

Our voice



The problem of Mexican workers emigrating to the United States is rooted in history. After the 1848 border treaty known as the "Treaty of Guadalupe" put an end to the war with the United States, residents on the Mexican side of the border continued to cross it as they had always done.

In 1942, during the Second World War, a US delegation negotiated permission for Mexican workers to be employed on the other side of the border in replacement of Americans in uniform. The agreements protecting Mexican workers' rights expired in December of 1964, and since then, only a limited number of workers, varying from year to year, has been allowed to cross the border. In fact, a larger number do enter the US: including so-called undocumented workers or "illegals" as they are known in the United States, who exceed the established quota.

This is one of the thorniest problems in relations between the two countries, and will be discussed by Mexican experts in this issue. Mexico and the United States have signed a number of agreements guaranteeing the human and labor rights of Mexican workers, whether illegal or not. Unfortunately, Mexican workers continue frequently to be mistreated, exploited and killed as a result of the persecution to which they are subjected. This poisons bilateral relations at a time when, in the light of the approaching Free Trade Agreement, they should be an example of neighborly conduct.

A smaller number of Mexican workers also emigrate to Canada, under an agreement signed

by the Mexican and Canadian governments; this has not caused any conflict between our two countries.

European workers from any of the European Economic Community countries are allowed to work freely in all of them. In the future, the same should apply to workers in North America. Workers' freedom to seek employment in any of the three NAFTA nations has not yet been dealt with in current FTA negotiations.

This issue will discuss other aspects of the border, such as the rapidly expanding in-bond industries.

It will also cover one of Mexico's lesser known museums, the Spratling Museum in Taxco. William Spratling, an American, came to Mexico and settled in Taxco. He devoted himself to making silverware with Mexican themes, set up a school for silversmiths, and awarded prizes for the best work. The museum was built in his honor.

The Former Head of State of Nigeria and Chairman of the Africa Leadership Forum, Olesugun Obasanjo, expresses his views on the subject of a new world order. Always open to ideas from elsewhere, the UNAM welcomes the opportunity to publish the opinions of such distinguished personalities as Obasanjo. Since ideas know no bounds, we have included articles from prominent thinkers in Latin America, Europe and now Africa. An ecumenical sense of culture is one of the cornerstones of this university.

The preservation of our endangered environment will be a recurrent theme in *Voices*. In this issue, Dr. José Sarukhán, the university's rector, writes in defense of the Lacandon ecosystem, where progress is synonymous with ecological disaster.

Porrás Navarro highlights the contribution of native Mexicans to the new culture that grew out of the contact between Spaniards and natives in his article on the Painted books of pre-Hispanic and colonial Mexico.

Hector Luisi, a distinguished Uruguayan, who helped write his country's Constitution, discusses current inter-American affairs.

Edmundo Flores comments on the effect of constitutional reforms on the agricultural development of rural Mexico. Now the object of much attention and plans for development, the rural sector, home to almost half the population of Mexico, was subordinated to Mexico's move towards industrialization in the 30's.

Poverty, ignorance and unsanitary conditions are widespread in the countryside. It is essential to raise the campesinos' standard of living, implement modern agriculture and agro-industry, and provide education and health services if Mexico is to become a society where differences between rich and poor are lesser than they are today ✽

Hugo B. Margáin
Editorial Director.