the question: Will the passage of NAFTA exacerbate our environmental problems or give us effective mechanisms to ameliorate them? The authors answered this question by gathering environmental health evidence on the U.S.- Mexico border conditions between 1993 and 1995. The evidence included interviews with academics, activists, medical doctors, representatives from NAFTA, the United States and Mexico, and hundreds of articles. The research revealed two results. First, NAFTA has failed a "do no further harm test" for U.S.- Mexico border environmental and health conditions. Second, two years of NAFTA data show that NAFTA is not on target to satisfy its proponent's promises in the future.

The book is divided into seven chapters which describe different elements of the environmental research gathered. Chapter one details the broken promise that NAFTA would decrease the number of "maquilladoras," U.S. owned manufacturing plants, in Mexico. In fact, statistics showed a 20 percent increase in maquiladora workers from 1993 to 1995. In addition, the devaluation of the peso and high interest rates further increased the environmental cleanup costs in Mexico.

Chapter two examines the increase in border hazardous waste generated under NAFTA. Data revealed not only an increase in hazardous waste, but also, that much of it has been washed down the drain. Further, resources for hazardous waste management have not improved since NAFTA. The third chapter discusses the increased incidence of neural birth defects in the border area. Although a direct link has yet to be proven, the higher than average rate of birth defects correlates to the high pollution levels in the border area.

Chapter four addresses the problem of contaminated water and its negative affect on border health. The incidence of waterborne diseases, such as Hepatitis-A, is two to five times higher than the national averages in the border region. Chapter five shows that border air pollution

has increased proportionately as industry and auto traffic have increased. For example, pollution from the Carbon II plant, which is across the border from Eagle Pass, Texas, produces 230,000 tons of sulphur dioxide annually. This is twice the rate allowed for U.S. plants in the 1970s.

Chapter six highlights the slow startup of environmental enforcement by the recently formed Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). Plagued by limited authority and less money than expected, the CEC has not been very effective. Chapter seven demonstrates the difficulty in obtaining funding for border clean-up projects. U.S. government budget cuts and the Mexican economic depression have limited money otherwise available for binational cleanup projects. Consequently, less projects have been started than anticipated.

Public Citizen, a public interest group, recommends no expansion of NAFTA, increased monitoring, and the provision of standing in U.S. courts to citizens of NAFTA countries allowing them to sue U.S. companies that pollute. The group also recommends a transactional tax on NAFTA trade. A portion of the tax should then be used for grants and interest free loans so that the poorer border communities can afford sanitation and clean drinking water systems. According to Public Citizen, these recommendations would help to fix the broken environmental promises that NAFTA has made.

Scott Madsen

