

HEY, TUCSON! DO YOU WELCOME A.F.T.A.?

THE ANDEAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT TALKS ARE IN OUR TOWN THIS WEEK, BRINGING HUNDREDS OF DELEGATES FROM PERU, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR, BOLIVIA, AND THE US TO NEGOTIATE THE TREATY. AFTA AIMS TO SPREAD THE FORCED ECONOMIC MODEL THAT THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA) FIRST INTRODUCED TO MEXICO, USA, AND CANADA IN 1994. AFTA WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR THE FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS (FTAA), FIRST INTRODUCED IN 1994 TO THE 34 NATIONS OF NORTH, CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. FTAA TALKS ARE CURRENTLY STALLED DUE TO INTENSE OPPOSITION FROM VENEZUELA, BRAZIL, AND OTHER COUNTRIES. BY GETTING WEAKER COUNTRIES TO SIGN REGIONAL AGREEMENTS, THE US HOPES TO ISOLATE BRAZIL AND VENEZUELA, THE ONLY COUNTRIES ECONOMICALLY POWERFUL ENOUGH TO STAND UP TO ITS BULLYING.

WHILE THESE TREATIES ARE DESCRIBED AS FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS, THEY ACTUALLY SERVE TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF INVESTORS, AND HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH COMMERCE. THESE TREATIES CONTINUE AND EXPEDITE THE DEREGULATION AND PRIVATIZATION OF BASIC NEEDS AND RESOURCES (EVEN WATER!), DEREGULATE CURRENCY TRADING, AND LOWER TARIFFS, OVERRIDING PRIOR TRADE, ENVIRONMENT, AND LABOR LAWS WON BY INDIVIDUAL SOVEREIGN NATIONS. THEY FURTHER AN ECONOMIC MODEL KNOWN AS NEO-LIBERALISM THAT EMPHASIZES SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC GROWTH ABOVE ALL ELSE, THROUGH THE EXPORT OF WHAT A COUNTRY CAN PRODUCE CHEAPLY AND THE IMPORT OF EVERYTHING ELSE. TRADITIONAL MODELS OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY ARE REPLACED BY GENETICALLY MODIFIED CASH CROPS FOR SALE ON THE VOLATILE WORLD MARKET. FARMERS CAN BE LEFT PENNILESS AND HUNGRY IF ANOTHER COUNTRY MANAGES TO PRODUCE THEIR CROP MORE CHEAPLY. THE PATTERN IS SIMILAR IN MANUFACTURING. LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES ARE REPLACED BY FOREIGN-CONTROLLED FACTORIES THAT ARE ALWAYS WILLING TO SHUT DOWN IF LOWER WAGES ARE AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE. THESE INDUSTRIES EXTRACT LOCAL RESOURCES FOR THE PROFIT OF OWNERS THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY, AND ABANDON THEIR WORKERS WHEN THE PILLAGING IS COMPLETE.

RECENT HISTORY SHOWS THAT THIS IS A DOOMED ECONOMIC STRATEGY. SINCE THE IMPOSITION OF NAFTA, MEXICO'S FOREIGN DEBT HAS INCREASED 500%. THE PRICE OF BASIC COMMODITIES HAS GONE UP BY 560% WHILE INCOMES HAVE RISEN BY ONLY 100%. THE DEFORESTATION RATE IN SOUTHERN MEXICO EXCEEDS 633,000 HECTARES PER YEAR. WATER TABLE LEVELS IN THE YAQUI VALLEY HAVE DROPPED TO 50% OF PRE-NAFTA LEVELS. OUTWARD MIGRATION HAS INCREASED DRAMATICALLY. A TINY GROUP OF BANKERS, STOCK BROKERS, AND RICH INDUSTRIALISTS PROFIT WHILE THE VAST MAJORITY SUFFERS. AFTA WOULD SPREAD THIS DISASTER TO THE ANDEAN COUNTRIES.

THESE TRADE AGREEMENTS EFFECT OVER A BILLION PEOPLE'S LIVES DIRECTLY, YET THE NEGOTIATIONS REMAIN SECRET TO REGULAR PEOPLE AND THEIR DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA ROUTINELY IGNORES THE SUBSTANCE OF THE AGREEMENTS. POLITICIANS SELDOM SPEAK ABOUT THESE ISSUES. NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE OUR FUTURE INTO OUR OWN HANDS. EDUCATE YOURSELF, EDUCATE OTHERS, AND DEMAND AN END TO PREDATORY ECONOMIC POLICIES.

March in opposition to the AFTA:

MEET 3 PM AT THE UA OLD MAIN BUILDING ON THE WEST SIDE OF CAMPUS ON FRIDAY, THE 3RD

WWW.NOAFTA.ORG
WWW.FTAAMC.ORG
WWW.RECALCA.ORG.CO



THE AFTA TALKS IN TUCSON WERE ORGANIZED BY MARY OKOYE, DIRECTOR OF TUCSON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND KENDELL BERT, DIRECTOR OF THE TUCSON OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE MEETINGS WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE TUCSON CONVENTION CENTER AT 260 S. CHURCH AVE AND THE RAMONSON CITY CENTER AT 181 W. BROADWAY. EQUIPMENT FOR THIS EVENT WAS SUPPLIED BY QWEST, VERIZON, AND IBM AT NO COST.