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Collaborative Research: Mexican Migration

One of the issues that surprised me the most over the course of the collaborative research project is how politics can complicate a simple issue such as the design and construction of a fence. In an article called “How Not to Build a Fence”, Peter Skerry outlines the politics behind the construction of the U.S-Mexico border fence¹. On the one hand, business interests oppose the fence because they see Mexican immigration as a source of cheap labor and seek legislation such as a guest worker program. On the other hand, labor unions and average citizens support the fence because they see the increased Mexican immigration as eroding their quality of life and decreasing wages. Yet another group protests the fence for its impact on the environment. The resulting conflict has manifested itself in the form of the current border fence. Skerry writes that the primary fence is “made of corrugated steel panels... [that] form a kind of ladder that makes the fence easy for young and old.” The awkward compromise that is the border fence is a symbol of the division in our country over the immigration issue. It is consistent with an immigration policy that acknowledges the problem of illegal immigration, but does little to stop it. Recently, new legislation has passed regarding the creation of a new and more robust border fence. Although the new legislation sounds promising, a lingering question I have is whether the fence will end up being an effective barrier, or whether the complicated politics surrounding this issue will lead to another ineffective compromise.

¹ Skerry, P. (2006). How Not to Build a Fence. *Foreign Policy*, 64-67.