

Dateline Mexico by Hugo López Ochoa

Farmers join forces to revive economy

A national resistance movement is consolidated, with support from the U.S., around the Permanent Producers Forum.

Farm leaders representing eight Mexican states met Oct. 3 in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua to join forces around a common program to stem the tide of bankruptcies in the rural sector and to revive the national economy, which is under siege by the free-trade monetarist dictates of the International Monetary Fund. The all-day meeting resulted in the "Declaration of Ciudad Juárez," which combined a call for moratorium on the agricultural debt with a series of anti-usury, pro-growth measures designed to make food self-sufficiency a national priority.

Attending the meeting from the state of Chihuahua were 80 delegates from 29 producer organizations representing all shades of the political spectrum. They have been on a virtual war-footing since mid-September, with tractor occupations in 15 cities, highway blockades, etc. The Permanent Forum of Rural Producers (PFRP), based in Sonora but also representing the states of Baja California, Sinaloa, Jalisco, Queretaro, and Guanajuato, brought delegates from throughout the region. The PFRP has spearheaded the farmers' resistance movement in Mexico. Delegates also came from Río Bravo, Tamaulipas, representing 100 growers who have carried out a tractor occupation of the municipal plaza in that border city since mid-September.

Also, for the first time since the Mexican farm protests began in early September, an American delegation was there to lend support: Harley Schlanger, from the Schiller Institute and the LaRouche movement in Texas, and South Dakota farmer Ron

Wieczorek, a leader of the Food for Peace movement. According to *Diario de Juárez*, Wieczorek "said that farmers in Dakota are prepared to undertake binational action" in support of the Mexican fight. Wieczorek, who received warm applause from his Mexican counterparts when he said that he was speaking in the name of the Food for Peace movement and the Schiller Institute (both founded by U.S. economist and political prisoner Lyndon LaRouche), told the meeting to "say no to NAFTA," a reference to the North American Free Trade Agreement whose secret arrangements would permanently bury the Mexican farm sector.

In fact, NAFTA was at the center of debate at the Ciudad Juárez meeting, with PFRP spokesman Alberto Vizcarra fighting to include a condemnation of the trilateral accord in the final declaration. In particular, he highlighted NAFTA's financial arrangements, which came to light at a Sept. 8 hearing of the U.S. House of Representatives Banking Committee, chaired by Henry Gonzalez (D-Tex.). The accords would accelerate the theft of Mexican farm land, increase Mexico's foreign indebtedness (now more than \$120 billion), and promote dollarization and looting that would subordinate U.S. and Mexican sovereignty to the Wall Street banks.

According to Sonora's *El Imparcial*, Vizcarra charged that the Banking Committee of the U.S. Congress has "warned about the dangers of an institution based in Mexico, that will issue credits in U.S. dollars with the help of the Federal Reserve, outside the reach of U.S. laws and regula-

tions." Those behind the secret accords, he said, seek to have the Bank of Mexico (to which the Mexican Congress has just granted absolute autonomy) abet this scheme. Billions of dollars worth of "NAFTA bonds" would be issued. "But that money will not come into Mexico," warned Vizcarra. It will instead go to the Big Seven banks, to feed the derivatives and other speculative markets.

Although Vizcarra's denunciation of NAFTA won support from many delegates, the chairman of the meeting, a Salinas government loyalist, blocked a consensus on the issue. But the common program adopted in Ciudad Juárez did include many key PFRP proposals, including for a national bank to issue credit for investment in infrastructure and to promote productive investments in agriculture and industry, fair parity prices, a program for national food self-sufficiency, import controls, an immediate end to farm foreclosures, and a farm debt moratorium.

The leaders agreed to publish the Declaration of Ciudad Juárez as a nationwide ad, and to get producers from other states to join their growing movement. They also voted to send representatives to the United States to help organize American farmers, and to offer testimony to Gonzalez's Banking Committee.

On Oct. 11, Vizcarra gave an interview to the daily *El Imparcial* announcing the next phase of the mobilization, which is to expose the secret agreements behind NAFTA, and to demand their investigation by the Mexican Congress. He also announced plans for a nationwide conference on the secret agreements, to which representatives from every economic sector would be invited. *EIR* has been asked to send specialists to the event, and U.S. farmers will be asked to attend.