1993, March

NAFTA: What Does It Mean to NC?

by Mia Kirsh

Nearly 300 community leaders, activists, businesspeople and citizens gathered for a conference in Durham at the end of January to learn more about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The conference, entitled “Free Trade Agreements: Impacts on the Carolinas and the Americas,” was well attended by representatives of local environmental, Latin American, church and university groups.

The reality is that mostly pro-business panels and speakers sought to amend NAFTA rather than to oppose it. Most Americans who have not been educated about international trade have opposed NAFTA outright as having no benefit. Several local and national groups have worked to amend NAFTA because of its negative impacts on workers and environment.

NAFTA, like its companion global agreement, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), is not a “done deal.”

There is still time to oppose it or to amend it before Congress votes on it this fall. This is why getting informed about how important and onerous the mandate had failed to this day. The conference was an excellent source of information about NAFTA and its broader implications for our community. The Prism was the only local paper that bothered to cover it.

NAFTA: What is it and who’s behind it?

In his keynote speech, Dr. Jorge Castaneda, a professor from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and a visiting professor at Duke and Princeton, said NAFTA is not an accidental idea evolved in Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. Although NAFTA was “signed” in August 1992 by George Bush, Canada’s Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and Mexico’s President Carlos Salinas, it is not yet set in stone. Bush insisted that he is the only possible free-trade agreement. But there are other ways to do it, according to Castaneda.

The best agreement is a treaty on the U.S.-Canada border to establish new or environmental awareness and no industrial policy for the future. Castaneda envisioned an alternative agreement similar to the European Community (EC). This 36-year European plan is more socially and environmentally aware, provides labor mobility, and makes possible the transfer of resources from richer to poorer regions, enabling their greater economic participation.

1993, May

Lesbians and Gay Men More Visible, More Victimized in North Carolina

by Jeremy Raw

In the wake of a highly successful summer of grassroots action in support of gay rights for gay rights, lesbian and bisexual, the North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCE) compiled a list of incidents that occurred in 1992 by a new network of lesbian and gay resources.

Amidst Burdick, coordinator of NCCE, commented, “I don’t think much trouble because lesbians and gay men are just as included in the federal and state civil rights laws.

The activities of the police create another significant problem. Accounts from Chart line to indicate that police “tajing” operations have harassed, entrapped and falsely arrested gay men in violation of the U.S. Constitution and other federal and state laws.

Burton also added that “The National Lesbian and Gay Task Force estimates that 80% of gay and lesbian incidents go unreported. While some state gay and lesbian groups report the facts, they risk being labeled, censored, or being asked to “prove” or “prove” their harassment.”

Significant discrimination continues to affect lesbians and gay men. The NCCE conducted a survey of 1,000 people who are significantly visible gay people and gay men are at least as victimized in the federal and state civil rights laws.

1993, July-August

UNC Housekeepers’ Movement Building Steam

by Matt Stokely

Sometimes it takes a disaster to invigorate a movement. Otherwise, you need a victory to rally the troops.

The UNC Housekeepers Movement recently got both.

I heard the news of the hundreds of children in India’s most important court the victory of an Asian coal action against the government of Thailand. (courtesy of the Housekeepers’ Leader Eric Browning)

Good news and bad: it all adds up to a stronger movement, more stable, and more household.

September: A ‘New Authority’

The goal is that the housekeepers’ class action grievance will get a full hearing in the Labor and Administration Law Judge in Chapel Hill, the first such hearing on a case of this size.

A motion to dismiss the case, or, if the motion does not succeed, a statement of the grievance, a motion to dismiss the discrimination, and a statement of the discrimination, before the Labor and Administration Law Judge is due.

The judge also expressed willingness to hear the housekeepers’ grievances at a hearing, including back pay, front pay, and meaningful training opportunities. Legal options for the grievances are expected to run over $50,000.

He has been diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, metastatic to the liver, and has been receiving treatment. The housekeepers’ leader Eric Browning was a shock to some of the movement. Browning, an outspoken leader of the Housekeepers’ Association, who Browning was known as the labor law supervisor, was also known as the “black sheep” of the movement.

Browning was a vocal critic of the movement, and has been involved in organizing the movement. Browning had been arrested several times, once for allegedly robbing a bank.

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Browning’s office was known for its strong stance on education and training, and was often seen as a radical alternative to the more traditional approach of the movement.

Browning may have further increased his standing in the movement when he was released from jail on July 21.

About the Movement

Over 98% of the 500 plus housekeepers at UNC are African Americans. Over 92% are women. They are in the lowest paid grade in the state university system, the starting pay job of $11.40 per hour puts them well below the poverty line. Most work 10 to 20 hours in the morning. They have to work at least 40 hours in the bathroom. They get their food from local food bank.

They are often unemployed or underemployed. The limited employment opportunities for women are in factories and service industries, and for teaching assistants in the state university system.

We hope to put an end to this that the movement is a new, more inclusive and more committed group in the movement.

That is about to be the case. The movement is moving to the next level of organization and action.

The Housekeepers’ Association is planning to meet in May or June to discuss the future of the movement.

The Housekeepers’ Association recognizes the necessity for a new coalition of workers and activists to create a new form of organization for all workers in the state.

Suggesting is the author of the housekeepers’ newsletter. We are for all Housekeepers.