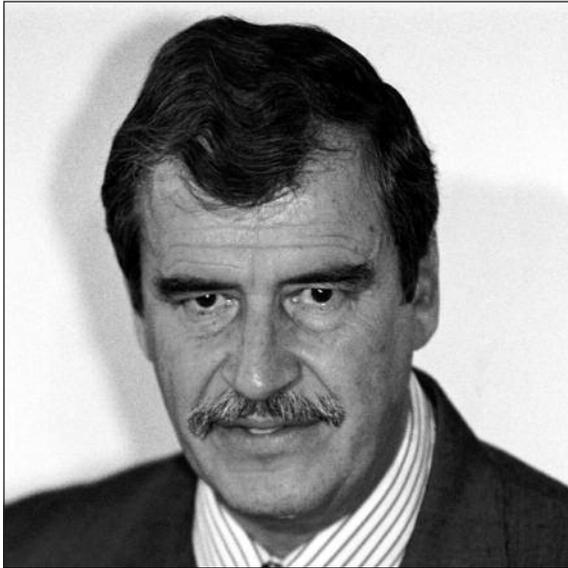
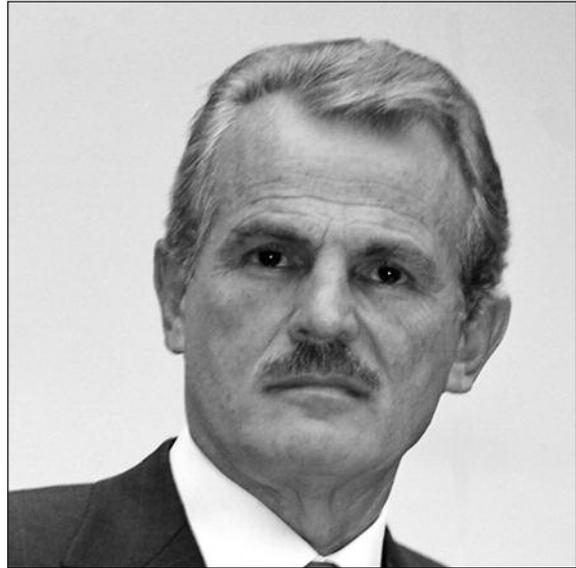


Mexico's Relations with the United States and Canada



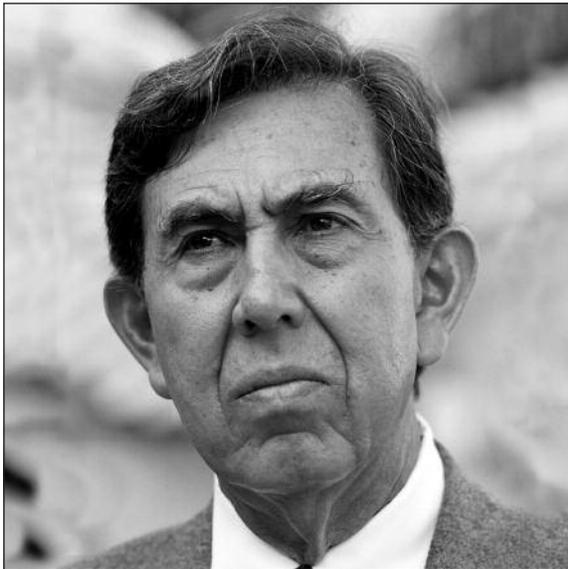
Octavio Nava/AE

Vicente Fox, Alliance for Change.



Octavio Nava/AE

Francisco Labastida, Institutional Revolutionary Party.



Antonio Nava/AE

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Alliance for Mexico.



Antonio Nava/AE

Gilberto Rincón Gallardo, Social Democracy Party.

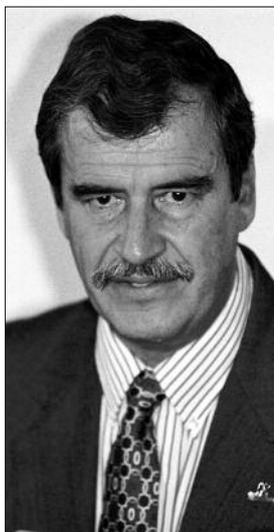
How Four Presidential Hopefuls Would Improve Them

Voices of Mexico interviewed four presidential candidates, Vicente Fox Quesada, Francisco Labastida Ochoa, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano and Gilberto Rincón Gallardo, about a topic of special interest to our readers: Mexico's relations with the United States and Canada.

It should be noted that although the interviews were done separately, we have merged them here to facilitate comparison of the candidates' positions on the issues. We should also point out that the order in which we print each answer, as well as the photographs and bullets, follows the criteria used by Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute to arrange the parties' emblems and candidates' names on the ballots and electoral documents: in the order they were registered as political parties. This mechanism has the stamp of approval of the parties themselves and aims to maintain impartiality. The party that has had official registration the longest is the National Action Party (PAN), followed by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the Social Democracy Party (PDS).

Two of the candidates are backed by alliances of several parties: Vicente Fox heads up the Alliance for Change, made up of the PAN and the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM); and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is supported by the Alliance for Mexico, made up of the PRD, the Labor Party (PT), the Party of the Nationalist Society (PSN), the Party of the Social Alliance (PAS) and the Convergence for Democracy (CD).

Voices of Mexico originally sent a questionnaire to all six presidential candidates. However, neither Manuel Camacho, Party of the Democratic Center hopeful, nor Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution candidate, responded to our repeated invitations.



“On the issue of migration, the main medium-term objective will be coming to an agreement to be able to then negotiate, within a North American common market, free transit of individuals and workers to lessen the gap in living standards on either side of the border.”

Voices of Mexico: *What aspects of Mexico-U.S. relations would you include on your agenda as priorities?*

Vicente Fox Quesada: To strengthen dialogue, cooperation and understanding between our two nations on the basis of mutual respect, the recognition of our asymmetries, interdependence and our common interests, the 2000-2006 bilateral agenda will emphasize migration, the protection of the human rights of Mexican men and women, economic and trade integration, drug trafficking, national security, cooperation on border issues and the environment. Now is the time to go from good will and political rhetoric to the instrumentation of the commitments we already have and create mechanisms and programs for mutual collaboration.

For example, on the issue of migration, the main medium-term objective will be coming to an agreement to be able to then negotiate, within a North American common market, free transit of individuals and workers to lessen the gap in living standards on either side of the border.

Taking drug trafficking as a shared problem of security, the strategy aims to fight it more energetically in its different stages (production, distribution and consumption), but with an interdisciplinary, integral focus that would emphasize co-responsibility and the transparency of the instruments for that fight and respect for territorial jurisdiction. Mexico also must do its part by fulfilling the agreements and broadening out the activities of the High Level Contact Group, purging its police forces, raising sentences for drug-related offenses, and in general perfecting pertinent legislation. The United States, for its part, should do the same, substituting effective bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for the current “certification” process and the application of the International Economic Powers Emergency Act.

Francisco Labastida Ochoa: North America is a strategic region for Mexico’s national interests and, therefore, relations with the United States and Canada are a foreign relations priority.

The relationship between Mexico and the United States is among the most diversified and intense in the world. We share a very long, dynamic border, with over 280 million crossings a year. Through NAFTA we have become partners in one of the biggest and most successful economic areas of the world. Our bilateral agenda includes a myriad of issues at the domestic, regional and global levels that must be addressed through a respectful and constructive dialogue in order to make the most of the current trends and opportunities that this unique relationship offers.

In this context, I would put a priority on four objectives. First, I will endeavour to strengthen mutual trust, consolidating and improving the institutional mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation we have developed over the past few years. From the Binational Commission to the High Level Contact Group that coordinates our efforts against drug trafficking, Mexico and the U.S. have established an institutional framework that is allowing us to make unprecedented progress toward the

management of common challenges with a constructive approach that takes into account the interests of both our countries.

Second, I will strengthen the mechanisms to protect and support Mexicans who migrate to and live in the U.S. Third, I would promote greater comprehensive, unconditional economic and political cooperation with respect for each other’s sovereignty to make the most of the opportunities stemming from globalization, while minimizing its negative effects. And, fourth—I would say our most challenging endeavour—I will promote a better understanding of each other’s culture and identity among our governments, private and academic sectors and, more importantly, between our peoples. This will be fundamental for reducing the negative stereotypes that affect our relationship.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano: A priority of the new government will undoubtedly be the

“Our consulates will work as never before to give all Mexican men and women residing or working temporarily abroad the attention and support they need to guarantee their civil and political rights. Among these are the ability to exercise their right to vote and to guarantee their safety in the United States and Mexico. We are prepared to denounce any abuses of our fellow Mexicans before the appropriate international bodies.”

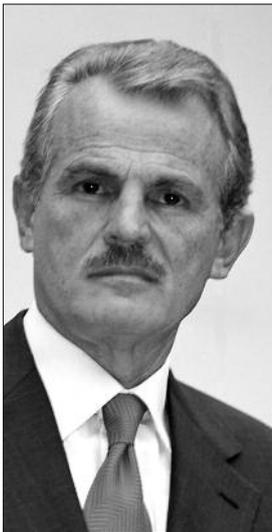
Vicente Fox

strengthening of the traditional ties of friendship between the United States and our country, consolidating and broadening out our economic, social, political and cultural links. However, it should be mentioned that this will be done on the basis of fashioning an agenda for dialogue between our governments that will put a series of negotiating points—or

points to be renegotiated— on the table about such vital issues as trade, the environment, migration, etc.

We will seek to strengthen and in some ways reconstruct our relations with the United States on the basis of mutual respect and the framework of a true alliance between nations. Mexico's foreign policy, an indicator of the degree of sovereignty the country enjoys, should be oriented toward egalitarian, democratic international relations, regulated by the criteria of autonomy and national self-determination. No decision, pact or commitment should be carried out if it runs counter to national interests, particularly if it implies greater sacrifices for the population.

Building a better future for Mexicans demands that we work on every level to make sure that integrating, inclusive trends dominate globalization so the country can be part of it in conditions of equity,



“We are proud of the growing political, economic and cultural importance of the Mexican communities in the U.S., and we are committed to protecting their rights and supporting them so that they maintain their ties with our country. In this sense, I would strengthen the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad, which has been very successful.”

equal opportunities and with full sovereignty allowing the entire population to enjoy its possible benefits.

Gilberto Rincón Gallardo: Social Democracy thinks that, first of all, relations with the United States should take on a broader social and human dimension. It is time to leave behind the strategy of dealing with bilateral issues through a compart-

mentalized agenda, which should be replaced with an integral agenda that will foster a more symmetrical relationship on both sides of the border. This should promote shared development, social well being, security and complete respect for human rights for people living along the border. The time has also come to say to our neighbors that broad agreements are needed that allow for legal, temporary labor by Mexican migrants.

Our relations with the United States must always maintain the strategic objective of encouraging as much as possible our nation's development, and, of course, it will be imperative that we eliminate nationalist prejudices and accept that we share common goals with the United States, like worldwide democracy, the defense of human rights and, as far as is possible, common tactics for the fight against drug trafficking. However, it should be clear that our opposition to all forms of hegemony or dominance by any power is essential to our foreign policy, just as the defense of the interests of our fellow Mexicans residing in the United States is a priority.

Voices of Mexico: *How do you think Mexican-Canadian relations could be improved?*

Vicente Fox Quesada: In different ways. For example, promoting with the United States and Canada itself the creation of different supranational institutions that would lay the foundation for a common market in 25 years.

Another option would be to create a bilateral parliamentary working group to regularly examine both countries' trade, scientific-technological, educational, migration and environmental policies and propose to their respective governments, the Ministerial Commission, the Mexico-Quebec Working Group and the Mexico-Canada Policy Planning Consultations policies and actions around these and other issues of common interest.

We must take advantage of our agreements to achieve conditions of reciprocity in our dealings with the United States.

In addition, Mexican-Canadian migratory labor agreements should expand to benefit a greater number of Mexican men and women.

Francisco Labastida Ochoa: Over the past five years, the relationship between Mexico and Canada has grown and improved dramatically in every possible area of cooperation. Its potential for expansion is still enormous. We have moved from what was called “respectful neglect” to a strategic partnership. To continue along these lines, in the first place, we must reinforce our political dialogue, while taking greater advantage of NAFTA. Even though we are now Canada’s second trade partner, with annual exports of over U.S.\$2 billion, our share of Canada’s total trade amounts to less than 3 percent. This shows that we still have many opportunities ahead of us in areas such as energy, agriculture, mining and telecommunications.

Second, we must broaden successful bilateral mechanisms like the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, which currently allows over 7,000 Mexican nationals to work in Canada every year, a success story that I would try to reproduce with the United States. This is a win-win program that benefits both Mexicans and Canadians, and it shows that we can endeavour in similar programs to further cooperate in areas like health, environmental protection, social development and educational and cultural exchanges.

Third, we must work together at the regional, hemispheric, and multilateral levels in order to provide more and better opportunities for the people of the Americas to progress and achieve better living standards. Mexico and Canada have worked closely on issues of global concern such as disarmament. The treaty to ban land mines is an outstanding example of this collaboration. This has also been the case with joint activities toward the creation of a hemispheric mechanism to evaluate efforts against drug trafficking and constructive ways to cooperate in the fight against this scourge. We must continue bilateral cooperation to support positive regional initiatives.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano: [The candidate did not answer this question. The Editor.]

Gilberto Rincón Gallardo: For some reason, relations between Mexico and Canada have not been developed to their full potential. Six years after NAFTA came into effect, Canadian investment in Mexico and its participation in our foreign trade are still very modest, smaller even than those of European countries like Germany. Mexico must step up its efforts to increase economic, political, trade and cultural relations with Canada, with which we share a clear vocation for peace. We should not forget that Canada is part of the Group of Eight, that it has always worked to deal with the problems of the developing world and that it has demonstrated an enthusiastic willingness to collaborate on the global commitments that the group takes on. We should also not forget that Canada is

“Above all, the significance of NAFTA has been the consolidation of clear and transparent rules to conduct trade relations between our countries and address issues like labor standards and environmental protection. This is fundamental to achieving even better results, and to harnessing the great opportunities that globalization and technological advances offer us for the benefit of our most precious resource: our people.”

Francisco Labastida

struggling to maintain its national identity vis-à-vis the growing cultural and economic influence of the United States, something that should be part of our strategic thinking.

Voices of Mexico: *What proposals would you make to follow up on the efforts already made by the Mexican government in tightening our links with*

the communities of Mexican origin in the United States and Canada?

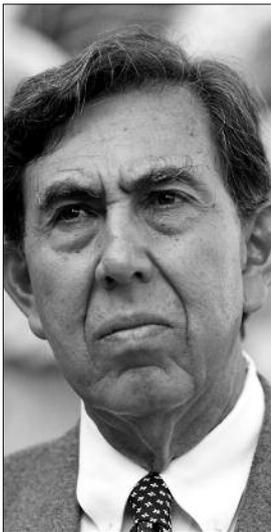
Vicente Fox Quesada: Our consulates will work as never before to give all Mexican men and women residing or working temporarily abroad the attention and support they need to guarantee their civil and political rights. Among these are the ability to exercise their right to vote and to guarantee their safety in the United States and Mexico. We are prepared to denounce any abuses of our fellow Mexicans before the appropriate international bodies. In order to do all this, consular budgets will be increased.

In addition, we will foster the creation of the Council of Mexicans Abroad so that the Mexican government and citizens can participate in the design and instrumentation of support policies. Mexican communities abroad will be organized so their efforts

their ties with our country. In this sense, I would strengthen the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad, which has been very successful in facilitating closer ties with our people abroad.

I would also promote a closer interaction among the private sector, universities and colleges, and between our people on both sides of the border through “traditional” communication channels, like the newspaper and TV show “La Paloma,” which is read and seen in every single Latino community in the U.S., and also through “new” media tools like Internet or cultural activities such as In-Site, the binational artistic and performance festival that takes place in the Tijuana-San Diego area.

Finally, I would also promote closer ties with the Mexican-American organizations which have contributed so much to the defense of the rights and the living conditions of our people abroad, like the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the National Council of La Raza, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials and the League of United Latin American Citizens.



“We are fighting for the current globalization process to include the free international transit of workers and migrants’ individual economic, social and political rights in their place of work and residence equal to those of local citizens. This is an issue that must be renegotiated in the North American Free Trade Agreement.”

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano: An important number of Mexican men and women have emigrated in recent decades to foreign countries, above all the United States. Several million of our fellow citizens are now there having gone with or without migratory documents, spurred by Mexico’s unemployment and poverty, seeking better living conditions. While crossing the border and living north of the border, undocumented migrants have been victims of repression, exploitation and racial exclusion, as have legal residents, although to a different degree.

While living abroad, Mexicans contribute work and creativity, but lack the essential individual rights that local citizens enjoy. They send part of what they earn by their sacrifices back to Mexico, benefitting their families and the country, but receive no protection or the support they need from the Mexican government. In these very difficult situa-

to better their families’ quality of life can improve the productive potential of their places of origin.

Francisco Labastida Ochoa: We are very proud of the growing political, economic and cultural importance of the Mexican communities in the U.S., and we are committed to protecting their rights and supporting them so that they maintain

tions, official discourse does not correspond to real actions and is usually conditioned by the pragmatism of the relations of dependency. Recently, legislation has made it possible for migrants abroad to retain their Mexican nationality when they adopt that of the country where they reside, but they continue to lack the right to participate in Mexican federal elections.

We are fighting for the current globalization process to include the free international transit of workers and migrants' individual economic, social and political rights in their place of work and residence equal to those of local citizens. This is an issue that must be renegotiated in the North American Free Trade Agreement and must be put on the agenda for treaty negotiations with the European Union.

We are obliged to actively protect the individual rights of Mexicans abroad, above all in the United States, in the framework of respect for its national laws and international agreements, as well as to offer them all the assistance within our power. We must also support their efforts to keep alive their cultural identity and language at the same time that they learn that of their host country. Giving the right to vote in federal elections to those who conserve Mexican citizenship is a demand of democratization and fair, necessary recognition of the conservation of their political rights. In addition, legislative efforts must be made to regulate remittances from U.S. and Canadian residents to their families in Mexico so they cost the least possible.

Gilberto Rincón Gallardo: The Mexican government has still not done enough to defend the interests of people of Mexican origin in the United States. The needs of this important sector of the population, which becomes more important to U.S. political life every day, must be more closely attended to. To do that, the government must have sufficient political determination and moral authority to be able to negotiate better treatment for our fellow citizens, particularly undocumented migrants,

with our neighbors. The time has also come to propose broad agreements in the framework of increasingly intense trade and economic relations that will allow for the legal, temporary, regulated presence of Mexican workers in the United States. It will also be essential to improve Mexican consular services in U.S. cities, making them more efficient and increasing their activities in the cultural and social sphere.

Voices of Mexico: *What is your balance sheet of Mexico in economic and political terms after six years of NAFTA?*

Vicente Fox Quesada: In general terms, the North American Free Trade Agreement has been positive for Mexico. However, while our exports to Canada and the United States increased considerably after the treaty came into effect in 1994 and

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Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas

it also facilitated U.S. government economic support for dealing with the crisis of that same year, the macroeconomic benefits have not yet been felt by the great majority of Mexicans. Despite this, we think that it would be inappropriate to renegotiate NAFTA as a whole. We do think that it is necessary to promote a greater flow of foreign direct investment in our country and satisfactorily deal with

the trade controversies that arise as a result of the trade dynamic itself.

We propose to advance toward a second phase of NAFTA with our trade partners through the creation over the next 25 years of a North American Common Market, in which not only would there continue to be free transit of goods, services, technology and capital, but also of persons. This would tend to gradually equalize wages and technology.

Francisco Labastida Ochoa: Our balance sheet is very positive. Our exports to the U.S. have grown from U.S.\$42 billion in 1993 to almost U.S.\$110 billion in 1999, and trade with Canada has increased 83 percent during the same period, from U.S.\$4 billion to over U.S.\$7 billion. Since NAFTA was signed, Mexico has become the United States' number two trading partner in the world,



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second only to Canada; it has also become Canada's second largest trading partner, following only the U.S.

Total trade in North America has grown 75 percent in five years, to almost half a trillion dollars a year, making it one of the most dynamic regions of the world, where jobs and new business opportunities are being generated each day, and, most

importantly, where disputes and controversies are settled constructively through institutional mechanisms. Above all, the significance of NAFTA has been the consolidation of clear and transparent rules to conduct trade relations between our countries and address issues like labor standards and environmental protection.

This, of course, has had a deeper impact, one that goes far beyond trade, because it is fostering greater trust and confidence among Mexico, Canada and the U.S., both at the governmental and non-governmental levels. This is fundamental to achieving even better results, and to harnessing the great opportunities that globalization and technological advances offer us for the benefit of our most precious resource: our people.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano: NAFTA has opened up a series of important economic opportunities for Mexico, but it has also created some significant problems. The Mexican negotiators who signed it six years ago did not wish to defend trade conditions based on equity and respect for our sovereignty and accepted a commercial opening that on many planes and levels was markedly asymmetrical and abrupt. This has caused, among other negative effects, the disappearance of thousands of small and medium-sized firms and the jobs they provided and, particularly, a significant drop in different areas of agricultural production.

NAFTA did not include articles to protect local production, particularly agricultural production, or compensatory funds to foster economic development in backward regions or areas negatively affected by the opening. In these conditions, only a few Mexican agricultural exporters and U.S. agribusiness have been and continue to be the big beneficiaries of this form of trade liberalization. It also did not include the negotiation of free transit for workers parallel to the free flow of capital, goods and services, nor did it provide for full political and labor rights for migrants. This deficiency is particularly

serious given the size of the flows of Mexican labor to the United States.

In the absence of domestic and international regulations, the free flow of worldwide speculative finance capital—rather than productive investment capital—not only does not benefit the country, but constantly threatens to generate crises like that of 1995 or bring us the effects of the recurring crises in other countries around the globe.

The government justified the inclusion of corn in the free trade agreement with the United States and Canada as part of a strategy to reorganize the agricultural sector, developing the crops that would give Mexico a comparative advantage and lowering the fiscal costs of subsidies to producers and consumers in the corn-tortilla chain. But this strategy implies, among other things, the destruction in the medium term of the base of genetic resources linked to the producers that NAFTA stipulates must stop growing corn. The disappearance of the government grain intermediary company, Conasupo, has led to Mexico's agricultural market being turned over to large multinational corporations, a few of which control more than 70 percent of the international grain market and determine the agricultural and trade policies of many of the world's countries. But not only basic grains have been affected by the economic opening. Other agricultural products, undoubtedly cattle and other animal products, have also been affected by the way NAFTA was negotiated.

The new government will push for the establishment of new international trade rules, rules equitable for all nations, rules that make it possible to regulate the worldwide flow of speculative capital and the global impact of local crises.

Gilberto Rincón Gallardo: More than six years after coming into effect, NAFTA must be evaluated to objectively determine its costs and benefits. On the one hand, it is true that in the last few years the United States has consolidated itself as our main trade partner, and Mexico is now the second

most important destination for U.S. exports, representing 7.5 percent of its world trade. However, in my view, NAFTA has five important defects that have begun to create conflicts and could make the treaty flounder if not corrected in time: the absence of a common regimen for dumping and compensatory subsidies and taxes, the fact that no regional industrial policy exists, the lack of a system for mutual recognition of technical norms, the fact that the whole system of the treaty is based on a very weak institutional mechanism and the non-existence of any system to regulate the real integration now taking place between the labor markets of both countries.

It is urgent we work to correct the defects that threaten NAFTA's future viability. This will require above all great political determination on the part of the three countries involved. The most difficult issue is linked to the creation of supranational

“It is urgent we work to correct the defects that threaten NAFTA's future viability. This will require above all great political determination on the part of the three countries involved. The most difficult issue is linked to the creation of supranational bodies to give the treaty institutional strength and make effective controversy resolution possible.”

Gilberto Rincón Gallardo

tional bodies to give the treaty institutional strength and make effective controversy resolution possible. In that sense, the reservations the U.S. government has always expressed about submitting to the dictates of multilateral bodies are well known. However, it is essential to exert pressure for NAFTA to have a truly solid institutional basis. ■■■