

OUR VOICE

California, the world's sixth largest economy, has a very intimate relationship with Mexico for many reasons. We have a common history that took different paths during the last century. As a border state, we share with it both water and general environmental pollution and sizeable trade. Unfortunately for Mexico, the number of our citizens who emigrate to California grows daily. Deaths from abuse and violations of human rights of these immigrants are also on the rise. Although sectors of United States agriculture could not produce without Mexican labor, many U.S. citizens harbor negative feelings about immigrants. The tensest moment in Mexican relations with California came when ex-governor Wilson promoted Proposition 187 denying social services to the children of undocumented immigrants. But, challenged in the courts, the measure was found unconstitutional and has not been applied.

Fortunately, Gray Davis was recently elected governor of California, showing the immense political strength of Hispanics, whose electoral support was definitive for his victory. We are finally beginning to see our way clear to a different kind of relationship with Mexico. The first sign was the new governor's immediate visit to Mexico. President Zedillo, responded to the gesture by returning the visit from May 17 to May 19. Both men acted as statesmen, putting misunderstandings behind them and trying to establish a new kind of relationship to benefit both their constituents. There is undoubtedly still an enormous amount left to be done to better relations, but the foundations have been laid and the future looks promising.

While Mexico now has a democratic system, it still suffers from great institutional weakness. We have not been able to move ahead to a culture of consensus for promoting government policies around the great social demands. This part of the democratic process has still to be gone through, according to Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda's analysis, which begins this issue's "Politics" section. Dr. Marcos Kaplan continues the section in a rather pessimistic tone focusing on the loss of sovereignty stemming from opening up markets in the age of globalization. He points to the paradox inherent in imposing neoliberal reforms to limit the state using the very same state-centered policies being criticized. The high-tech world financial market limits and distorts the state's decisions and actions, thus benefiting only certain groups, regions and sectors in detriment to the majority.

Eloy Garza González' article on the advances of the reform of the state emphasizes that while the agenda has been ambitious, the achievements have fallen short

of the mark. The topics include, among others, run-off elections, Mexican's voting abroad, access to the media, campaign financing and spending, the relationship between indigenous peoples and the state, control of organized crime and electoral reforms. But, in Garza's opinion, Congress has not been capable of creating the consensus needed to consolidate the advances.

Marco Antonio Baños Martínez considers that the transition to democracy has been possible thanks to the transformation of electoral norms, among them, the establishment of the Federal Electoral Institute as an independent body, the development of trustworthy voters rolls, the creation of state and local electoral bodies made up of non-partisan, citizen councilors and the choosing of polling place officials by lot. All these measures have lent credibility to the electoral process, although many changes are still needed to perfect it.

Painter Francisco Toledo from Oaxaca is one of Mexico's best and most widely recognized artists. It is sufficient to see one of his paintings for the viewer never to forget the emotions they evoke. In this issue, Carlos Monsiváis and José Pierre write about Toledo and his work in our "Science, Art and Culture" section.

We also present comments by Raquel Tibol and María Navarro on the work of Mario Orozco, who joins *amate* and painting to achieve a combination of colors and textures expressing much of that strange mixture of cultures that defines us as Mexicans.

Our "Economy" section begins with an article on a debate current throughout Latin America: dollarization. In the opinion of Francisco Sevilla, dollarizing the economy would complicate Mexico's situation even more and solve nothing.

The announcement of the privatization of Mexico's electricity system has been received with great disquiet. Rosío Vargas lays out the positions for and against its total privatization.

The nineteenth century was a time of tense Mexico-U.S. relations given American expansionism and the lack of political consolidation of the Mexican state. Historian Jesús Velasco describes these ups and downs in our "History" section.

The "United States Affairs" section begins with an article by Alejandro Becerra Gelóver describing how Mexican lobbying in the United States began under President Echeverría to soothe relations with our northern neighbor, relations disturbed by his non-aligned, Third Worldist policies. It was Carlos Salinas who launched an aggressive lobbying strategy that, although costly, succeeded in helping bring about the approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement, counter to the wishes of important U.S. pressure groups.

Undoubtedly, year after year since 1986, bilateral relations are put to the test by the U.S. executive and congressional certification of Mexico with regard to drug trafficking. Silvia Vélez analyzes the U.S. position on the question, foreseeing few possibilities that this unfortunate procedure be eliminated.

If we ask ourselves what the most important social movements of the end of this millennium are, we would surely have to include environmentalist movements. For this reason, our "Canadian Issues" section features an article by Sofia Gallardo on

Canadian nongovernmental environmentalist organizations, groups that have emerged from civil society to act politically beyond electoral periods. While the author underlines their agreements on defending the environment, she also mentions their different tactics and origins, highlighting the movement's complexity.

Also in this section, Adam T. Sellen describes how Canada and Mexico have joined together in a very special project: UNAM technology and personnel has been put to use together with the Royal Ontario Museum to authenticate pieces of Zapotec pottery, among them monumental funeral urns.

Oaxaca fully deserves the description "magical." Twelve millennia of history make for an incomparable accumulation of tradition and cultural wealth. This issue of *Voices of Mexico* dedicates its "Splendor of Mexico" section to this land of artists and shamans, historical figures and traditions, and indigenous peoples' survival.

Jorge Bautista and Adrián Salinas describe Monte Albán and Mitla, two impressive urban centers that flowered under the Zapotec and Mixtec cultures.

David Malpica delves into that fantastic craft, *alebrije* making, that gives us magical, brightly colored wooden figures in the form of animals, mythical monsters and devils or angels, and collector and Oaxacan culture expert Ruth Lechuga introduces us to the meaning of traditional Oaxacan textiles.

Amelia Lara and Manuel Esparza write about the Santo Domingo Cultural Center, housed in a colonial monastery that has become a monument in itself. Alejandro de Avila records the important work done to recover the region's flora by the cultural center's ethnobotanical garden. In our next issue of *Voices of Mexico*, we will continue to present our readers with articles about this fascinating state.

The population explosion has had a negative impact on nature. In his article for the "Ecology" section, Gerardo Ceballos warns that 25 percent of Mexico's vertebrates are endangered species, calling on government and civil society to prevent the catastrophe threatened by this alarming situation.

Recently deceased Jaime Sabines has been catalogued as "the people's poet" because of his ability to touch the emotions of most Mexicans. Together with Octavio Paz and Juan Rulfo, he is probably the Mexican writer most read by his countrymen. In a well deserved homage to his work, *Voices of Mexico* dedicates this issue's "Literature" section to him, with a brief anthology of his poems and three essays by experts on his work: Mario del Valle, Jaime Labastida and Juan Domingo Argüelles.

Another important, prolific Mexican writer also died recently. Our "In Memoriam" section pays homage to Ricardo Garibay, a writer both honest and polemical, who will be remembered for his capacity to understand and put in his writing the mentality, culture and day-to-day speech of Mexico's marginalized poor.