

# OUR VOICE

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed Bill HR4437, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, presented by James Sensenbrenner (R-Wisconsin). The bill, now slated for final review and ratification by the Senate, once again makes migration the most important point on the U.S.-Mexico bilateral agenda, despite the failure of binational policies in the matter. What is more, the issue has become a matter of state both for Mexico and the United States.

The bill introduces new proposals, like the construction of a 700-mile-long fence along several sections of the border, the criminalization of employers who repeatedly hire undocumented workers and deportation of the latter. It does not mention any incentives for undocumented immigrants, such as naturalizing those who have resided a certain amount of time in the United States. It criminalizes a social problem, wrongly associating terrorism with undocumented immigration and “securitizing” the understanding of immigration.

All this has happened in the midst of Bush’s foreign policy’s serious difficulties, particularly in Iraq, and of a credibility crisis that has increased since Katrina and the multiple scandals involving high administration officials. It demonstrates that the immigration polemic, while also due to Republican Party electoral aims and special interests, is additionally a tactic centrally aimed at distracting Americans’ attention.

Naturally, we cannot prevent the government of our neighbor and inevitable trade partner from designing its immigration policy as it sees fit. However, precisely because it is strategic, for the good of the U.S.’s own national interests, this policy should be conceived as an integral, shared policy, negotiated with its Mexican neighbor, with whom the United States shares very important experiences along its border and exchanges interests and serious, common problems that go beyond the most traditional definition of national sovereignty. Any action by Washington that underestimates these factors, determinant in its own national political life, would be a fundamental mistake.

It would also be an act of enormous political insensitivity and even an unacceptable abuse of power, and the societies and governments of both countries should be sufficiently alerted to their grave implications. Unfortunately, we have borne witness to all this for years now, given that deliberate “mistakes” in decisions and analysis continue to be made by the United States. The only thing they cause is the cancellation of shared policies that would allow us to advance toward a more fruitful, stimulating partnership. Given the risks this bill brings with it, it would be unfortunate if Mexico behaved passively or abstained from trying to stop it, including taking upon itself the task of intense diplomatic activity inside and outside the United States to thwart the bill among important sectors of public opinion and decision-makers. The cost of not being fully up to this important task would be a worsening of the negative effects of what for the last five years has been an already tense climate in bilateral relations.

Insisting on unilateral measures to deal with an enormously important binational matter, tingeing this bill with a gratuitous discriminatory flavor for immediate domestic political consumption, not consulting and including Mexico in this decision-making process is short-sighted. It is so short-sighted that it may well have enormously counterproductive repercussions for the United States itself in the medium term. It may be a political error *vis-à-vis* the 2006 mid-term elections: despite their relative popularity among some sectors of U.S. society, no one should underestimate the fact that anti-immigrant positions have left several bodies on the playing field in recent elections. This happened in West Virginia, where the candidate proposing indiscriminate harsh measures against immigrants lost at the ballot box. It could also be the case very soon of many U.S. politicians and congresspersons who would pay the price of their blind, anti-Mexican pragmatism.

In any event, the complex scenario described above has been counterproductive for everyone. Perhaps the most unfortunate result of the migratory “affair” is that the most recalcitrant political and social sectors in both countries are repositioning themselves. To a great degree, political actors have arbitrarily put forward an archaic, nationalist discourse—in the U.S. case, it is nativist and once again isolationist—that negates the central arguments of republican democracy that both parties are attempting to preserve: pluralism, tolerance and inclusion as central factors of living together nationally and internationally, including in the economy. This is one of the main demands of our global time: preserving a lay society and state as a

secular way of life and as the intimate conviction of living together publicly and privately. It would therefore be unfortunate if we found ourselves in the opposite situation, in which irrational political action by chauvinistic actors with power would eventually lead us to fundamentalism, to a single way of thinking and to intolerance as the cross-cutting axes of the narrative and descriptive tissue of our binational reality.

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Mexicans' being able to vote abroad has been one of the most sought-after achievements by a good part of the country's political class and by Mexicans and people of Mexican descent in the United States in this period of democratic consolidation. U.S.-based organizations have perhaps been key to Congress's recognition of this right for millions of compatriots living "on the other side" of the border. Unfortunately, the answer to this democratic call has not been nearly what was expected. In time, the Federal Electoral Institute will have to explain why so few of our compatriots abroad have made use of this right. From Chicago, Raúl Ross Pineda, one of the best known proponents of this democratic victory, offers us a detailed account of the events in the United States and Mexico that led to this historic landmark in Mexican democracy.

Also in our "Politics" section, Ambassador Walter Astié-Burgos brings us a balance sheet of the first 60 years of the United Nations. He looks at the urgent need for reforming the UN system and analyzes Mexico's participation as a founding member state over the six decades of its existence, underlining the fact that the UN has been an excellent forum for our country to express its most cherished convictions and defend its interests, of even more importance than other regional mechanisms like the Organization of American States.

Discrimination against the indigenous population in our country is one of our great misfortunes. It is a political, economic and social, but above all cultural, phenomenon, cemented in the prejudices and stigmas profoundly rooted in Mexicans' collective unconscious. Specialist Elvia Martínez presents a diagnostic analysis of the problem for the "Society" section. Martínez, an official of the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, describes the current administration's strategies to combat this situation, abandoning, as she says, the integrationist framework of indigenism to move forward to a proposal based on fostering independent participation and respect for their cultural autonomy and customs. Historian Ana María Saloma writes about the —now frozen in committee— Fox bill on cultural policy, known as the Bermúdez Bill, after its main proponent, the head of the National Commission for Culture (Conaculta), Sari Bermúdez. This bill attempted not only to privatize an important part of our country's historic patrimony, but also to centralize and homogenize decisions in the sphere that by definition should be the most plural of all: cultural creation and dissemination.

"Economy" presents a penetrating analysis by economist Bernardo Olmedo about Mexico's export model which, far from stimulating development and situating Mexico in an advantageous position in international trade, has had the opposite effect. According to the author, this may be because the maquiladora assembly-plant model based on the import of inputs has been followed instead of industrial development and the creation of our own technology, with a priority given to multinational companies instead of small and medium-sized Mexican companies.

In the "United States Affairs" section, analyst Teresa Gutiérrez-Haces offers us a panorama of U.S. trade strategy in the Americas pointing to the fact that far from really concentrating on negotiating a Free Trade Area of the Americas, the United States has preferred to negotiate bilateral accords to be able to take advantage of economic asymmetries, based on a paradoxical —not to say cynical— policy that both demands an almost absolute liberalization on the part of its trade partners and imposes norms and rules that go beyond trade.

This U.S. policy would seem to contradict the trend of deepening the integration of the North American region, most recently reaffirmed by the creation and ratification of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP). "North American Issues" offers three outstanding articles about North American integration beyond NAFTA. Political scientist and journalist Leonardo Curzio contributes a panorama of the recently approved SPP, which he considers the first truly trilateral attempt at integration, since both NAFTA and the smart border agreements were negotiated bilaterally. His analysis includes a reflection about the SPP's two central chapters on security and prosperity. He sustains that even though security continues to be the fundamental issue, a tendency to include other questions on the trilateral and bilateral agendas can now be observed. Mexican-American analyst Manuel Chávez, looks at the SPP from the perspective of the challenges that must be overcome for it to be successful and the Mexican

interests involved. He emphasizes the need for Mexico to improve its general image *vis-à-vis* its partner countries' governments and inhabitants and recommends that the authorities in charge of bilateral policy examine Canada's successful strategies in its relations with the United States. We conclude this section with an interesting contribution by Carlos Heredia Zubieta who writes about the region's social and economic cohesion, warning that even those who were originally the most fervent proponents of free trade have lost interest in full integration and that an accord that would lead to a full North American community presupposes greater equality in the three countries' economic development. This would involve financing integration by creating compensatory funds for the weaker economies, similar to the European model, something which both the United States and Canada would not be willing to even begin to discuss.

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Our "Art and Culture" section begins with Susana Esponda's disquieting, seductive visual proposal, whose artistic language untiringly looks for someone to dialogue with and translate the accumulation of experiences, sensations and social criticism that her works encompass. Diego Yturbe, for his part, brings us some very original digitalized watercolors demonstrating humanity's diversity and cultural richness as well as the diversity of the scenery that still makes up our world. Yturbe uses them to tell us the story of a long trip that included not only the search for adventure but also a deep immersion inside himself, a spiritual route whose later evocation produced innumerable stories. Lastly, after a brief narration of the history of University City, Édgar Tavares explains the architectural and urban qualities that merits this magnificent construction, which changed our city's image in the mid-twentieth century, being proposed as an addition to the UNESCO's list of Modern Heritage Sites. Photographs from the UNAM's historical archives show exactly how justified that proposal is.

"The Splendor of Mexico" looks at Mexico's eastern Huastec Region, rich in traditions and customs, covering parts of the states of San Luis Potosí, Veracruz, Tamaulipas, Puebla and Hidalgo. Armando Herrera describes three important moments in its history, beginning with its pre-Hispanic past and finishing up with the challenges and threats modernity has brought. Lorenzo Ochoa and Ana Bella Pérez Castro write about its colorful weekly markets, where all kinds of products change hands, both traditional and modern, in indigenous languages and Spanish, combining magic and technology, reciprocity and profit. Lastly, Gonzalo Camacho and Lizette Alegre examine music and dance in the Huasteca, intimately linked from time immemorial to cycles of festivals, agricultural ceremonies, rites of passage and healing.

To complete our brief trip through the Huasteca, our "Museums" section visits Mexico City's National Anthropology Museum's new Gulf Cultures Room, whose collection of different sized pieces brings together what is most representative of Huastec culture. Current data from recent archaeological work in the region as well as that obtained through the analysis of the museum's entire collection, which dates from the nineteenth century when it was the National Museum, confirm the Huasteca's valuable artistic and cultural contribution to the world of Mesoamerica.

"Literature" pays a well-deserved homage to Gloria Anzaldúa, whose writing was not conditioned to her Chicana identity, but crossed borders to open up to other worlds and other spaces. Two of her penetrating poems, a fragment of one of her last published essays —about 9/11—, essays by Marisa Belausteguigoitia and Claire Joysmith about her work and two poems dedicated to her memory make up this tribute.

Finally we dedicate our "In Memoriam" section to one of the most renowned jurists of twentieth-century Mexico, Ignacio Burgoa Orihuela. A knowledgeable and important interpreter of the Constitution and the most authoritative voice on Mexican jurisprudence for decades, Burgoa will also go down in history for having been the father of the legislation on the writ of constitutional relief. Fernando Serrano Migallón, himself a jurist, legal academician and writer, describes Burgoa's career for us.

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