

# MANNA *in the wilderness*

June 2005

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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## Putting A Human Face On Trade Agreements

by Ryan Hall

It isn't often that those of us at the Catholic Worker get a chance to travel somewhere together as our work at home keeps us busy, but thankfully we have many wonderful volunteers to assist us when the opportunity arises. So last April, Gary, Eugene and I attended a national Catholic conference in Tucson, Arizona on the topic of border issues and the trade agreements that affect our country and Mexico. We were blessed to have three others from Las Vegas join us as well: Tim O'Callaghan, Fr. Bob Stoeckig and our own Bishop Pepe from Las Vegas. Much of the conference centered around what trade agreements are, the winners and losers of those agreements and the Catholic Church's moral vision of trade. We also spent one day across the border in Nogales visiting industrial parks where new *Maquiladoras* (U.S. owned factories) were built and where nearby squatters had set up a small colonia so they would be close to work.

When we spoke with some of the factory workers in Mexico they were grateful to have jobs, yet they worked in unsafe working conditions for less than a living wage. This was evident from the *colonias*, which were no more than a mile from the industrial park. These desolate shanty towns are common sights when new factories enter town. People are so desperate for jobs and so willing to work they squat on land nearby the factories collecting scraps from anything they can find to build a home so they are close to work. They often go years without any utilities, until the city puts in electrical lines, but almost never do they get running water. With no deed to the land workers face expulsion at any time.

These people work very hard for what they have, but living on the border and having so much influence from the U.S. culture it becomes hard not to hope for a better life and so many make that treacherous journey through the desert into the U.S. It was a moving moment during the conference when Bishop Kicanas of Tucson finished his speech in tears as he told us of walking into a small church in Mexico and seeing the terrified young men kneeling and praying for protection as they prepared to sneak across the border.

Those Mexicans who stay face the challenge that unfortunately many, even in the U.S., still deal with: joining

unions. We spoke with union organizers in Mexico and the U.S. who struggled daily to convince people that joining a union will help them, but so many are afraid to lose their jobs. Without higher wages from the Mexican factories many women who work in those jobs rely on money their husbands are able to send back home from the U.S.

sure they have sufficient food supplies, enhance rural incomes and promote rural development. 3) Trade documents should be made available during the process of negotiation for review and public comment. 4) Major elements of civil society, including groups representing the poor, business, labor and religious communities, should have

greater access to participation in the process. 5) Labor and environmental concerns should be integral to trade agreements. 6) Trade agreements should lead to economic and social improvements at home and abroad, particularly for the poor. 7) Trade agreements should foster the right to organize and bargain collectively.

The proposed CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement) currently awaiting ratification by our Senate contains few of the above moral criteria. There are no provisions to protect labor or the environment. Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini, president of the Secretariat of Central American and Panama Bishops said concerning the CAFTA treaty



**HOLY FAMILY, FARMWORKERS (1954)  
ENGRAVING BY FRITZ EICHENBERG**

From the Catholic Church point of view, it naturally sees its role as offering a moral perspective for decision-makers who shape trade policies, placing the human person at the center of all economic activity. Unfortunately, these trade agreements are driven by economics, not concern for the millions of poor affected.

Sr. Maria Riley compared the equality of the trade agreements to that of her playing golf with Tiger Woods. She said that she may play in the same location with the same rules, but she would clearly lose every time. The same is true for trade agreements among the wealthy and poor nations. The U.S. Bishops propose a set of ethical criteria that should guide trade negotiations: 1) The subsidies, tariffs and quotas of richer countries that severely constrict poorer countries in their ability to sustain their own agriculture should be reduced. 2) Developing countries should have flexibility to use subsidies, tariffs, quotas and other support measures to make

that the Guatemalan government "has excluded the protesting voices and, though it hurts me and angers me to say it, will actually ratify the treaty". To see how bad things will be for Central America, he said, one only has to look at the plight of Mexico today, where industrial wages have declined by 25 percent since NAFTA's (North American Free Trade Agreement) ratification and undocumented migration from the country has doubled.

Under CAFTA, many of the poor farmers in Central America (the majority of the population) may lose their land as the treaty requires Central American nations to remove tariffs and other restrictions on imported grains and other agricultural products from the United States. The predominantly small farmers of Central America will be no match for the highly subsidized and efficient U.S. farmers.

Though understanding trade agreements and the issues facing our south-  
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ern border are complex, there is always something we can do to make a difference in the lives of those who are suffering. Help support the U.S. Bishops and the poor by sharing the guidelines above and your opinion about the CAFTA treaty with your elected officials. Learn more about how these trade agreements will not just affect your community, but those in other nations. Visit the U.S. Bishops website on global poverty at [www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/) and support fair trade products at [www.crsfairtrade.org](http://www.crsfairtrade.org). The more we put a human face on these trade agreements the more likely we are to make a difference.

**August Desert Witness 2005  
August 4-7, UNLV and Nevada  
Nuclear Test Site**

contact: Nevada Desert Experience:  
702-646-4814

[www.NevadaDesertExperience.org](http://www.NevadaDesertExperience.org)  
(Nevada Desert Experience is also looking for a vehicle for summer use or to be donated.)

Mark Your Calendars-

**Second Annual Soupline Olympics Volunteer and Donor Party:  
October 16, 2005**

**We need Volunteers for Friday mornings and for our Hot Dog Feasts (July 7, August 4 & September 8) call 647-0728**

*"There were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war against Iraq. To say nothing of the fact that, given the new weapons that make possible destructions that go beyond the combatant groups, today we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a 'just war'". -*



*Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, May 2, 2003*

**IN MEMORIAM:**

**"No Nukes" Norb Drouhard**

by D. Eugene Bahn

We at the Catholic Worker will remember Norb in a special way because he had been living with us for a number of months when he died on April 6,

was a model for many. This was clear at the memorial service we held here at the Worker: Planning to have each person hold a candle, 50 candles ended up being far too few.



I remember one of the last moments I spent with Norb. He wanted me to help him fix his car's horn. The wire had come unattached and his farmer's hands were too big to reach into the space to fix it. When the job was done, and Norb tooted that horn again, he just giggled, and giggled. He was so happy because now he could call more attention to his car when he drove places. His

2005. Norb had been a member of our family, and we will miss him like a brother, like a father who passes too soon.

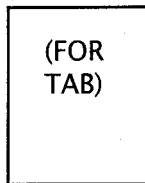
Norb was 80, and he said to me one day that he planned to live at least another 20 years. "No Nukes Norb," as he was lovingly called, had spent the past almost 20 years speaking out, protesting against the foolishness of war. "WWII Vet: War is MURDER, not Ca-

walking vigils on the Las Vegas Strip wearing a pro-peace sandwich sign were not enough. His hats and his shirts and his car were not enough; he wanted to do more. He wanted to call more attention to the message he held for the world.

And so he drove off that Thursday evening to go camp with the NDE Holy Week Peace walkers near the Nevada (Nuclear) Test Site so he could be with them on Good Friday morning for the last leg of the walk to the Site for our Nuclear Stations of the Cross and the annual crossing of the line. When the walkers started off that morning, while trying to catch up with those in front, Norb tripped on a cattle guard and fell. That fall contributed to Norb's death less than two weeks later. (The cause of death was deemed to be a subdural hematoma.)

Needless to say, it was a very sad day when we discovered that Norbert had passed on. But we here at the Worker will all remember a singing, humming, happy man, a man intent on spreading peace, a brother, a father, a warrior for what is right. We love you Norb.

**PRAY FOR PEACE IN OUR WORLD!**



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

sual-ty," read one of the many messages painted on Norb's car, along with "15 High Schoolmates Killed in WWII," "Get Corporations Off Welfare," and "Bring Our Troops Home, Alive, Today."

We will all remember Norb's hats and pins and t-shirts, all of which shared the truth that war is wrong, and peace and justice are good. This good man, this activist who walked hundreds of miles in peace walks on four continents,

**PLEASE JOIN US:**

- Wed., Fri., Sat., 6:00 a.m.:** Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.
  - Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.:** Breakfast served at G & McWilliams street to the poor and homeless.
  - Last Saturday of month; 8:30 a.m.:** Deliver food to people in need.
  - Wednesday; 8 a.m. -noon:** Hospitality Day, we invite 7 homeless men & women home for showers, to wash clothes, & lunch.
  - Thursday; 8 a.m. - 9 a.m.:** Vigil for Peace in front of Federal Courthouse, 333 S. Las Vegas Blvd.
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