

tear-gassed if they so much as march in a peaceful demonstration against homelessness; and there are the untold thousands who have not been able to return home at all. The people who are doing well and making a killing are the private developers tearing down slums and putting up expensive condos in the heart of deserted communities, and the for-profit schools and hospitals moving in to replace deserted public systems.

This New Orleans is the true face of the Bush administration and the reason that George Bush actually chose to showcase this city and this agenda by having this important summit here. Bush and his corporate cronies are proud of what has happened in New Orleans and want to show it off. I think I was most offended when, at the closing press conference, George Bush looked down, winked at the assembled reporters there and said, "Isn't New Orleans FUN?" He then asked if people were "awake," implying that the reporters had partied all night and were part of his little joke.

On the plus side, labour leaders from all three countries came to counter meetings to show the growing opposition to the SPP all over the continent. Particularly important was the two-day meeting of energy workers from the three countries, under the leadership of Dave Coles of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, who are working together to build a sustainable energy future for North America.

Most important, we were there in New Orleans to witness this travesty of democracy and shameful display of might and wealth. That our government would be party to something as shallow and ruthless as this empty summit speaks volumes. As a Canadian I was ashamed. As a human being, I was devastated by what I saw and heard in the "other" New Orleans.

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**Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians.**

## BECOMING "BETTER NEIGHBOURS"

**O**n Monday, January 28, U.S. President Bush announced the fourth Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) Summit in his annual State of the Union address to the American public. Social justice activists perked up as he mentioned the devastated Louisiana city of New Orleans as the leaders' destination in April. Bush's announcement was especially timely for me, as I was about to embark on a speaking tour to the United States to talk about the SPP. I joined a panel of expert speakers on trade, immigration, NAFTA and the SPP on a "Better Neighbours" tour through the eastern and western United States, hosted by San Francisco-based Global Exchange.

We were a cast of three, and represented perspectives from Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. The speaker from Mexico spoke about the legacy and negative impacts communities are suffering from 14 years of enacted NAFTA policy. Audiences heard about the mass migration of farmers off their land due to the fact that their locally produced corn is being undercut by NAFTA-imported U.S. corn and can no longer compete within their own local market. As a result, farmers move into border towns in the hope of "maquila" jobs rumoured to be more steady and available, or to the United States to take up dangerous and underpaid jobs, living away from their families as undocumented migrants.

My American colleague spoke about the lives these Mexican migrants live in the United States – working "under the table," suffering unsafe conditions and having little recourse if their employer violates workers' rights such as failure to pay for work done. He also spoke about the conditions these migrants are forced

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to live in, sending every penny back to families in Mexico. Dispelling any of the right-wing myths that jobs are being taken from working Americans, the point was well made that U.S. immigration policy needs comprehensive reform to account for the impacts of free trade policies that have put pressure on Mexico's population.

And I brought the message from Canada, speaking out about the threats from the NAFTA-plus ideology manifested in the SPP. I spoke about our concerns with the SPP's lack of democratic process and threats to our water and energy security. I talked about the mass movement in Canada to stop the SPP agenda in its tracks, and I invited like-minded Americans to join us.

For the tour, we visited 17 communities, making the links between trade and immigration and highlighting that to become "better neighbours" we need our leaders to hold public summit meetings, be more open and transparent, and advocate policy in the public, not corporate, interest.

**For more information about Global Exchange, visit [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org).**

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