

USHCC Outlines Legislative Goals

Elbert Garcia
the LATino News Network

Washington, The United State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce unveiled its legislative agenda and honored California Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante and New York Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez (D-N.Y.) for their tireless efforts on behalf of Latino small business on the second day of its Annual Legislative Forums and Banquet.

The USHCC awarded Bustamante with the organization's Chairman's Award and Velazquez with their President's Award, distinctions that honor two individuals who have demonstrated great leadership in promoting the interests of the Hispanic business community locally and nationally.

"It is with the tremendous effort and dedication of individuals such as these leaders that we as a business community grow and develop," said George Herrera, president and chief executive officer of the USHCC.

However, most of the day centered on policy as the organization told Congress and the executive branch as what it sees as the legislative needs of the Latino business community.

"Hispanic businesses generate nearly \$200 billion annually which makes a significant impact on the economy, yet they still face challenges such as lack of procurement opportunities and limited or no access to capital that impede them from developing and expanding their businesses," the USHCC CEO said. "Our Legislative Plan specifically outlines the priorities that will ensure that Hispanic businesses have equal and consistent access to opportunities offered by the federal government and help them remain competitive in the business world."

Among the Washington-based organization's recommendations to government leaders:

Access to Capital: The USHCC said that it was imperative that Hispanic businesses have access to the capital necessary to grow and expand their enterprises to become more competitive in the business world, especially since the increased number and profits of the nation's Hispanic businesses have made these

institutions central figures within the country's financial markets.

Thus, policies should focus on investing federal funds to stimulate business and job growth in depressed areas; implementing and expanding federal programs that provide venture capital funds for Hispanic businesses; and licensing federal programs created to increase opportunities for economic development within low-income communities.

Procurement: Although the public sector is one of the biggest contractors of products and services in the country, the USHCC said that programs within the federal government to provide procurement opportunities for Hispanic businesses have often been poorly funded.

In order to improve the situation, the organization said that policies to increase opportunities for competition should focus on instituting incentives and enforcement measures to assist federal departments and agencies in meeting procurement goals geared toward minority, Hispanic and women-owned businesses. Policies should also support legislation to examine contract bundling practices within the federal government.

E-Commerce: Although an increased number of transactions and wealth is being tied to the Web, many Hispanic businesses are being shut out of the digital age because they do not have the resources available to connect them to the Internet.

In order to ensure that the Latinos have equal access to e-commerce business opportunities, the federal government should focus on increasing access to the Internet within Hispanic and underserved communities, creating federal programs that increase access to e-commerce for Hispanic businesses, and creating "federal programs that create high-tech training opportunities for Hispanic businesses."

Business Education and Training: While many school districts have recognized the importance of incorporating business education programs into school curriculums, the USHCC said that it was especially important to teach Hispanic youth the skills necessary to help them succeed in the workforce.

As a result, policies to increase access to

business education in low-income communities should focus on utilizing the assistance of the U.S. Department of Education and creating business education programs, which educate Hispanic students on business and entrepreneurship opportunities. Policies should also augment existing programs within the department "geared toward partnerships with small businesses to improve education initiatives for career development and training" and supporting the creation and expansion "of programs to provide training and technical assistance to students interested in pursuing entrepreneurship opportunities."

Although its policy recommendations had an eye toward the future, the organization want to make sure that used the day to also honor all the efforts that Bustamante and Velazquez have made in fostering the growth and development of Hispanic business in California and throughout the United States.

The organization pointed out Bustamante's service on the California Complete Count Committee and to the Commission for One California, which is helps promote tolerance and encourage dialogue on issues of diversity in the state. They also noted his advocacy efforts with the 2000 Decennial Census as part of the government's Census Monitoring Board.

Velazquez, elected to the House in 1993 from a gerrymandered district that includes part of Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan's Lower East Side, is a ranking member of the House Small Business Committee. She has frequently sought to aid Latino businesses in the area of economic development by defending the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program and while also holding federal departments accountable for their track records as regards minority federal procurement.

The USHCC is dedicated to representing promoting and advocating for the 1.4 million Latino owned businesses in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. In addition to actively promoting the economic growth and development of Hispanic businesses, the USHCC serves as the umbrella organization for 200 local Hispanic chambers nationwide.

News Briefs

Edward James Olmos, Special Guest Tech Hosting Hispanic National Bar Association Conference

The Hispanic National Bar Association, Regional Student Division, is hosting a convention at the Texas Tech University School of Law on March 23-24, 2001. According to Javier Espinoza, a second year law student at Texas Tech and Regional President for the area, the conference will attract students from over eighteen law schools in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arkansas. The conference is a collaboration of several student organizations from the law school including, the Hispanic Student Law Association, the Black Student Law Association, and the Minority Law Student Association. Conference registration information can be obtained by contacting javier@espinoza.net or by calling 806 438-3759. The Minority Pre Law Society, an undergraduate student organization at Texas Tech will be hosting the keynote speaker, former Texas Supreme Court Justice Raul Gonzales, at a luncheon on Saturday, at 12:00 p.m. in the City Bank Conference Room located at the United Spirit Arena. The Office of Cultural Diversity will be sponsoring students from Estacado High School's Law magnet program to the conference as part of their Preparing for College: Antes de que sea Demasiado Tarde Series. Raiders Rojos National Alumni will be sponsoring the entertainment for the luncheon. Featured entertainment will be Mariachi Raiders Rojos. Tickets to the luncheon are available for \$25.00 per person. Please contact Javier Espinoza for ticket information to the luncheon. Persons may also call Janie Landin Ramirez, Texas Tech's Cultural Diversity Administrator, at 806 742 8672.

Edward James Olmos, the multi-talented actor, producer, director, and community activist, will be a special guest of the conference. In April 1999, Olmos launched a nationwide multimedia project called *Americanos: Latino Life in the United States*, a celebration of Latino culture through photography, film, music, and print. An edited version of this presentation will be shown at the Lubbock Memorial Civic Center Auditorium on Saturday, March 24th at 7:00 p.m. and will be followed by a personal presentation by Olmos. Tickets to the event will be available free of charge to area students and the community at the Texas Tech School of Law administrative offices located on 19th & Indiana or from Janie Landin Ramirez in the Office of Cultural Diversity located at 19th & University, Bank of America Building, Suite 304B. Persons will need to pick these up in person, limit of four per person. Olmos will also conduct a private session with selected students from the Lubbock Independent School District. Funding for Olmos was provided by the Office of the Provost at Texas Tech University.

REGION XII, LSD, CONFERENCE March 23 & 24, 2001

FRIDAY, March 23
Welcome Reception
7:00 - 9:00pm
Speaker: Bill Jones (Present Legal Counsel to Texas Governor)
Location: International Cultural Center (Tech Campus)
Attire: Professional
Welcome Party
9:00 - 12:00pm
Location: N/A
D.J. featuring Latin Mixes and Cash Bar available

SATURDAY, March 24
Continental Breakfast
9:00 - 10:00am
Location: Law School Forum
WORKSHOPS SESSION I
10:00 - 11:00am
1) Job Searching Beyond Career Services
Confirmed Speakers: Sylvia Garcia, Texas Tech Career Services, Juan Carlos Rodriguez, 3L Texas Tech // (others not yet confirmed)
(This workshop will focus on finding employment on your own. Techniques and resources used by current 3L's that have found work without the aid of Career Services will be shared and discussed.)
2) Pro's & Con's of Working as a Solo Practitioner, Working in a Firm, or Working for the Government
Confirmed Speakers: Juan M. Gonzalez, Langley & Banack San Antonio; Paulina M. Jacobo, Assistant U.S. Attorney-Northern District of TX; Robin Green, Law Offices of Robin Green, Lubbock, TX; Alejandro Mercado, Law Office of Alejandro Mercado, San Antonio, TX.

(Representatives in each field of work will provide a synopsis of how and why each chose their respective areas, plus the speakers will highlight the pro's and con's of their work. The forum will end with an open question-and-answer session.)
3) The Politics of Being a Public Official
Confirmed Speakers: Sam Medina, 237th District Court Judge, Lubbock, Texas.
(this workshop will provide a realistic assessment of a political career.)
4) The Role of the Hispanic Attorney in the Community
Confirmed Speakers: Ray Valencia, Professor - St. Mary's University, Emilio Abeyta, Solo-Practitioner and community activist, Lubbock, Texas.

WORKSHOPS SESSION II
11:00 - 12:00am
All four workshops will be repeated, with the exception of (1.) Job Searching Beyond Career Services. In its place we will offer:
A.) Insider's Guide to Resumes and Interviews.
Presentation by Ana I. Stevens, recruiting coordinator for Kemp Smith in El Paso, TX.
(This workshop will focus on the do's and don't's of resume writing and interviewing.)

LUNCHEON
12:00 - 12:45pm
Location: United Spirit Arena
Enjoy a delicious lunch catered by the Marriott Hotel while listening to the music of the Mariachi Raiders Rojos and enjoying the Nuestra Herencia Ballet Folklorico.
LUNCHEON SPEAKER: Former Texas Supreme Court Justice, Raul Gonzalez
12:45 - 1:30pm
HNBA IN-HOUSE MATTERS
1:45pm - 3:00pm
Location: Texas Tech School of Law, Room 109
We will take this time to accept and process applications to join the HNBA and vote for next year's president, as well as discuss any organizational matters of concern.
FREE TIME
3:00 - 7:00pm
This time will be open to you as a guest to relax or view the city, visit the mall, etc...
EVENING SPEAKER: Mr. Edward James Olmos
7:00 - 9:30pm
Location: Lubbock Memorial Civic Center
We will be opening up this event to the community but will reserve seats for the HNBA Conference guests. We will be screening an edited version of 'Americanos,' Mr. Olmos' latest project focusing on cultural differences, identity and unity. Afterwards, Mr. Olmos will take the podium.

Censo Sigue Con Significantes Datos sobre Hispanos

Según datos arrojados por el Censo del 2000 en el resto del estado los hispanos son el grupo con mayor crecimiento poblacional en los últimos diez años. Estos resultados, de acuerdo a especialistas, podrían llevar a una reestructuración de los sistemas políticos y educativos del estado, que tendrían que hacer mayor hincapié en los problemas específicos de la comunidad hispana. Entre los asuntos más apremiantes figuran la deserción escolar, poco acceso a servicios médicos y la apatía en el ámbito

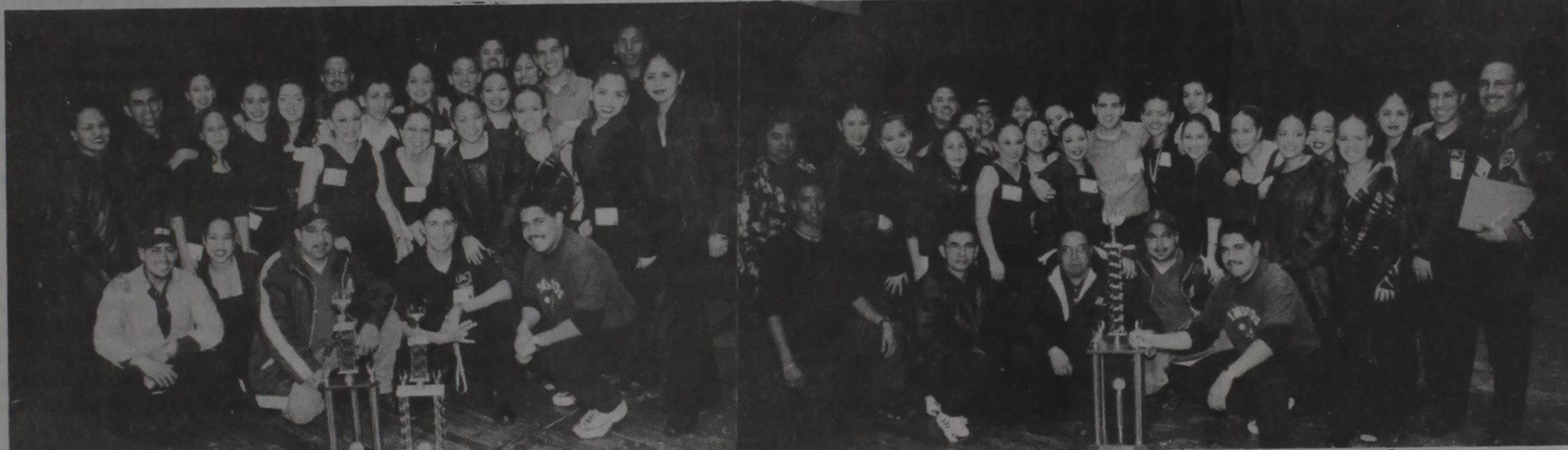
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"El Respeto al Derecho Ajeno es La Paz."
"Respect for the Rights of Others is Peace"
Lic. Benito Juarez

EL EDITOR

Established 1977 - Texas' Oldest Hispanic Owned Newspapers
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Hispanic Political & Community Leaders Disagree Over Budget Effect



Grupos folkloricos de todo Tejas y Nuevo Mexico compe-tieron este fin de semana para premios y para el orgullo de ser nombrado "Mejor del Festival Viva Aztlan." Al terminarse el grupo folklorico "Paso del Norte" de El Paso Tejas logro ganara. El grupo se comprometio venir

a el Festival el año proximo para hacer una presentacion especial. El Festival Viva Aztlan es organizado por Lubbock Centro Aztlan y lleva 7 años en existencia.

By James E. Garcia
Politico Magazine
March 16 (Politico) -- A coalition of Hispanic and Black Congressional Democrats say President Bush's budget and tax cut proposals "leave too many behind."

"There is a deep sense of concern which translates to a deep sense of frustration" with Bush's budget plan, said Rep. Silvestre Reyes, D-Texas, the chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. "The numbers don't add up."

Hispanic and Black caucus leaders were joined at a Thursday news conference by Rep. Dick Gephardt, the House Democratic leader from Missouri. Gephardt said Bush pledged to "unite our country and leave no child behind," but the budget does not do that.

But Bush's plans also have Hispanic support, including the backing of the increasingly influential U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

As the Republican-led Congress ponders its next move on the Bush proposals, Hispanic and Black Democrats in Congress held a joint press conference Thursday to declare that the Bush's "Blueprint for New Beginnings" short-changes most Hispanics and African-Americans.

In a lengthy report titled "The Impact of the Bush Budget on Black and Hispanic Families: Leaving Too Many Behind," the multiracial coalition asserts that Bush's budget "does not invest enough in education, health care, law enforcement" and programs that bridge the "digital divide" - the growing disparity between minorities and whites

with respect to computer and Internet access.

President Bush has proposed \$1.6 trillion in tax cuts over the next 10 years, including reductions for people in all income brackets. Most Democrats and some Republicans have criticized the Bush plan as too much too fast, and tilted in favor of the rich.

Economists estimate that more than \$5 trillion in surplus tax revenue will be collected over the next decade, though most add that an economic downturn or other unforeseen events could reduce that figure dramatically.

Bush says Americans are simply overtaxed and deserve a break. He also insists that tax reductions will spur economic growth. Gephardt recently told *Politico Magazine* that he prefers a \$900 billion tax cut over the next decade because that would provide taxpayer relief and still leave enough money to protect and expand important government programs.

While most Hispanic leaders agree with Gephardt's assessment, George Herrera, president of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, thinks Bush's plan is good for small businesses and therefore good for Hispanics in general.

"President Bush is providing the impetus to develop and expand Hispanic small business. His plan is sensible, fair and greatly reduces the inequities that currently exist within the current tax code," Herrera said. The USHCC is the largest and most powerful Hispanic business association in the nation.

Herrera's views were second-

ed by the head of the Hispanic Business Roundtable, a smaller and pointedly more conservative pro-business group.

"The President's tax relief plan will inject the much needed capital we need to turn around our slowing economy and help Hispanic families everywhere," said HBR President Mario Rodriguez, who agrees with Bush's claim that a tax cut will stimulate the sluggish economy.

Remedios Diaz-Oliver, a member of the HBR board of directors, added that many Hispanic families would benefit from proposals to double the "child tax credit" to \$1,000 and eliminate the "marriage penalty tax."

But in their report, Congressional Democrats assert that "most black and Hispanic Americans with children would get no tax cut at all," under the Bush plan, "while much needed improvements in better education, health care, Social Security and Medicare important to minorities are sacrificed" to help Bush meet his tax cut goals.

The report further claims that Bush's tax cuts will actually end up costing more than \$2 trillion over the next 10 years. And even though Bush insists everyone will get relief under his proposal, "The reality is that the tax cut will benefit the wealthy while leaving a majority of black and Hispanic families with children behind," the Democrats' report found. Specifically, 45 percent of the Bush tax cuts will go to wealthy families in the top 1 percent of income.

Defenders of the Bush plan say the rich get the biggest benefit because they pay more in taxes. They also say that

wealthy investors will use that money to spur additional economic investment and grow the economy.

The Democrats' report, meanwhile, points to research by Washington-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities that shows that 53 percent of African American and Latino families with children would receive "no tax reduction if the Bush plan were enacted, even though 75 percent of these families include someone who is working." The report prepared by Hispanic Congressional Democrats found that about 6 million Black and Hispanic families, including 12 million children, would receive no benefit from the Bush proposal.

Many Black and Hispanic families will receive no tax gain under the Bush plan because they do not earn enough to owe federal income tax -- although they do pay substantial amounts of payroll and other taxes. "Millions of black and Hispanic families fall into this category," the Democratic report states.

While that's true, HBR Executive Director Robert Deposada said in a press statement that critics of the Bush plan "ignore the fact that a vast majority of [Hispanic] small business owners pay personal income taxes on the money they earn in their businesses. And by reducing the personal income tax rates, Bush's plan will be a great boost for these small business owners." Virginia Gov. Jim Gilmore, chairman of the Republican National Committee, adds, "The President's budget proposal helps Americans from all walks of life"

La Enseñanza Que Cesar Chavez Nos Imparti

Por Dick Meister

El Día de César Chávez es el 31 de marzo en California, siendo este año la primera vez que se observa el feriado oficial en el estado, y es un día en el que podemos considerar las lecciones que su vida nos impartió, y en el que podemos considerar lo que podríamos hacer nosotros para continuar con los esfuerzos extraordinarios que él estableció para ayudar a los trabajadores agrícolas de nuestra nación.

Ante todo Chávez probó que los pobres y los oprimidos tienen el poder de prevalecer contra sus oponentes más fuertes -- si pueden organizarse efectivamente y adoptar como táctica principal la doctrina de la lucha por justicia sin violencia. El mismo había aprendido esta lección por medio de sus estudios de Martín Luther King Jr. y el dirigente hindú Mohandas Gandhi. "Tenemos nuestros cuerpos y espíritus y la justicia de nuestra causa como armas," explicaba Chávez.

Era un hombre brillante, creativo, valeroso y obstinado, de mirada triste y voz calmada que hablaba de la militancia en un tono mesurado, dirigente bondadoso con una paciencia inmensa que ocultaba tremendo talento estratégico bajo una sonrisa tímida y una actitud enteramente abierta.

Como trabajador agrícola él mismo, Chávez organizó con sumo cuidado un movimiento de base que permitió que sus colegas trabajadores explotados se formaran en sindicato, el Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas. A partir de ese momento solicitaron -- y lograron -- el apoyo esencial de millones de participantes de otros rubros que se unieron al llamado del sindicato a boicotear el producto de los cultivadores que les negaran la concesión de contratos.

La lucha duró cinco años, pero

en 1970 el sindicato al fin había ganado los primeros contratos sindicalistas de trabajadores agrícolas, nunca antes vistos en la historia. Cinco años más tarde el sindicato logró su objetivo principal: la declaración de la ley californiana -- el Acta de Relaciones Laborales Agrícolas -- que sigue vigente hoy como la única ley existente que exige que los cultivadores negocien con los trabajadores agrícolas que votan por la sindicalización.

La lucha fue en extremo difícil para los trabajadores agrícolas empobrecidos, y Chávez arriesgó su salud -- y probablemente su vida -- por darles ejemplos extremistas de los sacrificios que se hacían necesarios para ganar la victoria. Lo más notable fue que se sometía a ayunas públicas, y muy largas, que contribuyeron a que se sumara el público general a la causa de los trabajadores y que muy posiblemente contribuyeron a su muerte temprana, a los 66 años, en 1993.

Por razones del incumplimiento generalizado del Acta de Relaciones Laborales Agrícolas gracias a las administraciones republicanas que se oponían a las políticas laborales, para 1993 el número de miembros del sindicato había disminuido muchísimo y el sindicato sólo retenía unos cuantos de los cientos de contratos que había ganado. No obstante, la muerte de Chávez sirvió para volver a enfocar el sindicato en tareas de organización. Desde entonces los números de miembros y contratos han ido aumentando paulatinamente.

Más de la mitad de los cultivadores de rosas en California, incluyendo el cultivador más grande, operan con contratos del Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas, al igual que la mayoría de los que cultivan champiñones en el estado, la viña más grande del

estado de Washington, Chateau Ste. Michelle, y el campo de cultivo de champiñones más grande de la Florida. También en el condado de Sonoma, los trabajadores de la viña Gallo, la más grande a nivel mundial, están protegidos por un contrato del Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas.

Ninguna de las victorias recientes del sindicato significa más que la firma del contrato por tres años en los primeros días de marzo con Coastal Berry, los cultivadores de fresas más importantes a nivel mundial y prospecto principal en la campaña de cinco años por parte del sindicato para sindicalizar por completo la industria de la fresa en California, que aporta \$650 millones anuales. Si bien el contrato cubre sólo un 60 por ciento de los 2,000 empleados de Coastal Berry, establece el precedente importante de haber negociado los mejores términos laborales nunca ganados. Ganarán hasta \$12 la hora, con media docena de días feriados pagados, vacaciones pagadas, seguro de vida y de salud y otros beneficios que cubren también a los dependientes, además del establecimiento de un proceso de agravios y el sistema jerárquico por antigüedad.

Estos beneficios están en contraste agudo con la manera en que están tratados la mayoría de los trabajadores agrícolas. Continúan enajenados en la pobreza, sus sueldos y condiciones de vida y trabajo una vergüenza nacional. Carecen de garantías, cuentan con pocos derechos, si tienen alguno, y no tienen ninguna protección de las decisiones arbitrarias tomadas por sus patrones.

El contrato de Coastal Berry bien puede ser tan importante como la victoria de los primeros contratos que el Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas negoció

con los cultivadores de uva hace tres décadas.

Los esfuerzos actuales del sindicato se extienden mucho más allá de los campos de fresa californianos. Otras campañas importantes incluyen:

-- Campañas por organizar a los que cosechan manzanas en el estado de Washington y trabajadores de varios diferentes cultivos en Arizona, Texas, Florida y otros lugares, además de esfuerzos por lograr que las autoridades locales mejoren y aumenten los servicios públicos a su disposición.

-- Un boicot de las verduras congeladas y champiñones frescos que vende PictSweet, que repetidamente se ha negado a negociar un contrato que cubriría miembros del sindicato que trabajan en los campos de cultivo de champiñones de la compañía en el sur de California.

-- Unirse con otros sindicatos para luchar por la amnistía para los 6 millones de inmigrantes indocumentados en los Estados Unidos -- muchos de ellos trabajadores agrícolas -- a la vez que fortalecen el derecho a organizarlos. Con todas estas campañas, como con todo lo que hace, el Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas necesita mucho apoyo del público general. Que se lo diéramos sería honrar de verdad la memoria de César Chávez y su lucha de por vida para asegurar la justicia social y económica de los que cultivan y cosechan la comida que nos alimenta a todos.

Dick Meister, periodista de San Francisco, California, ha cubierto el Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas desde que lo fundó César Chávez. Es co-autor de "A Long Time Coming: The Struggle to Unionize America's Farm Workers," que publica MacMillan. (c) 2001, Hispanic Link News Service. Distribuido por Los Angeles Times Syndicate International

Cesar, El Amigo Al Que Yo Recuerdo

Por Marion Moses, M.D.

El día que cumplió 66 años, le mandé a César Chávez por fax un saludo en el que señalé que su padre había vivido hasta los 101 años, y su madre hasta los 99, con lo cual daba por sentado que César y yo seguiríamos colaborando durante muchos años más. Por desgracia, el tiempo que le quedaba para vivir sería de sólo tres semanas.

El 28 de marzo, fecha en la que hubiera cumplido los 74 años, la pérdida que sigo sintiendo se consuela con abundantes y muy buenas memorias que guardo de los muchos años en los que tuve el privilegio de trabajar y compartir amistad con este gran hombre. Su grandeza no era obvia a flor de piel.

César era un hombre de perspectiva clara y de opiniones fuertes. Podía ser muy obstinado (y decía lo mismo de mí). Nuestro trabajo con el Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas en los años sesenta supuso exigencias extraordinarias, sacrificios personales y un compromiso absoluto de nuestra parte. Lo que nos inspiraba y nos enaltecía se mezclaba con lo tedioso y mundano, que era la gran mayoría del trabajo. No era fácil siempre adecuarse ni organizar todo, y con los años muchos abandonaron el sindicato manifestando varios niveles de confusión, perplejidad o conflicto.

César es una de las personas más realistas que he conocido nunca, hombre de talentos para la organización inigualables, de una gran integridad personal y una dedicación inamovible a la lucha sin violencia. Comprendía claramente la base económica, política y social de la opresión de los trabajadores agrícolas, al igual que los intereses agrícolas fuertes alineados en su contra. No quería jamás caer en fomentar o apoyar actos violentos ni en derramar sangre como había sido la historia de la organización de sindicatos anteriores.

Al llegar yo por primera vez a Delano en 1966 para trabajar como voluntario para el sindicato, recuerdo haber pensado que la única manera de ganar contra tanta fuerza sería por milagro.

El "milagro" fue el ejercicio del poder del boicot de la uva, que tocó profundamente el sentido de justicia social de gran parte de la comunidad, más allá de los trabajadores. César siempre decía que si había suficiente gente haciendo algo mínimo, la diferencia resultante sería inmensa. Al pedirles que hicieran algo pequeño -- "No compre uvas" -- el sindicato comenzó a colaborar con otros sindicalistas, activistas pro derechos humanos y el medio ambiente, grupos religiosos, estudiantes y ciudadanos corrientes, colaboración que resultó en establecer por primera vez en la historia de los Estados Unidos un sindicato poderoso de trabajadores agrícolas.

El boicot de la compra de uvas repercutió largamente, llegando incluso a Hollywood. En la película "Sleeper" ("El dormilón") de Woody Allen, al personaje de Allen le preguntan si ha hecho algo significativo en su vida. Responde, "Una vez dejé de comer uvas por 24 horas." Una encuesta de Field en 1975 encontró que 17 millones de personas en

los Estados Unidos habían participado en el boicot de la compra de uvas.

Una gran parte del mensaje del boicot fue el uso de pesticidas. Chávez era un crítico severo del uso de sustancias químicas tóxicas en la agricultura. Era promotor ferviente de métodos de cultivo que fueran sostenibles y naturales. El mismo cultivaba verduras con métodos orgánicos en La Paz, sede del sindicato que incluía un complejo para la vivienda. Le preocupaba profundamente la carga tóxica de pesticidas que llevaban de forma tan desproporcionada los trabajadores agrícolas y sus familias. Se apenaba muchísimo con los niños de los trabajadores que sufrían de cáncer y defectos congénitos.

En una de las últimas conversaciones que tuve con César, unas dos semanas antes que muriera, hablamos de los pesticidas y las negociaciones de contratos del sindicato. El quería crear un nuevo enfoque y otro vocabulario que renovarían y fortalecerían las protecciones al consumidor de los efectos de los pesticidas. Nuestro lema era: "Si al trabajador se le protege en el lugar de trabajo, el consumidor estará protegido en el mercado."

Recordábamos que la primera prohibición del pesticida DDT en los Estados Unidos no fue originada por la Agencia de Protección al Medio Ambiente en 1972, sino por un contrato del Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas en 1967.

Para las generaciones futuras el uso actual de pesticidas tóxicos en la producción agrícola será considerado como una práctica extraña de sus antepasados. Verán a Chávez como una luz brillante en la oscura ignorancia, que se oponía a prácticas agrícolas tóxicas imposibles de sostener y que ponían en peligro la salud de los trabajadores, los consumidores y el ambiente.

Era también un hombre dedicado a su familia. Con su esposa, Helen Fabela, tuvo ocho hijos, tres de los cuales trabajan hoy para el Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas. Su hija Linda ("Lu") trabajó para el sindicato hasta su muerte en octubre a la edad de 49 años por complicaciones de escleroderma. Descendientes de Chávez hay 30 nietos y cuatro bisnietos.

César ha sido ejemplo viviente que si uno no se olvida de la gente, si no se distrae, y si puede mantener intacto su sentido de justicia social, no se perderá por el camino. No se sentirá quemado. Podrá hacer posible lo imposible. Yo recuerdo a César como el hombre que rompió con el ciclo de desesperación y pesimismo.

La vida y el trabajo de César Chávez fueron un regalo a todos los ciudadanos del mundo que luchan por la justicia social y del medio ambiente. Nos enseñó las conexiones invisibles entre todos nosotros y la tierra.

(Marion Moses, M.D., es presidenta del Pesticide Education Center en San Francisco, California. Se hizo activa en apoyo a las causas de los Trabajadores Agrícolas Unidos en los años sesenta y fue médica personal de César Chávez hasta su muerte en 1993.) (c) 2001, Hispanic Link News Service. Distribuido por Los Angeles Times Syndicate International.

What Cesar Chavez Taught Us

By Dick Meister

César Chávez Day is coming up March 31 in California, an official state holiday being observed for the first time -- a day to consider the profound lessons his life taught us, a day to consider what we might do to help carry on his extraordinary efforts on behalf of this nation's farm workers.

Chávez proved, above all, that the poor and oppressed can prevail against even the most powerful of opponents -- if they can effectively organize themselves and adopt nonviolence as their principal tactic. He learned that lesson himself from his studies of Martin Luther King Jr. and Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi.

"We have our bodies and spirits and the justice of our cause as our weapons," Chávez explained. He was brilliant, creative, courageous and obstinate, a saddy-eyed, disarmingly soft-spoken man who talked of militancy in calm, measured tones; a gentle and immensely patient leader who hid great strategic talent behind shy smiles and an attitude of utter candor.

As a farm worker himself, Chávez carefully put together a grassroots organization that enabled his highly exploited fellow workers to form their own union, the United Farm Workers. Then they fought -- and won -- the essential support of millions of outsiders who heeded the UFW's call to boycott the produce of growers who refused

to grant them contracts.

It took five years of struggle, but in 1970 the UFW finally won the first farm-union contracts in history. Five years after that, the union reached its primary goal: enactment of California law -- the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, or ALRA -- that remains the only law anywhere that requires growers to bargain with farm workers who vote for unionization.

The struggle was extremely difficult for the impoverished farm workers, and Chávez risked his health -- if not his life -- to provide them extreme examples of the sacrifice necessary for victory. Most notably, he engaged in lengthy, highly publicized fasts that helped rally the public to the farm workers' cause and that may very well have contributed to his untimely death at 66 in 1993.

Thanks in part to extremely lax enforcement of the ALRA by anti-labor Republican administrations, UFW membership had declined steeply by then, and the union retained only a handful of the hundreds of contracts it had won. But Chávez's death refocused the union on organizing. The numbers of members and contracts have been rising, albeit slowly, ever since.

More than half of California's rose growers, including the country's largest, are now under UFW contracts. So are most of the state's mushroom growers; Washington state's largest win-

ery, Chateau Ste. Michelle; and Florida's largest mushroom farm. Workers in California's Sonoma County vineyard of Gallo, the world's largest winemaker, also are now protected by a UFW contract.

None of the UFW's recent victories is more significant than its signing of a three-year contract in early March with Coastal Berry, the world's largest strawberry grower and a main target of the union's five-year campaign to unionize California's \$650 million-a-year strawberry industry. The contract covers only about 60 percent of Coastal Berry's 2,000 workers, but it gives them the important precedent of by far the best terms any farm workers have ever won. They'll be paid as much as \$12 an hour, get a half-dozen paid holidays, paid vacations, health and life insurance, and other benefits that also cover their dependents, plus a formal grievance procedure and seniority system.

That's in sharp contrast to how the vast majority of farm workers are treated. They are still mired in poverty, their pay and working and living conditions a national disgrace. They have no guarantees, few, if any, rights, no protection from the arbitrary acts of employers.

The Coastal Berry contract could very well be a breakthrough comparable to the winning of the UFW's initial contracts from grape growers three

decades ago.

The union's current efforts, however, extend far beyond the strawberry fields of California. Other major campaigns include:

-- Organizing drives among apple pickers in Washington state and workers in various other crops in Arizona, Texas, Florida and elsewhere, as well as attempts to get local authorities to improve and expand the public services available to them.

-- A boycott against the frozen vegetables and fresh mushrooms marketed by PictSweet, which has repeatedly refused to negotiate a contract covering UFW members at its Southern California mushroom farms.

-- Joining with other unions to seek amnesty for the United States' 6 million undocumented immigrants -- many of them farm workers -- and a strengthening of the right to organize them.

In those campaigns, as in all it does, the UFW needs strong public support. Providing it would truly honor the memory of César Chávez and his lifelong struggle to secure economic and social justice for those who grow and harvest the food that sustains us all. (Dick Meister, a San Francisco journalist, has covered the United Farm Workers union since its founding by César Chávez. He's the co-author of "A Long Time Coming: The Struggle to Unionize America's Farm Workers," published by MacMillan.) (c) 2001, Hispanic Link News Service. Distributed by Los Angeles Times Syndicate International

The Cesar I Remember

By Marion Moses, M.D.

On his 66th birthday in 1993, I faxed César Chávez a greeting, noting that since his father lived to be 101 and his mother to 99, I expected we would be working together for many more years.

Sadly, his time left on earth was only to be another three weeks.

On what would be his 74th birthday, this March 28, my continuing sense of loss is eased by rich and abundant memories from many privileged years of work and friendship with this great man.

Not that the greatness was always so obvious up close. César was a man of clear vision and strong opinions. He could be very stubborn (he said the same thing about me). Working with the United Farm Workers in the 1960s required extraordinary demands, and sacrifice and commitment. The inspiring and the lofty were mixed in with a much greater amount of the tedious and mundane. It was not always easy to adjust or sort it all out, and over the years, many left the union in varying stages of confusion, bewilder-

ment or turmoil.

César was one of the most realistic people I ever met, a man with unmatched organizational abilities, great personal integrity and an unwavering commitment to nonviolence. He understood the economic, political and social basis of the oppression of farm workers, and the powerful agricultural interests ranged against them. He was determined not to instigate or support the violence and bloodshed of past unionizing efforts.

When I first went to work as a volunteer for the farm workers in Delano, in the summer of 1966, I remember thinking that the only way to win against such powerful forces was a miracle.

The "miracle" was the countervailing power of the grape boycott, which tapped deeply into the sense of social justice of the broader community. César always said that if enough people did a small thing, it would make a difference. By asking them to do a small thing -- "Don't buy grapes" -- the UFW began a collaboration with trade unionists, civil-rights activists,

religious groups, environmentalists, students and ordinary citizens that resulted in a strong union for farm workers for the first time in U.S. history.

The grape boycott had a large impact, including on Hollywood. In the Woody Allen movie "Sleeper," the Allen character is asked if he has done anything significant in his life. He answers, "Once I didn't eat grapes for 24 hours." A Field poll in 1975 found that 17 million people in the United States had boycotted grapes.

An important part of the boycott message was the use of pesticides. Chávez was a severe critic of toxic chemicals in agriculture. He was an ardent proponent of sustainable, natural farming methods. He himself grew vegetables organically at La Paz, the UFW headquarters and living complex. He was deeply concerned over the toxic burden of pesticides borne so disproportionately by farm workers and their families. He grieved over farm-worker children with cancer and birth defects.

One of the last conversations I had with César, about two weeks before his death, was about pesticides and union contract negotiations. He wanted to create a new approach and new language to update and improve worker and consumer protection from pesticides. Our mantra was: "If the worker is protected in the workplace, the consumer will be protected in the marketplace." We reminisced that the first ban on DDT in the United States was not by the EPA in 1972, but in a UFW contract in 1967.

Future generations will look back on current use of toxic pesticides in food production as a bizarre practice of their ancestors. Chávez will be seen as a shining light amid the folly, challenging unsustainable toxic farming practices that imperiled the health of workers, consumers and the environment.

He was also a devoted family man. He and his wife, Helen Fabela, had eight children, three of whom work for the UFW today. His daughter Linda ("Lu") worked for the union until her death last October at age 49

from complications of scleroderma. There are 30 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

César was a living example that if you never forget the people, if you don't get distracted, and can keep your sense of social justice intact, you won't get lost along the way. You won't burn out. You can make impossible things happen. I remember him as the man who broke the cycle of hopelessness, pessimism and despair.

The life and work of César

Chávez was a gift to all citizens of the world struggling for social and environmental justice. He made tangible the invisible ties that connect us to each other and to the earth.

(Marion Moses, M.D., is president of the Pesticide Education Center in San Francisco. She became active in support of the causes of the United Farm Workers in the 1960s and was César Chávez's physician until his death in 1993.) (c) 2001, Hispanic Link News Service. Distributed by Los Angeles Times Syndicate International

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Join Development Plan Between Mexico & Central America Gets Underway

By Diego Cevallos

The Mexican government and Central American officials presented their Puebla-Panama Plan here Monday, an initiative that attempts to pull an area with a population of 64 million

With an initial Mexican investment of 42 million dollars, the project drafted by President Vicente Fox's development team promises to benefit nine states in Mexico's south and southeast as well as six countries of Central America.

The objective is to build corridors connecting the countries and states involved for highways and railways, gas pipelines and electrical power lines, in addition to establishing joint programs for trade, tourism and development.

"The plan is a respectful and inclusive convocation to join forces in pursuing orderly and sustainable growth that respects the environment and the indigenous communities' legitimate forms of organization," Fox said.

It is estimated that the Central American and south-south-eastern Mexican population will expand to 92 million by 2025, nearly the equivalent of Mexico's current total population of 100 million.

The zone covered by the initiative suffers the common denominators of extreme poverty and marginalization.

To firm up plans, business leaders, investors and representatives from the government of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama will meet to discuss specific issues in the coming months.

The presidents of the six Central American countries and Mexico are to launch several projects in June during a regional summit.

"I believe this is a happy and historic initiative because it represents... two great commitments: the development of the south and southeast of Mexico" and of the Central American countries, emphasized Enrique Iglesias, president of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which is financing a portion of the project.

Also providing support for the initiative are the Central American Bank of Economic Integration, the Andean Development Corporation, the World Bank and the Central American Integration System.

The foreign ministers of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras

and Nicaragua took part in the ceremony to launch the Puebla-Panama Plan.

Indigenous organization in Mexico, among them the rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), have stated that the Puebla-Panama project is an attack on the culture of the region's native peoples and its only pretension is to give these citizens "the crumbs left over from capitalist and neo-liberal development."

More than 10 million Indians live in the area encompassed by the project, with approximately 35 different languages spoken among them.

The most effective means for achieving development in the Puebla-Panama region are constructing physical infrastructure, training the workforce and establishing chains of production, Fox said.

"We have the will, we have the commitment, we have the capacity to drive a project of this magnitude. It is time to get down to work with dedication and professionalism. I am sure, I am convinced, that the results will be rapid and positive," stated the Mexican president.

There are several free trade accords in effect between Mexico

and Central America. But exchange has not grown significantly due to the sharp contrasts in levels of development and the lack of infrastructure connecting the countries, reports Fox's policy team.

Despite their proximity, Mexico sells just 0.9 percent of its exports to Central America, and purchases an infinitesimal 0.2 percent of its imports from the neighboring region.

President Fox presented the Puebla-Panama Plan to his Central American counterparts during a tour through the region prior to taking office last December.

"This effort toward integration might sound chimerical," Fox said at the time.

Nearly 40 percent of the area's population lives below the poverty line, subsisting on less than one dollar a day, according to United Nations studies.

"The Puebla-Panama Plan will seek the elimination of regional inequalities through ongoing, sustainable and integral development in order to improve the standard of living of the inhabitants," stated Mexico's Florencio Salazar, the plan's coordinator. "That is the ultimate goal of regional development."

Bush Addresses Friendly Audience at USHCC Conference

President George W. Bush continued to reach out to Americans of Latin American descent Monday, thanking the nation's Latino small businesses for their tireless work on the opening day of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's 11th Annual Legislative Forums & Banquet.

"I don't think enough people in our country pay attention to the role of the small business person, the incredible impact the Hispanic small business person has on the country," said the president, whose tax plan also received the official endorsement of the Latino business organization.

"The USHCC board of directors believes that President Bush's plan will provide Hispanic small businesses expanded opportunities for economic development and growth, and allow them greater accessibility to capital for investment," said George Herrera, president and chief executive officer of the umbrella organization for 200 local Hispanic chambers of commerce's nationwide.

Bush, barnstorming the nation to draw up support for his \$1.6 billion tax cut, reiterated his administration's commitment to Latin America and to ensuring that favorable conditions continue to exist for supporting entrepreneurial efforts.

"[Good public policy] firmly recognizes that the role of government is not to create wealth, but an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish," said Bush. "...Part of making sure the environment is hospitable to a capital formation and the entrepreneurial spirit is trade. But another part is to make sure the federal government does not squish opportunity by being -- over-spending taxpayer money."

Herrera also added that the President's plan helped to level the economic playing field for what will soon be the nation's largest ethnic group.

"By cutting the tax burden for working families, encouraging innovation through the research and experimentation tax credit, the plan is sensible, fair and greatly reduces the inequities that currently exist within the current tax code."



The President's remarks drew moments of laughter, although not all planned.

Bush, often satirized on the campaign trail for his mispronunciations and misuse of political terms and phrases, seemed to create a new opportunity for the nation's comedians when he introduced the term 'Hispanically.'

"The facts are that thousands of small businesses -- Hispanically-owned or otherwise -- pay taxes at the highest marginal rate, because most small businesses are not incorporated, they're sole proprietorships, or they're sub-chapter S's. And they're subject to the 39.6 percent income tax rate," the president said towards the end of his remarks.

The USHCC annual event is often used by the USHCC to issue its own policy priorities and legislative agenda to presidential advisors, congressional officials and other members of the federal government. Scheduled keynote speakers during the event include Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, HUD Secretary Mel Martinez, and Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Congressman Silvestre Reyes.

The USHCC is dedicated to actively promoting the economic growth and development of Hispanic businesses in the United States as well as to representing, promoting the interests of approximately 1.4 million Hispanic-owned businesses in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

Hope Stirs Anew For New Mexico's Land-Grant Claimants

By Marisa Trevio

It's a turf dispute that stretches a century and a half.

It reignited this year, when the U.S. General Accounting Office released the first part of a federal study commissioned to address concerns of New Mexican land-grant heirs. The central question under scrutiny is whether the United States government honored the provisions of the 1848 treaty that ended the Mexican-American War, or if it cheated hundreds of New Mexicans out of their rightful property claims.

The controversy was born in the frontier days of New Mexico. At the time, the "Land of Enchantment" was a newly acquired territory, part of the land mass Mexico ceded to the United States as a provision of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War.

In return, Mexico received \$15 million and a promise that the U.S. government would recognize the property rights and protect those individuals who chose to remain with their lands and become U.S. citizens. Those individuals had been issued the property in the form of community and private land grants from either the Mexican or Spanish governments when the area was under Spanish rule.

The new citizens of the United States claimed that their properties were being taken away through a variety of underhanded means, including false surveys, deceitful land deals and direct seizures by the U.S. government.

Among the New Mexican land-grant heirs, stories were handed down from generation to generation as to how the U.S. government stole their lands.

"My grandparents never could

understand how our government, which would get involved all over the world in human rights, would violate their human rights and take advantage of their hospitality," says Moises Morales, a county commissioner of New Mexico's Rio Arriba County and heir to three land grants.

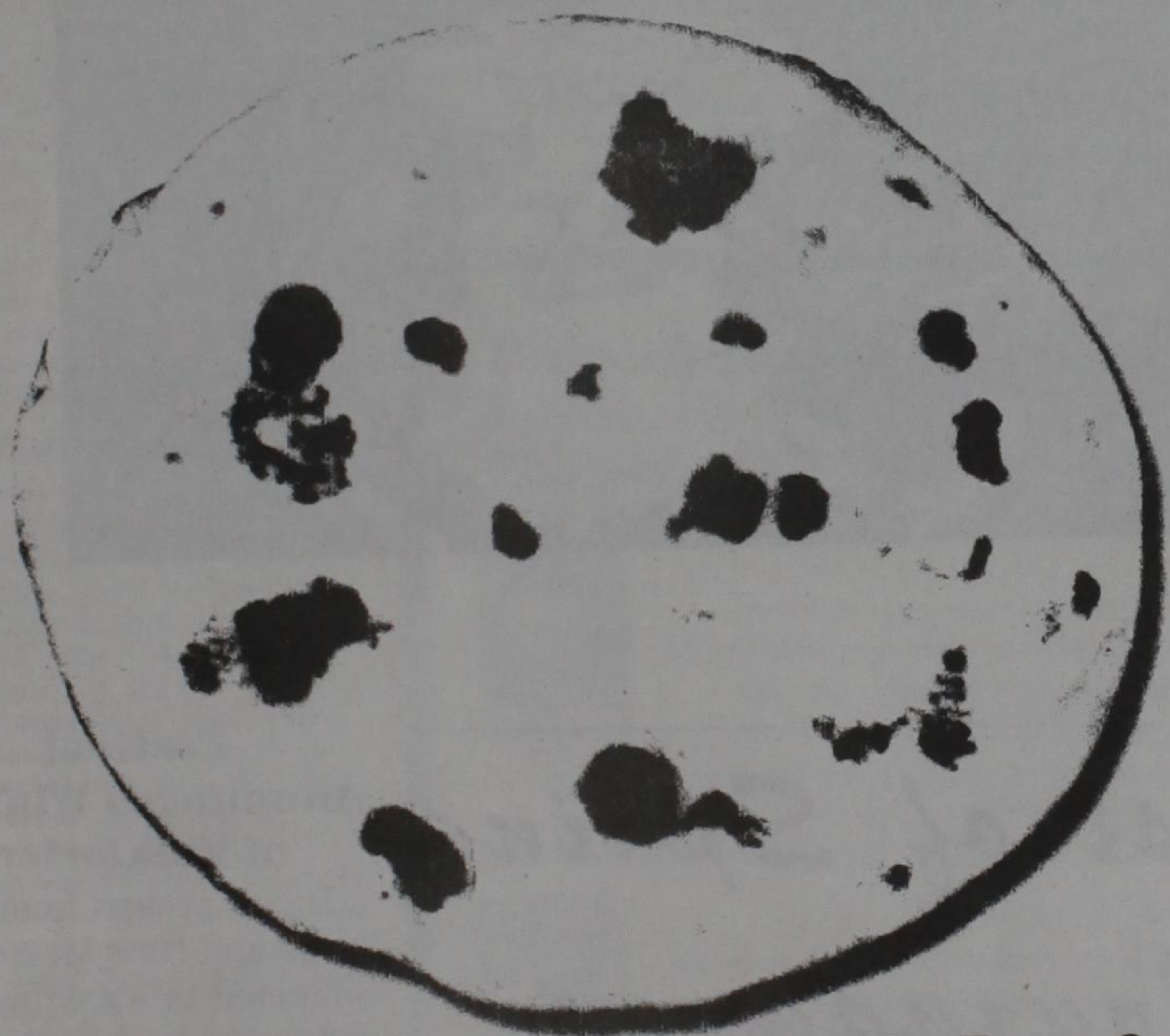
Hoping to gain a better understanding of the government's role in upholding the treaty's provisions, New Mexico senators Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman last year asked the investigative branch of the federal government, the General Accounting Office, examine the issue. To accomplish this, the GAO divided the task to address specific questions.

"The first part of the study refers to defining what the community land grant is," says Susan Poling, GAO associate general counsel in Washington,

D.C. "We will then try to identify how did the United States implement the property protection provisions in the treaty. From that exercise and through discussions with various groups and individuals, we'll try to identify what concerns exist about the implementation of the treaty. Then we will try to have some kind of assessment."

Initial findings have identified 152 community land grants. Interestingly, the GAO acknowledges that the U.S. government, after striking the original provision addressing land-grant protection from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (because of fears expressed by President Polk that land-grant claims would jeopardize established grants in Texas), signed the Protocol of Queretaro with Mexico in 1848. That protocol

continue on Page 5



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Viva Aztlan Festival Proves to be Huge Success, Marvels Audience



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Festival Announces Winners of Folklorico

Dance groups from Texas and New Mexico competed this past weekend in Lubbock in the Viva Aztlan Festival. Groups were judged by experts from Mexico as to dance technique, costumes and other aspects of the folklorico.

Winner of the coveted Best of Festival Award was "Ballet Paso del Norte" from El Paso.

The event was organized for the 7th year by Lubbock Centro Aztlan and produced in part by a grant from the Lubbock City Council as recommended by the Lubbock Arts Alliance. Other sponsors included Covenant Hospital Systems, United SuperMarkets, Civic Lubbock, the Lubbock Avalanche Journal, Texas Tech University and El Editor Newspapers.

All photos on this page by John Cervantez and available by calling 744-1654.

Nueva Esperanza Para Los Que Reclaman Concesion de Tierra En Nuevo Mexico

Por Marisa Treviño

Es un pleito por tierras que tiene más de siglo y medio. Surgió de nuevo este año cuando la Oficina General de Contaduría de los Estados Unidos emitió la primera parte de un estudio federal comisionado para responder a las preguntas de los herederos de la concesión de tierras de Nuevo México.

El enfoque principal es si el gobierno de los Estados Unidos cumplió con las provisiones del tratado de 1848 que dio fin a la guerra de México con los Estados Unidos, o si en realidad engañó a cientos de pobladores de Nuevo México al no hacer honor a sus debidos reclamos de propiedades.

La controversia nació en los días de la frontera de Nuevo México. En ese momento, la Tierra del Encanto era territorio recién adquirido, parte de las tierras cedidas por México a los Estados Unidos al cumplir con provisiones del tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo, que fue lo que dio fin a la guerra de México con los Estados Unidos.

Como recompensa, México recibió \$15 millones y la promesa que el gobierno estadounidense reconocería los derechos a la propiedad y daría protección a aquellas personas que decidieran quedarse con sus tierras y convertirse en ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos. Tales personas habían recibido la propiedad en forma de concesiones de tierras comunitarias y privadas del gobierno mexicano o el gobierno español, según el régimen que estuviera en poder.

Los nuevos ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos levantaron las voces en queja de que estaban perdiendo las propiedades por medios menos que honestos, como por ejemplo con mediciones falsas, negocios de tierras deshonestos e incautaciones llevadas a cabo directamente por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos. Entre los herederos de la concesión de tierras de Nuevo México pasaban de generación en generación las historias de cómo el gobierno de los Estados Unidos les había robado las tierras.

"Mis abuelos nunca entendieron cómo nuestro gobierno, que está involucrado por todo el mundo en la defensa de los derechos humanos, podía violar sus derechos humanos y aprovecharse de su hospitalidad," cuenta Moisés Morales, comisionado del condado Río Arriba de Nuevo México y heredero de tres concesiones de tierras.

Con la esperanza de entender mejor el papel que jugó el gobierno de los Estados Unidos en cumplir las provisiones del tratado, el año pasado los senadores de Nuevo México, Pete Domenici y Jeff Bingaman solicitaron a la subdivisión de investigaciones del gobierno federal, la Oficina General de Contaduría, que investigara los temas en cuestión. A su vez la Oficina General de Contaduría dividió

From Page 3

specificamente provides for the protection of land-grant titles and the guarantee that grantees could have their ownership of land acknowledged before U.S. tribunals. Since that time, only 25 percent of the total land-grant claims have been validated by Congress and the courts -- proof, according to some, that the federal government had another agenda in mind.

If that should prove to be the case once the final GAO report is delivered, sometime by December 2002, Senators Domenici and Bingaman vow they will embark on the best course of action on behalf of New Mexican land-grant heirs. At this point, the senators say they are not ruling out pursuing legislative action.

In the meantime, Moises Molina, along with other land-grant heirs, pledges not to give up the fight for the ancestral lands. He and others attribute ongoing problems in communities where the dispute has raged -- everything from elevated school dropout rates to the high incidence of drug use -- to the government theft of their property.

"Taking away our land has caused a lot of things to happen to our culture. Our community was destabilized, and our way of life taken away," Morales explains. "Some of our people went to prison over this, some of our sisters died of a broken heart because of what the government, the politicians, did. We want our lands back, plus damages."

"My grandparents used to tell us always to respect Mother Nature, always to take care of it -- and it will always keep you nourished. Our land is everything" (Marisa Treviño, of Dallas, Texas, is a freelance writer. She may be contacted by 3-mail at mtrevino@AT.SIGNairmail.net) (c) 2001, Hispanic Link News Service. Distributed by Los Angeles Times Syndicate International

la tarea para buscar respuesta a preguntas específicas y poder lograr el objetivo final.

"La primera parte del estudio se refiere a la definición de lo que es una concesión de tierra comunitaria," explica Susan Poling, asesora jurídica asociada de la Oficina General de Contaduría en Washington, D.C. "A continuación intentaremos identificar cómo implementó los Estados Unidos las provisiones de protecciones de propiedades dispuestas en el tratado. A partir de este ejercicio y por medio de conversaciones con varios grupos y personas privadas, trataremos de identificar las preguntas que existen en cuanto a la implementación del tratado. Finalmente, nuestra intención es llegar a algún tipo de evaluación."

Las primeras investigaciones han identificado a 152 concesiones de tierras comunitarias. Es de interés notar que la Oficina General de Contaduría reconoce que el gobierno de los Estados Unidos firmó el protocolo de Quétaro con México en 1848, después de tachar del tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo la provisión original que se refería a la protección de la concesión de tierra porque el presidente Polk expresó el temor de que los reclamos de concesiones de tierras pondrían en juego a las concesiones ya establecidas en Texas. El protocolo establece específicamente la protección de títulos de tierras de concesión y la garantía que los concesionarios podían hacer reconocer su tenencia de la tierra ante tribunales de los Estados Unidos.

Desde entonces, sólo 25 por ciento de todos los reclamos de concesiones de tierras han sido convalidados por el Congreso y las cortes -- prueba, según algunos, que el gobierno federal perseguía otras intenciones. Si fuera verdad, una vez que se emite el informe final de la Oficina General de Contaduría, para diciembre del año 2002, los senadores Domenici y Bingaman prometen seguir el mejor curso de acción en beneficio de los herederos de las concesiones de tierras de Nuevo México. A estas alturas los senadores no niegan la posibilidad de seguir un curso de acción legislativa.

Mientras tanto, Moisés Morales, con otros herederos de concesiones de tierras, jura no dejar de pelear por las tierras ancestrales.

El y otros atribuyen los problemas continuos en las comunidades en las que el pleito se ha llevado a cabo -- todo desde índices elevados de abandono de los estudios secundarios a altas incidencias del uso de drogas -- al robo de las propiedades por el

gobierno.

"El quitarnos las tierras ha causado que muchas cosas ocurran en nuestra cultura. Se destabilizó nuestra comunidad y se nos quitó la manera de vivir," explica Morales. "Algunos de los nuestros fueron encarcelados por este problema; algunas de nuestras hermanas murieron con el corazón roto por lo que hizo el gobierno, por lo que hicieron los políticos. Queremos que nos devuelvan las tierras, además que nos den indemnificaciones."

"Mis abuelos nos decían que siempre respetáramos la Madre Naturaleza, que siempre la cuidáramos, y así ella siempre nos alimentaría. Para nosotros, la tierra es todo."

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AIDS Becoming a Women's Disease, Says UN Commission

by Mithre J. Sandrasagra

UNITED NATIONS, AIDS is becoming a women's disease, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) declared at the conclusion of two weeks of meetings Friday.

Highlighting that "women are at the epicenter of the epidemic" the CSW urged all governments to take all necessary measures to empower women, strengthen their economic independence, and protect and promote their human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to allow them to better protect themselves from HIV/AIDS

"The pandemic requires the transforming of relations between women and men to eliminate gender inequality and reduce the risk of infection," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said.

The right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex is often violated since HIV/AIDS stigmatizes women and men in gender specific ways.

Seventy percent of worldwide infection occurs through unprotected sexual intercourse, according to Annan's 2001 report on HIV/AIDS and gender discrimination.

This makes women and girls particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection owing to their biological condition as well as economic and social inequalities and culturally accepted gender roles, which leave them in a subordinate position to men with respect to decisions concerning sexual relations, the report said.

"Women are not born vulnerable, but made vulnerable," Dubravka Simonovic, Chair of the CSW told reporters Friday.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is growing with alarming speed.

Estimates indicate that by December 2000 36.1 million people were living with HIV, up from 10 million in 1990. Ninety-five percent of those infected live in developing countries.

"Poverty is a major factor responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly among women who constitute the majority of the world's poor," Simonovic emphasized.

In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women now account for 55 percent of the total number of people living with the virus. By the end of 2000, an estimat-

ed 10.9 million men and 13.3 million women in Africa were living with HIV/AIDS, according to the Secretary-General's report.

The Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) says that in 1999, women and men had equal infection rates.

During CSW deliberations, it was noted that violence against women contributes directly and indirectly to women's vulnerability to HIV. The threat of physical violence and the fear of abandonment act as significant barriers for women who have to negotiate the use of a condom, participants noted.

"The imbalance of power between women and men often promoted by cultural, social and religious norms is one of the major causes of the spread of HIV/AIDS," Simonovic said.

Given the specific vulnerability of women and girls to the disease, the CSW raised the need for a gender-equality perspective in the upcoming special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS to be held from Jun. 25 - 27 in New York.

"We must ensure that gender specific aspects of HIV/AIDS are considered at the Special Session or the outcome may be detrimental to the situation of women," Simonovic stressed.

Gender perspectives have been lacking in many public health policies, HIV/AIDS action plans and treatment programs, she continued.

The CSW drew attention to the need for political commitment, adequate resources, good governance and democratic participation to provide a lasting solution.

Annan, endorsing the recommendations put forth by an Expert Group Meeting on the HIV/AIDS Pandemic meeting in Namibia last November, said that governments should enact, implement and enforce by 2005, laws that grant women equal rights to inheritance and ownership of property, to improve their economic status and enhance the ability of women, families and communities to deal with HIV/AIDS.

In addition, governments and international agencies are urged to ensure the provision of accurate and culturally sensitive prevention education. This work should aim to promote gender equality in relationships, and

provide information and resources to promote the practice of safer sex and human rights.

Governments and the private sector must also ensure that all forms of media promote non-discriminatory, gender-sensitive images of messages about men and women, Annan emphasized.

The expert group meeting also called on governments to ensure, by 2005, access to free and voluntary counseling and testing for HIV infection, affordable treatments and healthy diets in order to increase the life expectancy of people living with the virus.

It was further recommended that the international community and governments introduce, by 2002, measures including training and a comprehensive code of conduct to ensure that peacekeeping and military personnel respect the rights of women and girls in all aspects of their operations.

Armed conflict often leads to increasing vulnerability of women and girls to HIV infection. During armed conflict and political instability, women and girls may face systematic rape and other gender-specific war crimes, the CSW noted.

Among other specific recommendations, the Secretary-General called on international institutions to review their constitutions, mandates and relevant conventions to ascertain their application to HIV/AIDS within a gender perspective.

Participants at a panel discussion held parallel to the CSW meetings here noted successful programs and projects involving men in the fight against the disease. One of these groups, the Society for Men and AIDS in Africa, was commended for its work with religious and traditional leaders to develop programs based on religious core values.

The Commission also considered a new multi-year program of work for the period 2002-2006. The proposed program would provide a framework to assess progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of Beijing +5.

The CSW is expected to call on the Secretary-General to release an updated report on the gender aspects of HIV/AIDS prior to the Special Session in June.

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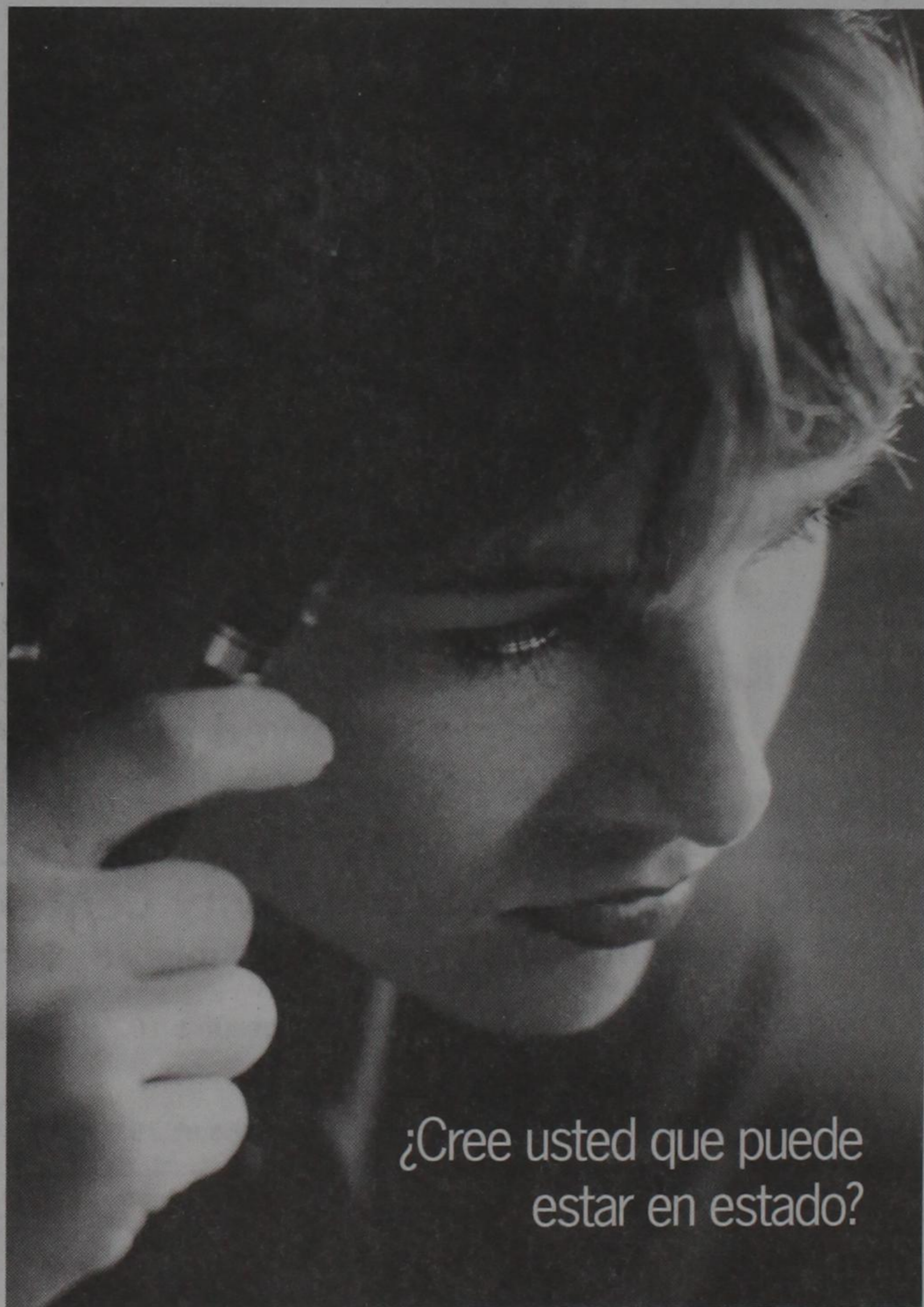
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El Editor, Lubbock, Tx.-March 15, 2001

Censo de la primera

político. Pronto serán la mayoría "Estos resultados muestran una intensa diversificación de la población en el estado", dijo la doctora en Ciencias Políticas de la Universidad de Texas en El Paso, Irasema Coronado, quien agregó que en Texas la comunidad hispana podría convertirse antes de lo previsto en mayoría a nivel estatal.

De acuerdo a la información ofrecida por el censo, para el año 2005 la población anglo pasaría a ser minoría en el estado. Actualmente, este grupo representa al 53 por ciento de los habitantes en ciudades como Austin, en el interior de Texas.

"Los números muestran que el rostro de Texas en los próximos años será muy parecido al que tiene El Paso en la actualidad", expuso la congresista estatal por El Paso, Norma Chávez, quien representa a una comunidad habitada en un 70 por ciento por hispanos.

Las cifras El informe establece que en el año 2000 Texas cuenta con 2.3 millones de hispanos más que en 1990. Los hispanos representan el 60.3 por ciento del crecimiento de población a nivel estatal en los años noventa.

Coronado reiteró que el crecimiento de la población hispana sólo refuerza la necesidad de que los legisladores y senadores tienen que prestar más atención a la educación en el estado.

"Los hispanos tienen los mayores índices de deserción escolar en preparatoria (secundaria) y los más bajos niveles de educación en comparación con otros grupos étnicos", indicó.

Una ayuda al Congreso Chávez mencionó que los datos proporcionados por el Censo permitirán a los legisladores reestructurar en los próximos años el presupuesto estatal, y "destinar mayores fondos a fortalecer los niveles escolares y económicos de la comunidad hispana".

Estados Unidos otorgó una protección temporal migratoria a los salvadoreños indocumentados tras los terremotos que azotaron a la nación centroamericana en los primeros meses de este año, y donó 110 millones de dólares para su reconstrucción.

"Estos números le dan una fuerza electoral y económica (a los hispanos) mayor a la de la comunidad negra", la mayor minoría en el país, dijo Martínez.

Falta de coordinación "El problema es que no tenemos tantos años de tradición ni de organización política aquí", indicó.

En la Cámara de Representantes de Estados Unidos, donde en la actualidad sólo 18 de sus 435 miembros son hispanos, el número de representantes de estas comunidades debe aumentar a varias docenas para reflejar un rápido crecimiento. La oficina del Censo prevé que este grupo sobrepasará a todas las otras minorías del país, incluyendo la comunidad afroamericana, en Estados Unidos para el año 2005.

La población hispana en Estados Unidos aumentó con mayor rapidez que cualquier otro grupo en el último diez años, según datos preliminares del Censo 2000.

El número de hispanos residentes en Estados Unidos creció en casi un 60 por ciento, de 22.4 a 35.3 millones de personas, entre 1990 y el 2000, señaló la oficina.

En diciembre pasado, el Censo indicó que la población total estadounidense creció 13.2 por ciento, a 281.4 millones de personas el año pasado, de 248.7 millones una década antes.

Además, se estima que la inmigración ilegal latina es una de las más altas.

Estados Unidos gasta millones de dólares cada año para prevenir la entrada de indocumentados procedentes de México y el resto del continente.

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Zapatistas Anuncian Sorpresivo Retorno A Selva de Chiapas

por Diego Cevallos

Los guerrilleros zapatistas anunciaron hoy su sorpresivo regreso a Chiapas desde la capital de México, pues, afirmaron, no harán fila hasta el infinito frente al parlamento para presionar por la aprobación de una ley que se limita a reconocer acuerdos internacionales.

Los derechos de autonomía indígena que se discuten en México en medio de acusaciones de racismo y bajo presión de la guerrilla zapatista, son los mismos que el país se obligó a cumplir en 1990 cuando ratificó, sin mayor discusión, el convenio 169 de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT), recordaron.

Pero ahora todo parece nuevo en el debate. Sectores conservadores sostuvieron que reconocer en la Constitución derechos especiales a las etnias dividirá un país donde viven 10 millones de nativos, y mantendría a esos pueblos en el retraso.

El Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), cuyos 24 jefes llegaron a la capital el 11 de este mes, luego de realizar una marcha desde el estado meridional de Chiapas, exige que se apruebe el proyecto de reformas a normas indígenas diseñado en 1996 por una comisión del Congreso legislativo.

Esa iniciativa fue elaborada sobre la base de los Acuerdos de San Andrés, negociados entre un grupo de legisladores y el EZLN.

Los guerrilleros habían advertido poco antes de arribar a la capital que no abandonarían la ciudad hasta que la propuesta fuera aprobada. Pero este lunes su máximo jefe, el subcomandante Marcos, informó que el viernes regresarán a las selvas de Chiapas.

Los zapatistas no están para hacer fila ante el Congreso legislativo y no pueden esperar hasta el infinito que se apruebe la propuesta, declaró Marcos tras afirmar que los diputados no tienen interés en el asunto ni en los Acuerdos de San Andrés.

"El EZLN ha decidido dar por terminada su estancia en la ciu-

dad de México e iniciar el retorno a las montañas del sureste mexicano. La cerrazón de la clase política es clara", expresó Marcos.

Antes de irse, los jefes guerrilleros realizarán un acto este jueves frente al Congreso para que ahí todos los asistentes escucharan entonces lo que ese órgano legislativo "no quiso oír", explicó.

El EZLN rechazó dos sugerencias del Congreso para reunirse con parte de los diputados y fuera de la sede legislativa. Pero Marcos advirtió que el grupo pretendía una tribuna con la presencia de todos los diputados, pues de lo contrario el acto no tendría sentido.

Mientras, el legislador Diego Fernández de Cevallos, del gobernante Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), sostuvo que "sería racista obligar" a los indígenas a tener una justicia diferente al del resto de la población, someterlos a tradiciones injustas, permitir los cacicazgos e impedir que entren al libre mercado.

Al igual que Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dinamarca, Ecuador, Fiji, Guatemala, Holanda, Honduras, Noruega, Paraguay y Perú, México es parte del Convenio 169 de la OIT, sobre Pueblos Indígenas y Tribales.

El PAN y el resto de los partidos políticos aprobaron por mayoría en el Congreso el Convenio 169, bandera de lucha de organizaciones indígenas de América Latina.

La propuesta de reformar varios artículos de la Constitución de México con postulados que son los mismos de la OIT abre la puerta para acabar con el racismo y la histórica marginación de los pueblos nativos, sostuvo el EZLN.

Quienes se oponen a la propuesta, son los racistas, los que quieren que los indígenas sigan como "ciudadanos de tercera" y los que no entienden el reconocimiento de lo diferente, sostuvo el grupo.

El Convenio 169 no se ha cumplido en México, a pesar de la ratificación, y nada asegura que una reforma constitucional como la pedida por el EZLN se cumpla, advirtió el antropólogo Oscar Rodríguez.

Lo que está en juego, más que una reforma legal, es la búsqueda de un cambio en el proceso de desarrollo, la necesidad de ampliar la democracia y garantizar el reconocimiento de la pluralidad, sostuvo, por su parte, el filósofo Luis Villoro.

En México, al igual que en todos los países de América Latina con población originaria, la mayoría de indígenas son pobres.

Los Acuerdos de San Andrés, los únicos firmados entre la guerrilla y el gobierno, fueron redactados por cerca de 50 asesores de las dos partes durante las negociaciones, entre quienes había apenas dos abogados. La mayoría fueron antropólogos, sociólogos e investigadores sociales.

La aprobación de las reformas, cuyo diseño jurídico aún requiere afinaciones, según juristas, es una de las condiciones del grupo para reanudar el diálogo de paz con el gobierno, suspendido en 1996, luego que el ex presidente Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) se negó a avalar el proyecto.

El Convenio 169, derivado de otro similar acordado 1957, consta de 44 artículos que garantizan la no discriminación contra los indígenas, el respeto a sus formas de organización política, a sus tradiciones, al uso que hacen de la tierra y a sus formas de impartir justicia.

Además, garantiza su propiedad sobre la tierra, al uso de los recursos del subsuelo, previa concertación con el Estado, el derecho a una educación especial y la obligación del gobierno de consultarlos por cualquier plan que los afecte.

El proyecto de ley, que el presidente Vicente Fox, perteneciente al PAN, respalda en el Congreso legislativo, recoge varios de los postulados del Convenio 169 de la OIT.

"México es el producto de la unión de pueblos y culturas diferentes. La mayor riqueza de nuestro país está en su diversidad cultural. Por eso, la unidad nacional no puede sustentarse en la imposición de una cultura sobre las demás", señaló Fox a los diputados al justificar el

proyecto de reformas. "El principal objetivo de las reformas es desarrollar el contenido constitucional respecto de los pueblos indígenas. Ellas se inscriben en el marco del nuevo derecho internacional en la materia, del cual el convenio 169 de la OIT es ejemplo destacado", apuntó.

Pero los diputados del PAN y del Partido Revolucionario Institucional, cuyas fuerzas avallaron en el pasado el Convenio 169, ahora critican los alcances de la reforma, mientras varios analistas observan que la propuesta contiene generalidades que podrían ser peligrosas, según dicen.

La autonomía es un concepto respetable, pero puede crear guetos, así como permitir que ciertas poblaciones se gobiernen por usos y costumbres que, en muchos casos, contradicen la ley general, advirtió el analista Luis Rubio.

En ciertas comunidades indígenas es legal el uso de alucinógenos y de marihuana, igual que la entrega de niñas en matrimonio para cumplir acuerdos entre familias. En otras, la mujer casi no tiene derechos y se impide estudiar a los menores.

Además, existe ambigüedad en muchos puntos de la reforma propuesta. Por ejemplo, se indica que los indígenas "son aquellas personas que descienden de poblaciones que habitaban el país al iniciarse la colonización", lo que incluiría a casi todos, apuntó Rubio.

Las reformas no serán aprobadas con rapidez, como pretenden el EZLN y el gobierno, pues requiere muchas afinaciones. No se aceptarán presiones de ningún tipo, dijo Fernández de Cevallos, jefe de la bancada del PAN en el Senado.

En la otra cámara, varios diputados repitieron las expresiones de ese influyente senador, a quien el EZLN califica de "racista".

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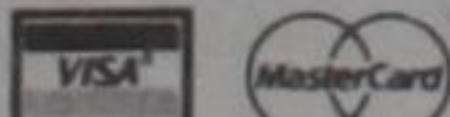
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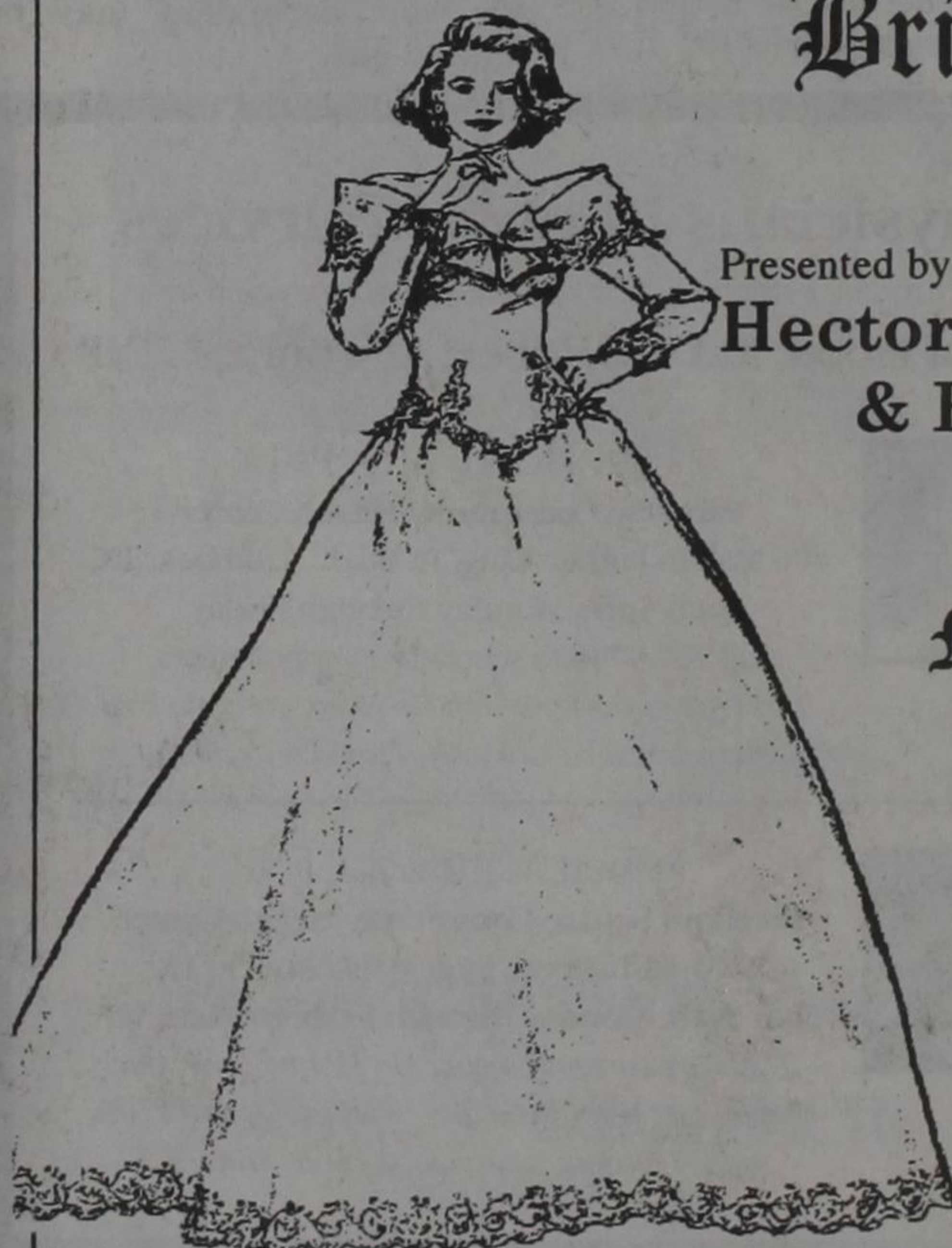
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