

Foreword

International trade agreements now are too important to be left just to international trade lawyers. The number of subjects encompassed by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the prospects for what may follow as it is implemented and built upon elsewhere, have aroused the interest of quite large segments of the American bar. Lawyers who consider themselves “international”—at least in some portion of their practice—soon may represent a majority of us.

The outpouring of interest in and support for the NAFTA among U.S. lawyers, as well as the bar’s support for other efforts to liberalize and encourage international commerce, have been impressive. The American Bar Association’s House of Delegates, at the urging of the Section of International Law and Practice, has adopted resolutions supporting approval and implementation of the NAFTA and also supporting continued fast-track status for the GATT negotiations. Educational programs explaining the NAFTA have sprung up like mushrooms and have proved popular in a variety of locales throughout the United States. All lawyers able to point in the direction of the nearest North American border seem to be interested.

The articles in this issue of *The International Lawyer* are an important contribution to this process of explanation and familiarization. They consider in detail a number of the most important aspects of the NAFTA, as well as its more general implications and the prospects for trade agreements that may follow.

As several of these articles point out, the NAFTA did not spring solely from the immediate negotiations that led to its signature. Rather, the concepts and procedures of the NAFTA are milestones on roads on which international lawyers have been traveling for many years. Regardless of the legislative fate of particular international agreements, they often become the foundations upon which other negotiators later build in their efforts to formulate international consensus. This is an important way in which international law is made, and the NAFTA is an outstanding contribution to that process.

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