

- Trade cannot exist in its own hermetically sealed world –apart from labour or environmental policy- and that is problematic for both Democrats and Republicans. It is a particular problem in the House of Representatives, where elections occur every two years and local social and economic issues dominate. The president may get the "fast track" but to do so he may have to buy off protectionist interests.

III. Trade liberalisation: civil society issues

Policy-makers are comfortable with free trade because in their eyes it amounts to economic democratic growth; however,

- There is a significant difference of opinion between "civil society" and "the state" on so-called 'theological issues', such as the 'net positive gain' of increased trade liberalisation. There does not appear to be any common terrain to resolve it. Unless there is a dialogue the division will likely remain.
- One positive result of the FTAA negotiations was that it was more inclusive of the CARICOM states. The concerns of the CARICOM states were given more weight at Quebec than they have been given in the past.
- National treatment is at the core of every liberalised trade debate, especially on cultural, energy and resource (water) issues. There must be a re-examination of NAFTA's Chapter 11 during the next round of the FTAA trade negotiations.
- In assessing the benefits of hemispheric free trade not enough attention is paid to the unequal benefits gained by particular elites and economic sectors and the disproportionate costs borne by more vulnerable (especially labour) groups. Those whose livelihoods are or may be negatively affected by trade agreements should be consulted and compensated.
- The old political institutions for public consultations are not working and new ones are needed. Civil society organizations have come to the conclusion that there is a large and growing democratic deficit in terms of consultation and transparency. Consultations with governments are designed more as instruments of co-option. A "real" debate on North American and global trade and financial issues must occur.
- There is some debate about the ability of civil society groups to affect policy and governments. Environmental groups used boycotts as a democratically acceptable way of getting governments to listen; for example, European threats to boycott Canadian forest products changed B.C. logging practices.