

much of which is due to vastly accelerating exports of goods and services from the United States to developing nations led by Mexico.

One of the principal challenges facing Mexico, which President Zedillo emphasized in his comprehensive annual address to the Mexican people on September 1, is the development of a long-term economic strategy, based on a private sector-led market economy, and acceptable to a political consensus. This has become critical because in each of Mexico's last five presidential terms, beginning in 1970, a financial crisis has been precipitated by differing and often contradictory economic policies. This will be a particularly difficult challenge, as highlighted recently by the highly adversarial response by opposition members to the recent appearance before the Congress of several cabinet officers, urging continuation of President Zedillo's and Treasury Secretary's Guillermo Ortiz's economic recovery and growth program and its required budget.

Another principal issue confronting Mexico involves the escalating threat to the personal security of persons in Mexico, at all levels of society, from a growing crime wave overwhelming an ineffectual and often corrupt criminal justice system and federal, state, and local police forces increasingly led by Mexican Army officers. A leading force in criminal activity are the regional narcotics cartels, which with their vast financial resources are responsible for widespread corruption throughout the public and private sectors of Mexico, as well as in the Army which for years has led the national anti-narcotics campaign.

President Zedillo in his September 1 address emphasized to his country and its citizenry the threat represented by the prevailing climate of insecurity and from narcotics. Fundamental reform of the judicial and public security systems have been a particular priority of his administration, but he acknowledged these programs and policies had to be improved. He vowed to develop and fund additional public security measures and called on the Congress, state, and municipal governments to work closely with executive branch in this vital arena.

In Mexico's economy, the present state of the financial and commercial banking sector remains a principal obstacle to economic growth and development. The public finances of Mexico are strong, having recovered far earlier than expected from the "Crisis" thanks to a wise and timely financial assistance package led by the United States and the international financial agencies. Continuing consolidation, led by commercial banks in Spain and Canada, has been required among financial institutions which began to fall shortly after their poorly conceived and implemented privatization by the prior administration. Massive government assistance and debt assumption has been provided to the privatized financial sector, with accompanying widespread public criticism, to confront a bad debt overhang which now exceeds \$50 billion and will require many years of continuing economic progress to surmount.

Mexicans traditionally have had a keen awareness and pride in their own extraordinary history. However, this admirable quality has limited development of modern democratic political institutions and the ability to develop the economic and social policies required by a young, ambitious and increasingly restive population.

The crossroads at which Mexico finds itself has been particularly well-stated in a recently published history of Mexico:

"The ordinary Mexican is no longer obsessed by the gravitational pull of the past. Intoxication with history is now more an

issue for political and intellectual elites. In the midst of the Crisis, in a national mood of confusion and unease, today's Mexican is turning toward the future. And the man and woman in the street have begun to understand that, even if the lack of democracy is not Mexico's foremost problem, the country's other problems cannot be resolved without democracy. These are the issues of the past and the present and the future, including the ancient social and economic problems that Mexico has endured as "the land of inequality." Without a legitimate division of powers, the President, if he wishes, can reign as an absolute for six years. Without a solidly based and independent system of justice, the corrupted "Revolutionary Family" will continue exploiting "public posts as private property," sacking the country as it has from the days of Alemán to Salinas de Gortari. Without a truly efficient and honest civil service, neither a just system of taxation nor a way of delivering benefits directly to the poor are possible, as modes for reducing the enormous inequalities between great wealth and great poverty. Without a reliable and honest police system, the streets will be insecure and the financial influence of drug cartels will grow geometrically. Without true and effective federalism, the capital will continue to exercise a form of imperialism over the provinces and the cities. Without democracy—the ideal of Madero (and less completely of Juárez)—any economic reforms, even if they move in the right direction, will always be fragile and endangered."¹

My own view of the road ahead for Mexico, at this watershed in its history, is that our neighbor has found in President Ernesto Zedillo a wise and dedicated leader whose policies, along with the present confluence of events, can produce a presidency sharing power with a representative Congress having real legislative, oversight and budgetary powers, and with an independent judiciary providing the rule of law and the fair administration of justice.

Whether Mexico is continuing on the course this paper has described will become more apparent in its crucial political year 2000 when presidential, state and municipal elections are scheduled. These will constitute a plebiscite on Mexico's emerging political system, on present economic and social policies, and on those to be followed in the next three years.

The course of present and future developments in Mexico will have profound implications for our own country and national interest. A growing and increasingly prosperous Mexico, with responsive and representative political institutions, will remove, or at least substantially reduce, many of the conflicts which have characterized our nation's historic relations with Mexico. This relationship is the most complex and wide-ranging we have with any nation, and in coming years will continue to be among our most important.

OPPOSITION TO H.R. 2621

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2621, the Reciprocal Trade Agreement Authorities Act—the so-called fast track authority legislation.

¹Mexico: biography of power: a history of modern Mexico. 1810-1996/ by Enrique Krauze

The take it or leave it approach fast track authority brought to the NAFTA and GATT agreements a few years ago led to the acceptance of trade negotiations that have damaged my home State of Mississippi and this Nation's economy, labor force, and environment. This is not an issue of free trade; I support free trade as most Members of both sides of the aisle and the President do. My opposition to fast track authority and that of many of my colleagues is part of an effort to permit Congress to have real input into the negotiation of trade agreements and the ability to properly inform the public of their possible effects.

NAFTA and other trade agreements have severely hampered Mississippi and the Nation's opportunities for faster rates of economic development. Although United States exports have increased by 26 percent to Mexico and Canada since NAFTA's enactment in 1993, imports from those regions have increased by 47 percent according to Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau data. As a result, the Nation has lost a net total of 394,835 jobs since 1993. In Mississippi alone, major employers have moved across borders, forcing 6,671 people to face unemployment and difficult transitions to lower paying jobs. Moreover, as employers use the threat of moving their businesses overseas, employees are forced to take cuts in their paychecks and health benefits that have led to a 4-percent decline in nationwide median wages since 1993.

Fast track authority would be a blank check for extending NAFTA and other international trade agreements that tend to neglect the delicate economy of small States, like Mississippi, that heavily depend on low-wage labor and manufacturing. In addition, these agreements have encouraged other countries to develop unsafe products and to ignore environmental standards. It is no mystery why the National Consumers League as well as the Nation's premier environmental organizations—the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation, the World Wildlife Fund, and others—oppose fast track authority.

Granting fast track authority will send the wrong message to other nations about child labor, the environment, safety standards, and the United States willingness to support its workers. Mr. Speaker, I object to providing new fast track authority on behalf of the 6,671 Mississippians who lost their jobs since fast track was used to pass NAFTA in 1993, and I object to it in the name of my State and this Nation's future.

SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING
IRAQ

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives late today approved House Resolution 322, which places this body on record in favor of using force against Iraq if that is necessary in order to compel Iraq to comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions which call for the elimination of Iraq's capability to produce nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and missiles capable of delivering