Chapter 3: “Internal Colonialism”: Native American Communities in the West
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SUMMARY

This chapter explores a second major theory related to the siting of hazardous facilities: Internal Colonialism. This is the idea that certain parts of the country are seen and treated as internal colonies when it comes to the extraction and processing of hazardous materials - specifically the South, Southwest, and Native American reservations. The natural resources and cheap labor available in these lower-income and low employment areas are exploited by the peripheral and Northern areas of the country. This chapter mainly focuses on Native American reservations and how occupants of these lands have suffered from the siting of hazardous facilities on their lands. One issue is that minority elites often act in concert with or are manipulated by corporate interests rather than their community residents. Another is that in the energy industry, Native Americans are paid less than non-Native American workers, who mainly occupy managerial and supervisory jobs. Native American reservations are heavily courted to host nuclear waste sites because of their remoteness. Problems that arise for Native Americans include toxic contamination, relict waste, low wages, deplorable working conditions, and health problems.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What do Native Americans stay on their reservations despite proximity to hazardous waste sites?