

López Portillo urges New Economic Order

On Sept. 8, in the Mexican daily El Universal, former Mexican President José López Portillo (1978-82) urged Mexican leaders to reconsider the urgency of the international battle to secure a New World Economic Order. In the article, entitled "On the Subject of the State of the Union Address," López Portillo explains that this issue is of such importance, that he breaks the unwritten rule of the Mexican political system, that former Presidents do not publicly comment upon the actions of the current President. On Sept. 1, in his State of the Union address, President Ernesto Zedillo told Mexicans that because of the global crisis, the worst of Mexico's crisis is still to come.

It is unusual, and without a doubt a little unorthodox—assuming that the unwritten rules of what we could call the political protocol of presidentialism are still kept—that a former President publicly writes about what the head of the Executive branch reports. . . . I am going to dare to do so, because, when I heard and read the State of the Union—a good State of the Union address, if you take into account the gravity of the situation, such that, as difficult as the situation was when it was my turn at the helm (and only he who has carried the boat knows what it weighs), the situation is much more difficult today—an old reflection came back to me once again, something which has concerned me since I had the responsibility of the Presidency . . . : a new *international* economic order. . . .

The proposition is very simple: The new economic order must be oriented to the increase of production, and not to the control of demand, the latter fundamentally directed to favoring capital (frequently, that of speculative capital) through outright depressive measures which reward profits, even if this postpones the satisfaction of real human, social needs. . . .

All this comes to mind, because the State of the Union made clear that global inter-communication is transmitting to what have come to be called "emerging economies" . . . (which in my time were called "developing countries," if not frankly "under-developed countries," or the Third World) the weaknesses or failures of other similar countries, and not, as it should be, the strength which should come from the unity of a well-organized globalization. . . .

With a fundamental difference, the "populist" governments of [Mexican President Luis] Echeverría and my own, agreed on this. . . . We called them "external factors," which

controlled the great economic variables over which there was practically nothing we could do from inside, other than to propose international measures such as the above-mentioned New International Economic Order of Echeverría, or my World Energy Plan, and the North-South meeting in Cancún which I proposed in 1981. . . .

International proposals

I emphasize this, not to recall past efforts, but to underline that the essential solution to the economic problems of countries such as ours, cannot be found here, but abroad, which is where these problems come from, and it is there that the battle should be waged. . . .

Those critical of these policies . . . charge that to attribute problems to external factors, is to elude responsibility. And this is not so. This does not mean decisions are not taken into consideration, decisions which can be erroneous, and are frequently defensive, and almost always conditioned by external factors, outside of national control. Therefore, to the degree that ability and circumstances permit, and do at least create a consciousness inside and outside [the country], and so as to not continue sitting on one's hands, international proposals are made. . . .

I proposed a World Energy Plan which would permit the passage . . . from the oil energy era (which, we forget, sooner or later will run out) to the next era. Oil is non-renewable. An energy era, . . . basically a nuclear era, plus the development of others . . . would not leave [prices and markets] to the free play of the law of supply and demand, as currently happens—as if to this law, the rationality of production, consumption, and their relationship should be sacrificed. . . .

To the same purpose, . . . we convoked . . . the meeting in Cancún, called the North-South Meeting, to make people conscious of the problem. . . . We conducted the meeting to achieve what I called "the spirit of Cancún," which is an important precedent for something which, if we wish it to be so, will be a new economic order which treats as "global," that which is worldwide and international, democratic, and rational, an agreement which we reach . . . through the agreement of our national sovereign states. . . . The time has come for the world to elevate civil society, and leave behind the law of the jungle.

These reflections were provoked by President Zedillo's Fourth State of the Union address, because I see that, despite the years, and the fact that we have been the good students of the International Monetary Fund, our problems remain unresolved, and are basically the same, because the solutions to them, fundamentally, lie outside. It is time that we advance, . . . ordering world production, and not remaining subject to monetary demands which, fatally, subdue and oppress us. . . . Think about it. I said it as President; I repeat it now as ex-President.

There are many occasions in which politics is not to seek who is guilty, but who will take responsibility.