

## **A Deal for President Trump**

Monday afternoon at INCAE's Club de Presidentes, Prof. Jorge Dominguez of Harvard led a session on some of the main issues facing Central America in its relations with the U.S. He discussed three of particular concern: trade and the fate of CAFTA and NAFTA which most of the Republican candidates and Bernie Sanders of the Democrats are attacking; the blocking of immigration and deportation of illegal immigrants which all candidates seem to agree is a big problem; and finally the impact of the U.S. war on drugs which has created great violence, corruption and instability in the northern triangle. (He quoted a shocking statistic: each day the U.S. is deporting between 150-250 criminals back to the northern triangle. These are criminals trained in the modern techniques of violence in the U.S. jails and gangs, and supplied by the U.S. gun industry with the latest weapons of violence. They are overwhelming the capacity of the police and political system in our countries.)

"It's February 2017," began Prof. Dominguez in the late afternoon, "President Trump has taken office and is beginning to implement the changes he promised. Each of your tables should discuss how Central America should respond. Nominate one of your members to present it to the group. I was the nominee of our group.

"President Trump, I understand you are a superb deal maker which pleases us. I've just returned from a meeting of the Presidents of Latin America and we have a very good deal to propose to you regarding the three most important issues in our relations: trade, immigration and drug violence.

"We're not asking for anything in the way of new trade deals. Given the fact that the U.S. exports more to Latin America than we export to the U.S., we'd suggest it makes the most sense for you not to disturb this very favorable arrangement for the U.S. and focus your trade efforts on Asia. It would be stupid to kill a golden goose helping the U.S. economy."

"Regarding immigration we agree with you that we have to stop illegal immigration. The treatment of our children and people by ruthless coyotes, the damage done to families hurts us even more than the U.S. Let's work together on an effective program that gets America the guest workers it needs for its economy, stops illegal immigration and figures out a humane way to deal with the mess that you have inherited. We can be effective partners in this if the U.S. clarifies, simplifies and speeds up its guest worker programs and provides us with the technology and financial support to help keep people away from your borders.

“Finally on the issue of drugs and violence, as an outsider you have a wonderful opportunity to change a strategy that has failed for thirty years. We not only stand ready to help you but are going to insist on it. Everyone has known that the U.S. strategy toward drugs is a total failure. That strategy going back to Nixon and the criminalization of drugs has failed to stop the use of drugs, has filled your jails with addicts, given criminals billions of dollars of profits, and corrupted the police forces of your cities and our countries. That strategy, which only tries to stop supply at its source but doesn’t seriously attacked demand or punish users, has been a known failure for over thirty years. (Let’s get serious -- cocaine and prostitutes at parties of your secret service – give us a break!) The U.S. strategy is like trying to put out a fire by throwing gasoline on it! And if the polls are right more than 70% of Americans now believe it is a failed strategy.

“We in Latin America can no longer support this failed strategy and plan to support you in the following way. We are financing a major communication campaign in the U.S. media to show the terrible failure of the strategy. With facts we will show how it is damaging the U.S. And in that campaign, we will call on Americans to ask their elected officials if they believe the strategy is working. If the politicians say “Yes,” the great majority of Americans will know they need to replace them. If the politicians agree the strategy is a failure, the electorate should ask them what they plan to do about it – as every businessman knows the height of stupidity is to keep pouring money into a failed strategy. In this way politicians will no longer be able to ignore this cancer in U.S. society which has spread to our countries. We will also publicly tell the American government that if they agree the old strategy is a failure, we will work with them to find a new strategy that will solve the problem, by analyzing history, by studying what other countries are doing, by developing medicines that block addiction, by putting our best minds to devise programs that work.

“However, if the U.S. continues to pretend there is no problem, we have decided we will give free passage to drugs through our countries to your borders and let you bear the burden of stopping them with your giant wall. We will no longer bear the brunt of the violence and corruption by trying to stop the flow of drugs which your billions of dollars finance and which your guns used to murder our people make possible.

“President Trump, many people believe you aren’t capable of being an effective President, but if we work together on these three issues in this way, you could go down in history as a great President!”

The reactions to this presentation from participants in the Club de Presidentes, suggested to our table, that perhaps we in Central and Meso America should prepare to do

something like this with the next President of the U.S. We invite your thoughts and suggestions.

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