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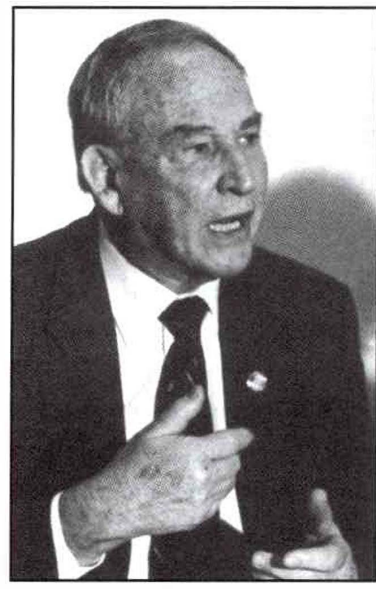
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Jose Angel Conchello
1913-2017



Luis Humberto González/SILVA

José Angel Conchello was a polemical man, widely recognized as a firm defender of democracy, the nation and the rights of Mexican workers. Though he stirred all kinds of controversy and contradictory opin-

ions, he was one of the country's most respected legislators, not only because of his honesty, coherence and ability to dialogue, but the also because he knew how to intelligently balance political differences both within his own National Action Party (PAN) and in partisan and general national debate.

Trained as a lawyer and well versed in economics and national politics, from the beginning of his political career he questioned any government decision that he thought could have a negative impact on citizens' rights or national sovereignty.

During his first term as a federal deputy in 1967, he analyzed public spending under the Díaz Ordaz administration, finding considerable differences between the budget authorized by Congress and what was actually spent. In 1972, when elected president of the PAN National Executive Committee, he worked to organize the party and establish a political line oriented to denunciation and democracy, which made him enemies among the more right-wing of his fellow party members. He reappeared in national politics as a federal deputy in 1973 and he would have another term beginning in 1985. He was the PAN candidate for the gubernatorial seat of the state of Nuevo León in the 1979 elections, which he lost to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) candidate, despite the denunciations of electoral fraud that he later reiterated in his review of the campaign.

From 1987 to 1993, he headed up the PAN regional leadership in Mexico City, where he carried out heated debates with other party leaders. He was also one of the leaders of what was called the Democratic Doctrine Forum, a democratic current inside the PAN that opposed alleged secret negotiations with the PRI,¹ although he did not approve the group's later split from the party. He was a representative and coordinator of the first elected Mexico City Assembly of Representatives and twice elected senator.

During his first term as senator in 1992, he wrote a tract fervently opposing the North American Free Trade Agreement (*El TLC, un callejón sin salida* [NAFTA, A Dead End]), arguing that it was "economic surrender."

As a senator in the 57th Congress he participated in five commissions: as president of the third section of the

Foreign Relations Commission (Latin America and the Caribbean); secretary of the Mexico City Federal District Commission; and a member of the Jurisdictional Social Assistance, Law of the Seas and Fishing Commissions. He combined his legislative duties with his law practice, which led him to act as director of the National Association of Advertisers (ANA) from 1962 to 1989.

Under his leadership, the ANA coined such polemical slogans as "We want no more taxes; we want more honesty," and, on the question of the privatization of the Mexican Social Security Institute, "Public property: sale prohibited."

In the current legislative session he presented six important bills, and worked on a transitory article for the Retirement Savings Plan Law.² He defended workers' rights, opposing the privatization of the Mexican Social Security Institute and modifications in its systems; he debated the imminent danger of the United States obtaining control over the oil reserves discovered in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico, and in 1997 attained a Foreign Ministry announcement of Senate participation in the negotiations to delimit maritime boundaries in the gulf.

José Angel Conchello, also the author of works denouncing national public policy, like *Agonía y esperanza* (Agony and Hope), *El trigo y la cizaña* (Wheat and Darnel) and *Devaluación 82* (Devaluation, 82), died August 4 in an automobile accident.

His funeral was attended by President Zedillo, distinguished members of all the nation's political parties and important figures in Mexico's political and cultural spheres. ■■

NOTES

¹ In alleged secret negotiations between the PRI and the PAN, called *concertaciones*, the ruling party supposedly opened up power positions to the PAN (granting them gubernatorial seats, city halls and deputyships, etc.) in exchange for its vote in the Chamber of Deputies in fundamental matters of legislation. [Editor's Note.]

² The Retirement Savings Plan Law regulates contributions for pensions and retirement for Mexico's public employees. [Editor's Note.]