The influence of Latinos on the U.S. Congressional election of Nov. 2, 2010 was very similar to previous votes. Latinos showed strong support for Democrats and exhibited low registration and voting. Further, the election race demonstrated Latinos’ lack of a cohesive policy agenda and low political capital. Their participation did not increase substantially despite important contests in some Congressional districts where they form a powerful demographic group. Latinos have yet to translate their strength in numbers into influence on election outcomes, political representation and issues. They continue to lag behind other ethnic groups in their political mobilization and participation.

Looking for strength in numbers

Historically, Latinos have been under-represented at the polls, a fact that contributes to politicians’ limited interest in currying favor with this demographic group. The number of registered Latino voters has been slowly increasing; in 2008 Latinos represented nine per cent of all voters, against eight per cent in 2004. But this increase is modest considering that the Latino population is growing at an annual rate of 3.9 per cent, much faster than the national average of 0.9 per cent. Hispanic registration and voting levels remain the lowest of all U.S. citizens. Less than 50 per cent of Latino citizens went to the polls in the 2008 presidential election, while 32 per cent voted in the 2006 Congressional election—a similar result to this year’s contest. With such a low turnout, it can be expected that politicians will continue to pay only lip service to Latinos. Increased political participation requires greater public policy outreach to motivate this group to vote.

(Continued on page 3)
FOCAL Views: Are we competitive in our own hemisphere?

Canada will lose out if it does not continue to build its relationships with Latin America and the Caribbean.

Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) economic growth rates exceed five per cent and its population of 550 million includes a growing middle class with a significant per capita annual purchasing power of $11,000. Canada-LAC bilateral annual trade tops $40 billion, and investment from Canadian firms in LAC is $100 billion plus—three times the levels of our investment in Asia. Spanish is the third most spoken language in Canada and 11 per cent of our immigrants come from the region.

But the obvious and growing importance of the region to Canada has not been matched by a commensurate level of interest or resources, and public perception lags far behind. Very often, a mention of our neighbours only evokes images of abject poverty, organized crime, or democratic upsets.

It is true that the region faces real challenges. There are high levels of inequality and areas of serious poverty. The fight against organized crime and corruption has reached crisis levels in some countries and “drugs and thugs” do capture headlines. However, things are changing rapidly and Canada will lose out if it does not continue to build its relationships with this dynamic part of the world.

There has been some success. Canada named the Americas as a foreign policy priority in 2007. Growing immigration, tourism and educational connections have built new cultural and social ties. Canadian companies are highly visible in the resource extraction, financial, industrial and agricultural sectors. Our universities have extensive academic partnerships with the region.

But curiously, Canada is little known in Latin America and vice versa. Changing this calls for sustained, deliberate effort to better match our interests. Hosting international meetings will not suffice; gaining ground in the long run requires long-term action.

Other countries are doing just this. In 2000 Spain launched a concerted effort that unites business, government and academia working in the Americas. The latest European Union-Latin America and Caribbean Summit has implemented a detailed joint work plan. China’s trade success is yielding a series of broader exchanges. India is rapidly making inroads with new trade and investment ties.

Canada is often cited for effective governance, responsible business practice and democratic freedom; a competitive edge on countries such as China or India. The challenge is to translate this generally positive image into results when we need international allies, when our firms compete for new business, and when our universities seek international students and academic exchanges.

Right now, our fragmented approach makes it very difficult for people from the Americas to see beyond the vaguely positive and seek out Canada as a partner and a source of expertise. Why not change this and create a one-stop portal to offer easy access to the best that Canada has to offer? Or go a step further and create a new way to support the joint development of innovative ideas?

It is time to catch up with the U.S. and Europe with a program of concerted public-private action. From socially responsible business to public sector policy making, Canada has a wealth of relevant analysis, experience and expertise. However, if these ideas are to impact our image and influence in the Americas, we need to pay more attention and focus our efforts.

It is time to up our game and really connect with our partners in the Americas. Our competitiveness is at play.

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Latinos’ political capital at the state and federal levels remains low, making it difficult to promote their agenda, including greater participation at the ballot box. The number of Latinos in positions of political authority grew by 24 per cent between 1996 and 2007, across all levels of office. In 2007, there was 34 per cent more Latinos found in state legislatures; yet representation among statewide officials has not improved compared with their representation figures of 1996. At the federal level, more Latinos are taking on federal government positions, particularly young ones assuming positions with an international focus. Notwithstanding, the greater presence of Latinos in positions of political power is still far from matching their growing population and potential political capital.

**Latinos are not a monolithic voting bloc**

Putting Latinos’ low electoral participation and their under-representation in politics aside, the fact that this demographic group lacks a cohesive policy agenda means that it is unlikely to impact national elections. The group comprises immigrants from an entire continent as well as people of Hispanic background born in the U.S. As such, it is a divided community with wide-ranging interests driven by nationality, place of birth, experiences with poverty and location in the U.S.

However, some generalizations still stand. On average, Latinos face higher poverty rates and earn incomes lower than the national median and lower that any other ethnic group. During the recession, Latino unemployment has not declined as much relative to other groups, but it is high nevertheless: it stood at 12.2 per cent in September 2009 and at 11.9 per cent a year later. This number represents a nearly four per cent increase from 2008 when unemployment was 8.8 per cent among Latinos. The group’s incomes have dropped and it remains vulnerable because of crime in neighbourhoods where many Latinos live. Latino children often attend public schools with limited resources and have high dropout rates; they are also more likely to be victims of youth gangs in their inner-city neighbourhoods.

Given these socio-economic strains, it is not surprising that a recent Pew Hispanic Center report stated that education, jobs and health care were the most important issues to Latinos; immigration was only the fifth most important issue although half of Latinos are immigrants and form 27 per cent of all Latino eligible voters. Amidst national division over immigration policy marked by strong anti-immigrant sentiment, the poor Latino mobilization around this issue weakens any prospect of reform. Latino social movements have limited resources, are divided and thus lack the capacity to influence political agendas and galvanize a unified movement. They are more likely to use their resources to serve their communities and influence local and state agendas rather than to take action on national issues. In sum, the variety of issues that Latinos find important, and the disjuncture between their actual interests and public perception of their interests, make it more difficult for this group to promote a common policy agenda.

**Greater incorporation for greater strength**

Although Latinos are the largest minority in the U.S. with a population that has grown from 35 to 45 million in 10 years, their electoral participation remains low and stood at 31 per cent in 2008. Expectations

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**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latinos in positions of political authority</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>Per cent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of office</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statewide Officials</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including Governor)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Legislators</strong></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>County Officials</strong></td>
<td>358</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Municipal Officials</strong></td>
<td>1,295</td>
<td>1,640</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Judicial/Law Enforcement Officials</strong></td>
<td>546</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Board/Education Officials</strong></td>
<td>1,240</td>
<td>1,847</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special District Officials</strong></td>
<td>125</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

that they will become an influential political group are yet to be met. Perhaps it is not surprising that Latinos feel alienated politically, given the widespread anti-immigrant rhetoric. The punitive anti-immigration law passed in Arizona earlier this year reinforces this sentiment. A 2010 Pew Hispanic Center survey found that an impressive 42 per cent of Latinos feel that neither Democrats nor Republicans defend the interests of their community. While the current political atmosphere has proven successful in demoralizing Latinos, it could ultimately galvanize them to respond to the attacks through political channels.

In addition, as the Latino population grows, politicians will inevitably need to acknowledge the group’s interests. In states such as Georgia and South Carolina where additional Congressional seats were gained following the 2010 census, politicians will owe much to their Latino constituencies. Reversely, states that are losing seats would have lost more had it not been for their increasing Latino populations. Even if Latino voter turnout lags behind population growth, politicians will ultimately have to take this growing demographic into account.

Finally, improved outreach to Latino communities and efforts to integrate them into the political process could improve voter mobilization and turnout. Educating Latinos on voting rights and the electoral process, and on ways in which government can work for them, will be essential to ensure that Latinos will increase their impact in future elections.

Manuel Orozco, Senior Associate and Director of Remittances and Development at the Inter-American Dialogue, has conducted extensive research, policy analysis and advocacy on issues relating to global flows of remittances, and migration and development worldwide. Katherine Scaife is an Associate with the Remittances Development program, and has supported Latino community organizing efforts in the U.S. and abroad.

Elections

U.S. midterm elections: A forecast of relations with Latin America, the Caribbean

The Nov. 2 midterm elections in the United States resulted in the biggest Republican sweep in more than 70 years, shifting the balance of power in Congress and shrinking the Democrat majority in the Senate.

According to Foreign Policy, Cuban-born Ileana Ros-Lehtinen who was re-elected to the House under the Republican slate in Florida will be a crucial actor in foreign relations. She is poised to chair the House Foreign Affairs Committee and many analysts predict she will recast the committee’s agenda. Ros-Lehtinen is an active member of the Cuban-American lobby and overtly anti-Castro. She is likely to overturn outgoing chairman Howard Berman’s (D-Calif.) pending legislation to ease sanctions and travel restrictions on Cuba.

Further, Ros-Lehtinen has been forthright about her disapproval of Venezuela’s regime under Hugo Chávez, as well as Nicaragua’s Daniel Ortega and Bolivia’s Evo Morales.

Marco Rubio’s election as Florida’s Republican senator also heralds an end to the Cuba-U.S. rapprochement. Rubio who comes from a family of Cuban refugees vowed in his victory speech never to forget the exile community. That could signify that any pro-Castro measure would require 60 votes to pass the U.S. Senate.
Forecasting California-Canada relations

Daniel J. Smith and Patrick James

The outcome of the gubernatorial election will shape economic opportunities and could affect trade with Canada.

The United States and Canada are both striving to recover from the global recession, but Canadians have been more successful in resuscitating their economy. In the U.S., the state of California especially is beset by burgeoning political and economic problems. While California has only made piecemeal economic progress in the last two years, extreme partisan politics and interest-group influences have produced persistent gridlock in the legislature, notably on the issue of deficit management. These continuing political struggles could undermine efforts toward full recovery. Failure to stabilize the state’s economy would impact California-Canada relations in the short- to medium-term. The outcome of the California Nov. 2 gubernatorial election will certainly shape the economic opportunities and constraints of firms and industries, and could affect trade and investment patterns with Canada.

The state finally enacted a budget on Oct. 8, 2010. With the new administration in place, the priority for Californian politics will continue to be initiating economic growth. During the gubernatorial race, the approaches of candidates Jerry Brown and Meg Whitman, though divergent, both provided prospects for sustained economic relations between Canadian and Californian firms. Despite political and economic struggles in California, and the expansionary and fiscal restraint of most businesses in the state, trade and investment with Canada in 2011 and beyond should not be considered entirely uncertain.

Canada is the second-largest export market of California. Since 2006, the country has annually imported between 11 and 12 per cent of California’s goods. Approximately 25 per cent of all the state’s exports to Canada are computers and electronic products; agricultural goods account for more than 20 per cent; and transportation products comprise 15 per cent of total exports. These primary exports to Canada can be expected to remain a pillar for the future. California, likewise, is the fourth largest market for Canadian firms in the U.S. Another primary Canadian import is alternative energy. California obtains nearly one-quarter of its natural gas and one-third of its hydro-power from its northern neighbour country.

But trading in goods is not the panacea for California’s economic situation. Despite its reputation as a leading centre for technology (e.g. biotechnology and medical instruments, computers, digital media, nanotechnology and advanced materials, telecommunications), California has experienced “a reversal of fortune” in recent years through capital flight. Between 2002 and 2006, Canadian investment in Silicon Valley totalled US$230 million, while capital flowing in the opposite direction reached US$760 million. However, this U.S. investment in growing technology sectors in Canada could lead to new firm integration or international collaborations between the two economies—as happened with MarketLink for instance.
The gubernatorial race allows us to point to some opportunities and impediments particular firms and industries could encounter under the new economic policies of the incoming administration. Republican candidate Meg Whitman centred her economic strategy primarily on eliminating costs for the private sector, thereby providing businesses with the fiscal capacity to expand. This emphasis on reducing costs for businesses— in start-up, factory and capital gains taxes— would create the incentives needed to generate larger Canadian investment in California’s industries. The shortcomings of this policy, however, rest in the uncertainty of real expansion and growth, and in its short-term viability.

The strategy of Democratic candidate Jerry Brown is founded on developing new industries, particularly in renewable energy. Funding the development of the alternative energy sectors could provide new channels for California-Canada exchange in energy, as well as for Canadian firms to establish collaborative ventures or acquire clean technology; yet it may also create a California that is more energy independent. The downside of this strategy for the state’s economy lies in the lack of short-term gains for Californians as it may not provide the same potential for growth in labour as Whitman’s vision promises.

California’s economic policy will continue to target the high unemployment rate, which is currently standing at approximately 12 per cent. Solutions emanating from Sacramento will give primacy to job creation rather than production efficiency; improving the state’s industries will be central to this objective. Nonetheless, continued economic relations with Canada are essential to job growth, as trade alone supported the employment of more than 832,000 Californians in 2007. Both Brown’s and Whitman’s strategies present opportunities for firms and industries to expand. For those businesses not benefiting from the state’s new economic policy, Canada offers ample prospects for growth.

Another source of potential change in California-Canada ties, including in energy, could emerge from ballot initiatives. Proposition 23, in particular, would adversely affect the goal of job creation embedded in California’s alternative energy initiatives. But this is a moot point. While Proposition 23, akin to the policies supporting renewable energy development (e.g. AB 32), is also asserted as being essential to reversing the state’s unemployment rate, the net effect of the energy industry on job growth is uncertain as it is mostly a capital-intensive one. This issue reflects the ability of direct democracy to counter attempts at economic reform, which contributes to California’s political dysfunction.

Economic relations between Canada and California could benefit from the former’s optimal business environment. The country’s sound fiscal management, ironically, is grounded in policies of the 1990s similar to the current profligate spending in the U.S. These Canadian policies now attract inward investment. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, the country is rated as the number one location to conduct business over the next five years among G7 members. Particularly propitious to foreign firms are the low transaction costs. The country’s incentives include a falling federal corporate tax rate, which by 2012 will be less than half of the U.S. rate, and the lowest payroll taxes among G7 countries. This is in stark contrast with California, where high taxes pull the state to the bottom of the ranking of favourable tax climates in the U.S. In sum, Canada’s healthy business environment is an advantageous alternative, or potentially a first-best option, for expansionary Canadian firms looking to escape the state’s higher transaction costs.

In the near term, economic relations between California and Canada will remain inherently tied to the state’s political developments. Despite lower levels of economic exchange due to the global recession, trade and investment between the two economies can be expected to stay as robust as it has been over the last decade. Nevertheless, the gubernatorial election and ballot initiatives such as Proposition 23 present some firms and industries from both economies with opportunities, while others will need to be more innovative to overcome the constraints of California’s economic environment.

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Les présidentialles d’Halloween : le Brésil dans l’obscurité?

Jean Daudelin

(English follows)

Les implications de la victoire de Dilma Rousseff demeurent floues.

Les élections sont censées nous apprendre certaines choses, par exemple l’orientation que prendra un pays, la façon dont il sera dirigé ou, du moins, la personne qui le gouvernera effectivement. Toutefois, les élections présidentielles brésiliennes du 31 octobre dernier n’ont rien révélé du genre. La portée réelle de la victoire de Dilma Rousseff est un mystère non seulement pour les observateurs étrangers et la plupart des Brésiliens, mais également pour Rousseff elle-même.

Manifestement, certaines choses demeureront inchangées, et elles sont très importantes: la politique économique dirigiste mais favorable au marché est bien enracinée, il n’y a pas véritablement de remboursement de dette à suspendre et l’inflation est encore largement perçue comme une bête trop dangereuse pour qu’on ne la laisse s’échapper de nouveau. Ce qui est peut-être le moins susceptible de changer est la Bolsa Familia, ce programme de transferts monétaires conditionnels ayant remporté un succès remarquable et qui est considérée comme une vache sacrée que personne n’osera toucher. Dans une large mesure, cette campagne électorale était dépourvue d’enjeu, constituant plutôt un accident institutionnel empêchant Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, le politicien le plus populaire de l’histoire du Brésil, de rester au pouvoir durant au moins un autre mandat et de faire grosso modo ce qu’il a fait depuis 2002.

Pourtant, la donne politique est sur le point de changer significativement, tandis que Lula s’apprête à céder sa place à la présidence à Rousseff. Le nouveau jeu politique comporte de nombreux niveaux dont les dynamiques et combinaisons sont tellement complexes que personne ne peut prédire ce qui en ressortira. C’est donc mystère et boule de gomme.

La donne politique est sur le point de changer significativement.

Le premier de ces niveaux se trouve au sein même du Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, Parti des travailleurs), qui a finalement accédé au pouvoir en 2002 uniquement grâce au charisme de Lula. Il n’avait donc d’autre choix que de laisser Lula gouverner, ce que ce dernier a fait, mais souvent d’une façon et avec des gens qui ne plaisaient pas vraiment à l’« establishment » du parti. Les petistas acceptent cet état de fait depuis maintenant huit ans, mais bon nombre d’entre eux estiment qu’il est temps de remettre les rênes au parti et tenteront, de toute évidence, de faire valoir leur position sur les priorités et le budget du gouvernement.

Le premier obstacle qu’ils rencontreront est Lula, qui n’est plus à la présidence, mais qui n’en est pas loin non plus. Celui-ci pourrait bien, d’ailleurs, être tenté de revenir au pouvoir en 2014. Il est en quelque sorte le zombie du parti : mort dans un sens, mais bien vivant dans l’autre. Par ailleurs, la solide base sociale qui soutient Lula et que certains analystes appellent le lulismo est le deuxième obstacle qui se présentera à eux. Le lulismo forme aujourd’hui un important mouvement, qui fait des adeptes principalement dans le nord-est du pays, mais également dans l’ensemble des régions les plus pauvres du Brésil. Les mouvements sociaux et les organisations politiques en lien avec le PT n’ont pas atteint les gens de ces secteurs, qui demeurent largement indifférents à l’égard du gauchisme orthodoxe ou du post-marxisme sophistiqué des intellectuels du PT. Ils n’en ont que pour Lula et pour ce qu’il leur a apporté, c’est-à-dire la stabilité et un sentiment de sécurité grâce à une politique économique prudente ainsi qu’à un chèque qu’ils reçoivent tous les mois et qui leur permet pour la première fois de joindre les deux bouts. Autrefois partisans de l’ancienne oligarchie, ces gens des régions pauvres du Brésil sont résolument conservateurs, en partie par nécessité, car ils savent...
qu’ils seront les premiers à couler si la barque venait à chavirer, mais aussi par choix puisqu’une grande majorité d’entre eux, catholiques ou protestants, sont extrêmement religieux. C’est une réalité que Rousseff a découvert à ses dépens lorsque sa position ambiguë sur l’avortement a fait tourner sa campagne au vinaigre, ce qui a probablement contribué dans une large mesure à la tenue d’un second tour de scrutin.

Si Rousseff tente sa chance, se range du côté des petistas et adopte une approche un peu plus « progressiste » que Lula, saura-t-elle rallier les lulistas? Surtout, Lula laissera-t-il cela se produire? Permettra-t-il à la successeur qu’il a choisie — « lui-même en robe » comme il l’a décrite en pensant peut-être déjà à l’Halloween — de trahir « son » électoral?

Comme si toutes ces incertitudes n’étaient pas suffisantes, Rousseff devra également construire une majorité pour chaque loi qu’elle tentera de faire passer au Congrès. Pour ce faire, non seulement devra-t-elle gagner l’appui de toute la délégation du PT, dont une grande partie s’est hissée au pouvoir grâce à l’appui des lulistas, mais elle devra aussi, à l’instar de tous les présidents brésiliens, menacer ou soudoyer de nombreux députés et sénateurs « centristes », la plupart provenant du principal allié du PT, le Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB, Parti du mouvement démocratique brésilien). Bien qu’il ne soit pas tout à fait le « gang de bandits » décrit par l’ancien gouverneur et candidat à la présidence Ciro Gomes, la majeure partie de ses membres élus agissent seulement lorsqu’ils sont menacés ou lorsqu’on promet un poste de ministre aux membres de leur parti, un emploi à leurs partisans, des dépenses dans leurs circonscriptions pour leurs électeurs, ou de l’argent liquide pour eux-mêmes. Lula, qui jouissait d’une immense popularité et qui, par conséquent, pouvait imposer des sanctions politiques, devait néanmoins recourir à l’un ou l’autre de ces moyens pour obtenir ce qu’il voulait. Rousseff, qui ne détient pas la grande légitimité politique de son prédécesseur et qui ne parviendra probablement pas à l’acquérir à court ou à moyen terme, n’aura pas de choix : elle paiera cher pour obtenir ce qu’elle veut du Congrès. Combien? Personne ne le sait, car on n’a aucune idée de ce que les lulistas penseront, de ce que Lula fera, de la manière dont réagiront les députés petistas au Congrès, de ce que les « alliés » centristes demanderont et de la tournure que prendront les événements.

D’ailleurs, personne ne sait trop ce qui se cache derrière le masque que Rousseff a porté durant la campagne électorale. Est-elle davantage une lulista ou une petista? Comment entend-elle traiter avec le zombie et combien est-elle prête à payer pour obtenir ce qu’elle souhaite au Congrès? Son programme ne nous éclaire pas plus que sa campagne. Comme pour souligner son manque de pertinence, celui-ci a été présenté seulement au cours de la dernière semaine d’une campagne qui a duré plus de deux mois.

En définitive, tout cela n’a peut-être pas vraiment d’importance pour les années à venir étant donné que les fondements de la prospérité actuelle du Brésil sont très solides. Mais à long terme, ou dans un avenir rapproché si la crise économique frappe de nouveau, les Brésiliens souhaiteraient peut-être avoir eu une soirée d’élection moins mystérieuse.

Jean Daudelin enseigne à la Norman Paterson School of International Affairs de l’Université Carleton et blogue par intermittence sur le site jacaremirim.com.
Brazil’s Halloween elections: Too much mystery?

Jean Daudelin

The implications of Dilma Rousseff’s victory are yet to be fully understood.

Elections are supposed to tell us something: where a country is heading, how it will be governed, or at the very least who will govern it. Brazil’s Oct. 31 presidential elections told us nothing of the sort. The meaning of Dilma Rousseff’s victory is shrouded in mystery, not only for outside observers and most Brazilians, but also for Dilma Rousseff herself.

Clearly a few things won’t change, and they matter a lot: state-led but market-friendly economic policy is here to stay, there is no real debt repayment to suspend, and inflation is widely seen as too dangerous a monster to let out again. Above all perhaps, bolsa familia, the country’s famously successful conditional cash transfer program, is a sacred cow nobody will touch. In a sense, this election was thus about nothing much, an accident of institutional design that prevented Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil’s most popular politician ever, from staying in power for at least four more years doing roughly what he has done since 2002.

Yet Lula will soon be out, and Dilma Rousseff in, as quite a different political game will get under way. That game has many levels and their dynamics and combinations are so complex that nobody can say what will come out. Hence the mystery.

The first of these levels is the partido dos trabalhadores (PT, Labour Party) itself. Having finally reached power in 2002, but exclusively thanks to Lula’s charisma, the party had to let him govern, which he did, but often in a way and with people the party establishment did not quite like. The petistas have swallowed it for eight years, but now many feel that the party’s time has come and that they will clearly try to stake their claims on government priorities and budgets.

It may not be easy. Their first problem is with Lula, who is out, but not quite, and could well be tempted by a comeback in 2014. Call him the party’s zombie: dead in a sense but well alive in another. Their second problem is with Lula’s social base, which some analysts have called lulismo. As it now appears, lulismo forms a large movement, mainly rooted in the Northeast but spanning the whole country through its poorest sectors. Those sectors were not reached by the social movements and political organizations linked with the PT and to this day they remain impervious to the orthodox leftism or sophisticated post-Marxism of PT intellectuals. They are devoted to Lula himself and to what he has given them: stability and a sense of security through prudent economic policy, and a cheque every month that for the first time enables them to make ends meet. They used to be the social base of the old oligarchy and they are resolutely conservative, in part by necessity as they know they will be the first to fall off if the boat is rocked, but also by choice as the vast majority—catholic or protestant—is intensely religious. Rousseff discovered it the hard way when her ambiguous stand on abortion became a major issue and probably played a key role in pushing the presidential contest into a second round.

If Rousseff takes a chance, sides with the petistas, and moves a bit to the left, will the lulista base follow? Above all, will Lula let it happen, leaving his chosen successor—“himself with a skirt” as he put it, perhaps already thinking about Halloween—turn against “his” people?

As if these uncertainties were not enough, Rousseff will also need to piece together majorities for every law she will try to push through Congress. To do that, not only will she need to garner support from the whole PT delegation, a large part of which got to power thanks to lulistas’ support, but also, like all Brazilian presidents, she will need to threaten or buy off a great many “centrist” deputies and senators, mostly from the PT’s major ally, the partido do movimento democrático brasileiro (PMDB, Brazilian Democratic Movement Party). Though not quite the “gang of bandits” that former governor and presidential candidate Ciro Gomes called them, most of its elected members move only under threat or when bought off with ministerial posts for party members, jobs for their followers, expenditures for their constituents, or raw cash. Lula, whose immense popularity meant he could impose political sanctions, nonetheless had to resort to one or another of those other ways to get what he wanted. Rousseff, who is
¿Chile privatizará las semillas?

René Montalba N.
(English translation follows)

La nueva ley que se debate en Chile tiene partidarios y detractores.

En Chile, la ley sobre Regulación de Derechos de Obtentores de Nuevas Variedades Vegetales promulgada en 1994, y aún vigente, consagra el derecho de propiedad intelectual para obtentores vegetales y la protección de las nuevas especies vegetales, las cuales debido a su alto costo técnico y financiero deben protegerse en un marco legal. Actualmente se está debatiendo un proyecto de ley que modificaría este marco legal y que, en conjunto con otras medidas, podría resultar en una privatización de la semilla y una liberación de los transgénicos.

Desgraciadamente, la mayoría de los agricultores y ciudadanos desconoce el contenido de dicha iniciativa de ley, aunque podría tener impactos negativos en la biodiversidad de Chile, en la agricultura en general y la agricultura orgánica en particular, así como para los pequeños y medianos productores agrícolas.

Un obtentor es la persona natural o jurídica que, en forma natural o mediante trabajo genético, ha descubierto y, por lo tanto, logrado una nueva variedad vegetal, es decir que trabaja en el desarrollo de nuevas especies y variedades que represen-te un mejoramiento productivo. El proyecto de ley que propone regular los derechos sobre las obtenciones vegetales y derogar la ley anterior está, desde el 10 de marzo de 2010, en el segundo trámite constitucional en la Comisión de Agricultura del Senado. Una vez que se apruebe este proyecto, el Convenio Internacional para la Protección de Obtenciones Vegetales (CIPOV), que se encuentra en segundo trámite desde mayo de 2009, deberá ser aprobado en la Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores del Senado.

De manera paralela, el Ministro de Agricultura de Chile José Antonio Galilea anunció que en junio y julio de 2010 se presentarían las indicaciones al proyecto "Bioseguridad de Vegetales Genéticamente Modificados", cuya tramitación se encontraba detenida en el Senado desde 2008, orientado a la liberación de los transgénicos. Al mismo tiempo, el gobierno y el Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero del Ministerio de Agricultura se disponen a elaborar un reglamento de la nueva Ley de Medio Ambiente, que asegura la liberación al mercado de los transgénicos, por la vía de declararlos libres de impacto ambiental o ingresarlos al Sistema de Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental (SEIA). La experiencia de la ciudadanía respecto de la institucionalidad ambiental y la participación en los procesos de SEIA indica claramente que así...
las transnacionales lograrán la liberación de los transgénicos. El debate está dado por las distintas posturas que se han generado frente a este tema, tanto desde la ciudadanía como de los sectores políticos de la región y el país. Por un lado, se ha planteado que para hacer realidad el “Chile potencia agroalimentaria”, se requiere de variedades más adecuadas, productivas y eficientes de las distintas especies cultivadas, lo cual, debido al alto costo de este proceso, solo sería posible si se aseguran los derechos de propiedad intelectual a estos “obtentores vegetales”. Así también, el poder entrar con productos chilenos a mercados de exportación requeriría que se verifique el respeto a la propiedad intelectual que se consagraría en la letra del proyecto de ley sobre las obtenciones vegetales. De acuerdo al proyecto de ley original, del año 2008, la nueva normativa favorecerá el registro en Chile de nuevas especies vegetales creadas no sólo en nuestro país, sino también en el extranjero. En este sentido, el nuevo escenario será favorable para el incremento de la competitividad nacional.

Mientras, los detractores consideran que este proyecto de ley se enmarcaría dentro de las responsabilidades adquiridas por la firma del tratado de libre comercio con Estados Unidos y que sería funcional a los intereses de las grandes empresas transnacionales, las cuales finalmente estarían interesadas en masificar el uso de cultivos transgénicos. Del mismo modo, aseguran que, de ser aplicada, se minaría la independencia de los agricultores sobre el derecho a reproducir sus semillas y mantener su patrimonio genético, ya que fortalece los derechos de las transnacionales agroquímicas o semilleros y vulnera los derechos de las comunidades campesinas e indígenas y de los agricultores orgánicos. Por ello este proyecto de ley de privatización de la semilla, desconocido por la mayoría de los agricultores y ciudadanos, debe rechazado por sus impactos negativos en la biodiversidad —patrimonio de todos los chilenos— y por sus nefastas consecuencias para el desarrollo de la agricultura en general, y en especial para la pequeña y mediana agricultura y la agricultura orgánica.

La ley afectaría los derechos sobre el patrimonio genético.

Existe una desinformación de la opinión pública sobre la letra y los alcances de este proyecto de ley. Es probable que parte de la polémica que la ley ha generado tienda a reducirse o que genere puntos de consenso o solución mediante el desarrollo de actividades que permitan un análisis más profundo desde los distintos puntos de vista. Como ejemplo de esto, la desconfianza de grupos ciudadanos respecto de la pérdida del “derecho de los agricultores” a conservar y reproducir sus semillas tradicionales, o los posibles efectos derivados de esta ley en la pérdida de biodiversidad silvestre, podrían ser solucionados mediante la tramitación conjunta de un proyecto de ley que resguarde la diversidad agrícola y natural.

René Montalba N. ocupa el cargo de Director del Instituto de Medio Ambiente (IMA) desde agosto de 2008 y desde noviembre de 1999 se desempeña como académico de la Facultad de Ciencias Agropecuarias y Forestales de la Universidad de la Frontera en Chile. Sus principales áreas de expertizaje e interés corresponden a sustentabilidad agraria, agroecología, manejo sustentable de recursos naturales y gestión ambiental.
Will Chile privatize its seeds?

René Montalba N.

The new law being debated in Chile has its proponents and detractors.

The Chilean law on the Regulation of the Rights of Breeders of New Varieties of Plants, enacted in 1994 and still in force, establishes rights for the protection of new plant species which, due to their high technical and financial costs, must be protected within a legal framework. A new bill is currently being debated that would amend this legal framework and could, together with other measures, result in the privatization of seeds and the liberation into the environment and the market of genetically modified crops. Unfortunately, most farmers and the general public are unaware of the content of this bill although it could have negative impacts on biodiversity in Chile, on farming in general and organic farming in particular, and on small and medium-sized farmers.

A new bill could have negative impacts on biodiversity.

A breeder is an individual or legal entity who, by natural means or genetic manipulation, has discovered and thus bred a new variety of plant; in other words, someone who works on the development of new species and varieties leading to improvements in production. The bill to regulate rights over new varieties of plants and repeal the previous law has been going through the second reading in the Senate’s Agriculture Committee since March 10, 2010. Once this bill is approved, the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV Convention of 1991), in second reading since May 2009, will need to be approved by the Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee.

In parallel, the Chilean minister of agriculture, José Antonio Galilea, announced that in June and July 2010 details would be presented with respect to the bill entitled “Biosecurity of Genetically Modified Plants,” which is aimed at regulating the liberation of genetically modified products. The reading of this bill has been stalled in the Senate since 2008. At the same time, the government and the Agriculture and Livestock Service of the Ministry of Agriculture are preparing to draft a regulation for the new Environment Act that ensures the commercial liberation of genetically modified products either by declaring them to be free of environmental impacts or by submitting them to the Environmental Impact Evaluation System (SEIA). The experience of the citizenry with respect to environmental institutionalism and participation in SEIA processes clearly indicates that this is how the transnational companies will achieve the commercial liberation of genetically modified products.

The new scenario will be favourable to increasing national competitiveness.

The debate on this topic is characterized by different points of view at the levels of both the general public and regional and national political sectors. On the one hand, it has been suggested that to see the vision “Chile, agri-food power” realized, more suitable, productive and efficient varieties of the different species under cultivation are required. Due to the high cost of the process, this would only be possible if the intellectual property rights of these “breeders of new plant varieties” were guaranteed. In addition, to export Chilean products would require verification of the respect for intellectual property that would be embodied in the text of the bill on new plant varieties. In accordance with the original bill proposed in 2008, the new regulations will favour the registration in Chile of new plant species created not only in our country, but also abroad. In this regard, the new scenario will be favourable to increasing na-
Corruption report delivers worrying results

Corruption remains a main obstacle in solving the world’s most pressing problems according to Transparency International’s 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released in Oct. 26.

The Western Hemisphere is no exception, but results for the region are ambiguous. On one hand, Canada is the regional winner, occupying the sixth position of countries perceived as least corrupt worldwide. Barbados ranked 17th and Chile 21st, among a list of 178 countries. On the other hand, for the first time in the history of the Transparency International Index, the U.S. was not in the top 20 slot, ranking 22nd. Among the most worrisome cases in the region are Haiti and Paraguay tied at 146, and lastly Venezuela at 164.

The index classifies countries on a scale of 0 to 10, from being perceived as highly corrupt to being perceived as having low levels of corruption. In 2010, almost three quarters of the countries in the index ranked below five, pointing to the pervasiveness of this issue.

The results were especially striking for industrialized countries, many of which suffered a decline in the rankings. In light of such findings, Transparency International highlights the importance of battling corruption in order to achieve good governance, which is essential for addressing the global challenges of today.

René Montalba N. has been Director of the Institute of the Environment (IMA in its Spanish acronym) since August 2008 and professor at the Faculty of Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry Sciences of Universidad de la Frontera in Chile since November 1999. His main areas of expertise and interest lie in agricultural sustainability, agro-ecology, sustainable natural resource management and environmental management.
Getting money into the hands of Haiti’s poorest

Leigh Carter

An unprecedented Fonkoze-military collaboration assists the most vulnerable.

The Jan. 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti left many, especially the poor, unprepared to cope with disaster. Many Haitians had to confront the immediate effects of the quake with no money in their pockets; many had their assets and resources destroyed, and lost key family members. After the earthquake, all Haitian commercial banks closed cutting people off from money sent by their family and friends in other countries. Suddenly, the $200 from an uncle in Brooklyn or the $100 from a sister in Miami became the only source of immediate aid available for many.

It was not until 11 days after the seism that a few commercial bank branches in some parts of Port-au-Prince began to open their doors to their “best” customers. In contrast, and despite suffering severe damage to its headquarters and some of its branches, the micro-finance bank Fonkoze quickly re-opened 34 of its 42 branches, including its Port-au-Prince branch.

Determined to live up to its reputation as “the bank on which the poor can rely,” Fonkoze was resolute to remain open even if it meant dragging desks and computers into the courtyard to serve members and clients. Demand for remittance payouts from Fonkoze’s proprietary transfer system and providers such as Moneygram quickly swamped the available liquidity in Fonkoze’s branch network. But it was not long before Fonkoze’s branches depleted the reserves in their safes.

Fonkoze holds deposits in Haitian as well as U.S. banks. Its primary bank in Haiti held the critical liquidity needed in Fonkoze’s branches. Yet, instead of providing Fonkoze—who had been a long-time dependable customer—with access to its money, the commercial bank treated Fonkoze like a regular customer, limiting withdrawals to just $5,000 per day. This represents a trivial amount for a financial institution needing to pay over $250,000 in remittances each day.

Determined to find a solution, Anne Hastings, CEO of Sèvis Finansye Fonkoze began to call anyone who would listen to her plan. After four days of negotiations that began on Jan. 18 with the U.S. military, the State Department, the Multilateral Finance Corporation and the Haitian government, Fonkoze secured approval to airlift $2 million in cash from Fonkoze’s ac-
counts at City National Bank of New Jersey direct to its branches throughout Haiti. Once the key players realized that Fonkoze was the bank serving the most vulnerable people in Haiti post-earthquake, it took less than 24 hours for the U.S. military and the United Nations (UN) to complete the delivery.

The cash was packaged in a bank by employee volunteers in Miami into storage boxes, driven in an armored vehicle to Homestead Air Force base, and transported aboard a military C-17 to Haiti. In the pre-dawn hours of Saturday, Jan. 23, Anne Hastings and her team met the C-17 on the tarmac of the Port-au-Prince airport. A member of the Fonkoze team accompanied the funds in the UN helicopter, guiding the pilots to designated landing areas—sometimes just a soccer field—where Fonkoze branch directors awaited pickup. Without a hitch, this unprecedented joint Fonkoze-military operation delivered money by helicopter to 10 locations across the country.

The media widely reported the mission as a tremendous success that was achieved in a timely manner. “As people continue to migrate from Port-au-Prince, Fonkoze’s branch network will become even more essential. Probably most important, unlike the commercial banks, Fonkoze has re-opened many of its branches and has continued to pay out remittances using its cash on hand,” said Jennifer Harris from the U.S. State Department in a message to Fonkoze staff after completion of the mission.

Few would imagine a micro-finance bank involved in such an action-movie scenario. Anne Hastings and the management team of Fonkoze connected the dots between the U.S. military, the U.S. State Department, the Multilateral Finance Corporation and the Haitian government to drop disguised boxes of U.S. dollars in some of the most remote villages of Haiti. This is just one of the many ways that Fonkoze, a bank designed for Haiti’s poor, has become a key player in the revitalization of Haiti. Since then, Fonkoze’s money transfer program has almost tripled in size.

Leigh Carter is the Executive Director of Fonkoze USA, a non-profit organization working to provide resources for, and awareness of, Fonkoze’s work in Haiti.

Disputes
Costa Rica and Nicaragua engage in border dispute

A Costa Rica-Nicaragua longstanding border dispute linked to territorial claims over the San Juan River that runs through the countries’ shared border re-emerged early November.

The recent standoff was sparked by complaints over dredging work carried out in the river by Nicaraguan troops in a territory Costa Rica claims to be its own. Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla’s government affirms that this represents an attempt to change the course of the river and move the border. The government is also investigating alleged environmental damage caused in the border area by the supposed incursion.

Costa Rica denounced what it considers to be an act of aggression against the country—an accusation that Nicaragua denies categorically, affirming it is merely exercising its right over its own territory.

Heated tensions between the two countries lead the Organization of American States (OAS) to hold an urgent meeting on Nov. 3, in an attempt to mediate the issue. The meeting resulted unfruitful, and was followed by Secretary General José Miguel Insulza’s visit to both countries and to the disputed region over the weekend. However, the dispute remains unsettled. Costa Rica has warned it could take the case to the United Nations if the OAS does not provide strong backing and if Nicaraguan troops are not withdrawn from the contested territory.
Una mano de obra barata: los trabajadores agrícolas temporales en Québec

Mayra Roffe Gutman y Annie Lapalme

La flexibilización y la precarización del empleo acompañan el incremento de trabajadores migratorios.

Nueve de cada 10 quebecenses prefieren consumir alimentos locales, anunció una encuesta publicada por el organismo Equiterre en diciembre del 2009. Basta pasearse en alguno de los atiborrados mercados montrealeses para ver que son muchos los consumidores que, en efecto, eligen productos locales. Desde luego, las frutas y verduras, tanto como el amable granjero que nos las ofrece, crecieron en suelo quebequense pero hoy venimos junto a ellos, bajando las cajas de los camiones o acomodando la mercancía, unos de los miles de trabajadores agrícolas temporales que vinieron desde México y Guatemala a trabajar la tierra canadiense y que regresarán a sus países de origen una vez finalizadas las cosechas. Y si consumir local no nos cuesta hoy más que algunos dólares extra es en parte gracias a esta mano de obra barata y no tan local.

El programa de importación de mano de obra agrícola proveniente de México a Canadá fue instituido en 1974, como una extensión al Programa de Trabajadores Agrícolas Temporales (SAWP por sus siglas en inglés) que desde 1966 coordina la contratación de trabajadores temporales provenientes de Jamaica. Casi 30 años más tarde, en 2003, la provincia de Quebec comenzó a recibir trabajadores agrícolas temporales provenientes de Guatemala en el marco del Programa de Trabajadores Extranjeros Temporales (TFWP por sus siglas en inglés).

A diferencia del mexicano, el programa que permite venir a los guatemaltecos no fue negociado de manera bilateral entre los Estados en cuestión sino entre la Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM) y FERME (una organización sin fines de lucro que representa a los empleadores de Quebec); así éste comporta algunas diferencias importantes. Mientras que, en México, son las instituciones de Estado que se ocupan de seleccionar a los trabajadores, las empresas canadienses pueden ir ellas mismas a reclutar empleados a Guatemala, reduciendo así las posibilidades de regular y proteger a los trabajadores. Por otra parte, los guatemaltecos están obligados a pagar por su alojamiento, mientras que los mexicanos están exentos de esta cuota. Finalmente, un trabajador guatemalteco que es expulsado de una granja no tendrá la oportunidad de regresar a Canadá en el marco del programa, mientras que un mexicano tendrá la posibilidad de solicitar su readmisión al año siguiente.

Si comparamos la situación de los primeros inmigrantes agrícolas que vinieron a Canadá desde Europa del Este en las décadas 1950-1960 y que pudieron solicitar la residencia permanente después de algunos años, con la de los mexicanos y, aun más, de los guatemaltecos de hoy, no es difícil detectar una tendencia hacia la flexibilización y la precarización del empleo. No hay que olvidar tampoco que la creación del TFWP para Guatemala coincide con la intensificación de las tentativas de sindicalización y reivindicación de derechos laborales de los mexicanos en Quebec. Por primera vez en 2009, esta provincia recibió más trabajadores guatemaltecos que mexicanos y comenzará a recibir nicaragüenses a partir de 2011. ¿Que país, más empobrecido que los anteriores, será el siguiente en la lista para reclutar a trabajadores cada vez más vulnerables?

Las granjas canadienses que contratan trabajadores agrícolas temporales pueden elegir de entre un océano casi inagotable de candidatos. Se vuelve difícil negociar las condiciones de trabajo cuando siempre hay alguien dispuesto a trabajar cada vez más y ganar cada vez menos; el pago, aunque reducido, sigue siendo mucho más de lo que uno de estos trabajadores podría ganar en su país de origen. También hay que subrayar que la visa que permite la entrada de los trabajadores agrícolas guatemaltecos a Canadá está ligada a su contrato de trabajo. Cuando la...
situación del trabajador es problemática, el procedimiento es simple y expedito: el granjero despide al trabajador y el trabajador es repatriado en un máximo de 72 horas. El trabajador puede protestar si así lo desea, pues cuenta con un contrato y un permiso de trabajo, pero ¿con qué voz? ¿en qué idioma? ¿cómo protestar si no se tiene la posibilidad de exigir un arbitraje imparcial antes de ser repatriado? La estrategia consiste entonces en evitar a toda costa el posible despido, a veces aceptando incluso de trabajar en condiciones indignas o peligrosas, ocultando una enfermedad y evitando expresar cualquier tipo de descontento.

En noviembre terminan las cosechas. Alrededor de 7,000 trabajadores agrícolas temporales que vinieron a Quebec este año están regresando a sus países de origen pues aquí ya no son necesarios. Al final de esta temporada los trabajadores habrán ganado por lo menos dos batallas importantes. Las autoridades del consulado guatemalteco anunciaron en julio pasado la eliminación del depósito que obligaba a los trabajadores provenientes de este país a dejar una fianza de alrededor de 400 dólares canadienses como condición para participar en el programa. Unos meses antes, la comisión de normas de trabajo de la provincia de Quebec declaró como inconstitucional una disposición del código del trabajo que impedía la sindicalización de granjas en las que no hay, por lo menos, un empleado durante todo el año. Sin duda, se trata de avances significativos pero, ¿es posible hablar de un verdadero acceso a la sindicalización cuando el riesgo de perder el empleo (y en consecuencia la única fuente de ingresos para toda una familia) es tan elevado? La 

**Convención Internacional sobre la Protección de los Derechos de Todos los Trabajadores Migratorios y de sus Familiares de 1990** garantiza el derecho a un proceso jurídico imparcial previo a la deportación de un trabajador migrante. A pesar de promover sus programas de empleo temporal como un modelo internacional, Canadá aún no ha firmado esta convención. Para que el camino hacia la sindicalización sea realmente viable es indispensable asegurarse de que los empleadores no puedan utilizar el despido como una manera de disuadir a sus empleados de unirse al sindicato.

A partir del 2008 y por primera vez en la historia del país, el número de trabajadores temporales fue mayor que el de los residentes permanentes aceptados en Canadá. Esta inversión no tiene nada de singular; obedece a una tendencia cada vez más generalizada en los países occidentales. Rentable para los países del Norte que satisfacen las necesidades de mano de obra a un costo mínimo en términos de protección social, seductor para el Sur que convierte flujos migratorios irregulares en otros más regulares y que asegura las preciosas remesas, es muy probable que la migración de nuestro siglo esté marcada por el signo de la temporalidad.

**Mayra Roffe Gutman es candidata a un doctorado en sociología y Annie Lapalme es candidata a una maestría en geografía por la Université de Montréal. Ambas trabajan como agentes de investigación para la Cátedra de Estudios sobre México Contemporáneo del Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Internacionales de la Université de Montréal (CERIUM) y se interesan en las condiciones de trabajo de los migrantes agrícolas temporales.***
Nine out of every 10 Quebeckers prefer to consume local foods, says a December 2009 poll conducted by Quebec environmental organization Équiterre. One need only peruse one of Montréal’s jam-packed markets to observe that many consumers do, indeed, choose local products. Traditionally, the fruits and vegetables, like the friendly farmer selling them, grew on Quebec soil. Today, however, they are joined by new faces unloading boxes from the trucks or laying out the merchandise: a few of the thousands of seasonal agricultural workers who came from Mexico and Guatemala to work the Canadian farmland before returning to their countries of origin once the harvest is over. And if eating locally today does not cost more than a few extra dollars, it is in part thanks to this source of cheap and not-so-local labour.

The program to import farm labour from Mexico was launched in 1974 as an extension of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), which has overseen the recruitment of seasonal workers from Jamaica since 1966. Nearly three decades later, in 2003, the province of Quebec began accepting workers from Guatemala through the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP). Unlike the Mexican program, the Guatemalan program was not negotiated bilaterally between the countries concerned, but rather via the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and differs from the former in significant ways. While Mexican state institutions are responsible for worker selection, Canadian companies can recruit employees directly in Guatemala, thereby limiting the possibility of regulating and protecting workers. In addition, Guatemalans are required to cover certain costs that Mexicans are exempt from paying, such as housing, the full cost of air fare, etc. Finally, while a Guatemalan worker who has been expelled from a farm does not have the opportunity to return to Canada within the framework of the program, a Mexican worker in a similar situation would be able to reapply in the following year.

When comparing the situation of the first agricultural immigrants—who came from Eastern Europe in the 1950s and 1960s and could request permanent residency after a few years—with that of today’s Mexicans and, to a greater extent, Guatemalans, there is a clear trend toward an ever more flexible workforce and reduced job security. It is also worth noting that the visa granting Mexican agricultural workers entry to Canada is linked to their work contract. If the situation involving the worker becomes problematic, then the solution is simple and speedy: the farmer dismisses the worker and the worker is repatriated within a maximum of 72 hours. Workers may protest if they so desire, as they have a contract and a work permit, but with what voice and in what language? How is one to protest with no possibility of requesting an impartial trial prior to deportation? The strategy is, therefore, to avoid the possibility of being laid off at all costs, sometimes going so far as ac-
cepting despicable or dangerous working conditions, hiding signs of sickness and refraining from expressing any form of dissatisfaction.

The crop season ends in November, and about 7,000 seasonal agricultural workers who came to Quebec this year will return to their countries of origin as they are no longer needed there. By the end of this season, the workers will have won at least two important battles. In July 2010, Guatemalan consular officials announced that they would waive the security deposit of approximately C$400 previously required of Guatemalan workers as a condition for participation in the program. A few months earlier, Quebec’s Labour Standards Commission (Commission des normes du travail) declared unconstitutional a provision of the Labour Code that prohibited the unionization of farms where there was not at least one employee working throughout the year. Clearly, these are significant advances, but is it possible to speak of true access to unionization when the risk of losing one’s job —and consequently, the only source of income for an entire family— is so great? The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families of 1990 guarantees the right to an impartial trial prior to a migrant worker’s deportation. Despite promoting its temporary workers programs as an international model, Canada has yet to sign this convention. If the road toward unionization is to be a success, it is paramount to ensure that employers cannot use dismissal as a means of dissuading employees from joining a union.

Beginning in 2008, the number of temporary workers was greater than that of permanent residents accepted into Canada, for the first time in the country’s history. This reversal is not unusual, and is in line with an increasingly generalized trend in western countries. This situation is viable for the countries of the North because it satisfies their labour needs at a minimal cost in social protection, while it is attractive to the South because countries can convert waves of illegal migration into more acceptable ones and ensure the continuation of much-needed remittances. It is, therefore, very possible that the migration trends of this century will marked by their temporary nature.

Mayra Roffe Gutman is a doctoral candidate in sociology and Annie Lapalme is a masters candidate in geography at Université de Montréal. Both work as researchers for the Chair in Contemporary Mexican Studies of the Centre for International Studies and Research of Université de Montréal (CERIUM) and are interested in the working conditions of seasonal agricultural workers.
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The End of Globalization and the Return of Regionalism: Why the World is about to Get Smaller and What it Means for Trade and Competitiveness in the Americas

Inter-American Dialogue, Washington, D.C., Wednesday, Nov. 17, 12 p.m.


Les 20 ans du Canada à l’OÉA

Université Laval, Québec, jeudi le 11 novembre 2010, de 11h30 à 12h30

«Les 20 ans du Canada à l’OÉA», par Jean-Paul Hubert, membre de comité juridique interaméricain, et qui fut le premier ambassadeur du Canada à l’OÉA. Local 3470 du pavillon Charles-de-Koning. Présentation en français.

Latin America’s Economic Renaissance: Is It Sustainable?

Ottawa, Wednesday, Nov. 24, begins 5:15 p.m.

The Canadian International Council and FOCAL present a conversation between Professor José Antonio Ocampo, Columbia University, former Under-Secretary General of the United Nations for Economic and Social Affairs, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Minister of Finance of Colombia; and Paul Durand, former Canadian Ambassador to Costa Rica, Chile and the OAS. There will be a presentation and discussion, followed by dinner. Registration is available at http://cicottawanov242010.eventbrite.com, by e-mail at ottawa@onlinecic.org or by telephone at 613-520-3916.