

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

Battle at the interparliamentary meeting

The annual meeting of American and Mexican congressmen is usually a shopping and tourism affair. This year things were different.

Just a few family members and journalists were on hand to receive the leader of the Mexican Senate, Joquin Gamboa Pascoe, upon his return to Mexico City from the May 5-6 U.S.-Mexico interparliamentary meetings in Washington, D.C. Not one government official showed up.

In Mexico, when you're "burned" (quemado), you're burned.

Gamboa Pascoe had committed one of the cardinal sins of Mexican politics—misrepresenting the country's views abroad, and worse yet, misrepresenting them in the United States. Gamboa had stated that Mexico fully supported Carter's Iran and Afghanistan policies, when in fact Mexico abstained from January's defining UN Security Council vote on imposing sanctions and voiced deep misgivings about Carter administration policy.

Mexican public opinion was particularly sensitive to Gamboa's propitiation of Washington because the entire Interparliamentary meeting was taken up with sharp American recriminations against Mexico for not joining GATT, and renewed threats of actions against Mexico's undocumented workers in the U.S.

The bitter undertones of the meeting—in the past a politically lightweight affair—actually trace back to last December. At that time the longtime chairman of the

U.S. delegation, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-Tex.), exited from the ranks of "Mexico's amigos" north of the border with a spectacular tirade against Mexico for not taking the Shah back and for not paying reparations to the U.S. for the Ixtoc I oil spill.

His place as chairman was taken by freshman Arizona Sen. Dennis DeConcini, who continued in the same political vein. Mexican officials here have been bracing for more public signs of U.S. government displeasure over the thumbs down Mexico gave GATT in mid-March. It came in no uncertain terms from DeConcini, who declared that trade between the two countries "can only prosper if lack of confidence"—Mexico's negative decision—"is erased." He raised Mexican hackles even further by demanding explicitly that Mexican oil be placed at U.S. disposal in case of war—the "strategic reserve" concept.

In the second barrel of the blast, newly confirmed U.S. ambassador to Mexico and first Chicano named to the post, Julian Nava, charged that Mexico's GATT decision would "cause new problems" in relations and that there were "limits" on how many undocumented workers the United States could take in the midst of economic depression. Two days later he added more fuel to the fire by threatening, "sooner or later Mexico will have to join GATT."

These public threats drew heated replies not only from the left and from nationalist sectors of Mexico's ruling party, but also from one of the top private sector spokesmen, Carlos Antmann Obregon, president of the National Association of Importers and Exporters (ANIERM). Antmann charged that the U.S. was demanding 200,000 more bpd of Mexican oil as the price for U.S. relenting on the trade war campaign.

As interesting as what was said at the interparliamentary meeting is what was *not* discussed. Most important in this regard was the technology question.

Last year, a congressional group led by Jim Lloyd (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Science and Technology Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, held hearings to publicize the need to offer Mexico high-technology packages in exchange for its oil. This year, this approach was entirely absent from the Washington proceedings. As one Mexican official told *EIR*, this bodes ill for American business prospects in Mexico. He reminded us of the words of Mexican Industry Minister de Oteyza when Occidental Petroleum's Armand Hammer showed up in Mexico earlier this year with big financing projects—but without a technology kicker. Said de Oteyza: "We are not interested in financial resources as such. Through oil, our country has adequate economic resources. We are willing to listen to any investment project, so long as it also represents the highest level of technology—in production, administration, and exports ... Projects that come from abroad and don't include this aspect will be rejected."