

Colombian peasants: no to marijuana

The Colombian National Agrarian Federation (FANAL), representing over 20,000 peasants, issued a statement on Jan. 30 condemning the attempts to impose a drug economy in Colombia and warning of a right-wing coup danger. The following is the text of the statement.

Aware of the treasonous campaign being carried out by information services to create a climate in Colombia favorable to the legalization of marijuana, the National Agrarian Federation (FANAL) states:

1. In the name of the Colombian peasantry FANAL rejects the dishonest campaign in favor of the legalization of marijuana and declares persona non grata and traitors to the country all those "denationalized" who try to promote the legalization of this harmful drug in the country. These "denationalized ones" are the same who are trying to impose a fascist regime in Colombia modeled on those of the Southern Cone in order to insure their marijuana economy.

2. It is ridiculous and imbecilic to think that marijuana production benefits the peasant sector; it is inconceivable to

think of replacing food production for the nutrition of the Colombian population, especially children, with a drug which is harmful to the health and to the morale of our population.

3. We praise and thank the patriotic attitude of the president of the neighboring country Venezuela, Dr. Carlos Andres Perez, for his collaboration with our government in its energetic rejection of the imperialist policy of using both our countries as the epicenter for the production of drugs. We also confirm our decided support for those measures adopted by President Turbay Ayala to combat drug trafficking.

4. We understand that the only effective way, as a definitive strategy to stop the terrible threat of drug production in our country, other than the military measures already being taken, is to have brute force development of the country through massive industrialization based on the use of advanced technology. Only this way, can we end massive unemployment and increase the standard of living of both workers and peasants and prevent the labor force from being used for unpatriotic ends because our country is underdeveloped.

5. We fervently call on progressive and nationalist forces in the country, such as the Catholic Church, workers, peasants, industrialists, and businessmen, to unite their voices in protest against the tragic possibility that some "denationalized ones" will turn Colombia into the world's drug paradise.

Signed Eli Arambulo, President, FANAL
Fausto Charis, Secretary

Colombian prelate warns of coup

Leading Catholic officials in Colombia have warned that the expansion of repression and military justice — through application of the "Security Statute" and its encroachments on constitutional law — constitutes a grave danger to the continuation of democracy in Colombia. On Jan. 21, Bishop Dario Castrillon of Pereira reported that the Colombian situation will be brought up for discussion at the meeting of Latin American bishops (CELAM) in Puebla, Mexico, and urged that a formal denunciation of growing militarization be issued there. The Bogota daily El Espectador reported Jan. 22 on the Bishop's statements:

Bishop Castrillon said that "An idea is being created in the country that military justice is more important than civilian justice. This (idea) is opening the road to military regimes, as has already occurred

(elsewhere) in Latin America. This idea was also promoted in these countries in the beginning, and what they did was to place the State step by step in the hand of the military, finally granting them complete control."

Once in Mexico, Bishop Castrillon further declared: "What personally has me concerned is that the Security Statute opens the way to a possible inability of man to defend himself from the great power of the State, which is the first step taken in the violation of rights."

Venezuela supports war on drugs

In a major statement this week, President Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela declared his country would lend full support to the Colombian government in its attempts to halt drug traffickers. His statements — a significant contribution to the international battle against drug trafficking — were reported in the Jan. 28 issue of the Caracas daily El Nacional.

We face actions which must be fought with all the force at our disposal. We face crimes which are of the most heinous and abominable type, because they threaten not only the individual, but an entire society. We are presently using all the means at our disposal. However, what happens is that these crimes yield such rich bounty that the criminals have immense resources. Yet, you can see that discoveries are constantly being made. A little while ago, a small plane made an emergency landing in Falcon and it turned out that the plane was carrying drugs. And we also discovered that it carried weapons destined for Colombia. There, they were going to exchange the weapons for drugs to carry to the United States.

We have given precise instructions to fight this traffic. We are also constantly vigilant, together with the Colombian government in order to prevent maritime drug traffic. Thus I believe we are doing everything possible in this area. We have magnificent coordination with Colombia, and we already had it with the U.S....we are working on it and having success against the drug traffic....