

Lynn Haller

EN111

MC Harper

April 2009

Progress

Growth, advancements, and technology are all good, right? These changes are especially good when they are brand new and hyped up by everyone. A hypothetical example of this would kind of go like this “Oh, wow!! A Lafarge plant is going to open up in Defiance, Ohio. They’ll be hiring 250 employees. That’s great!!” What most people don’t realize right away is that Lafarge, a cement plant, emits a lot of toxins into the air. One of these toxins is mercury which can cause developmental disabilities in children. Of course, Lafarge won’t come right out and say “Were going to open up in Defiance, Ohio and emit toxins into the air you breath that could potentially have adverse effects on your kids, but hey, were bringing 250 jobs to your area so everything is okay.” In reality though, changes do have consequences that can be very damaging to individuals, communities, and nations.

As U Sam Oeur recounted in his memoir *Crossing Three Wildernesses*, a lot of changes took place during the reign of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge’s mission was to control Cambodia and eliminate the western influences of imperialism and capitalism. Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, also wanted to make Cambodia into a rice producing machine because he used the rice to trade for weapons and ammunition. U Sam Oeur also explained some of the changes that occurred after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in his autobiography. Some of those changes included revolts and privatizations.

Some may say that revolts are a good thing because the people are voicing their opinions instead of just conforming. They are becoming independent. Revolts, however, can have severe

consequences. For example, in *Crossing Three Wildernesses*, U Sam Oeur explains a strike that occurred near a medical school. Students decided to watch the strike and were apprehended by the police. As a result, all the medical students assembled to demand the release of their fellow students and were shot at by the police. Even though the students wanted to express their opinions to the police, they were facing bullets instead. An act like this can have consequences as serious as death if not handled properly.

In addition, Cambodia wanted to have a market economy like other communist nations had around the world at this time. To do this, businesses needed to be privatized. Privatization has the benefits of private ownership of businesses instead of government ownership, competition, and efficiency. Privatization, however, had a lot of negative effects in Cambodia. U Sam Oeur explained in *Crossing Three Wildernesses* that when the privatization process began the elite members in the government acquired any land that they possibly could. They kicked families off of their land, sold people's homes, and seized their land to gain power and control. Obviously, these are some very shocking and threatening consequences of the privatization process that took place in Cambodia in the late 1980's.

Every change or advancement should be investigated quite thoroughly. Change may look good on the surface, but deep down it may have some serious consequences just waiting to come out. Progress, whether for good, bad, or both, will never stop happening though. The world is always evolving because life is always evolving, but we as humans have to take precautions to protect our families, communities, and our nation from irreparable damage.

Work Cited

Oeur, U Sam. *Crossing Three Wildernesses*. First Edition. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2005.