MEMORANDUM

August 24, 1992

To: Jose Estrada, Assistant Director
   Michael Donovan, Assistant Director I

From: Don Ellenberger, CPD
       AIFLD Nicaragua

Subject: Conversation with CUS: UTCN - CPT

Today I enjoyed a rather lengthy conversation with Jose Espinoza, Carlos Martinez, and Ramon Luna. Their visit was unsolicited; it's uncommon that they just drop in. On the table were the issues of the UTCN and the CPT, as well as the social project that Antonio Jarquin is requesting (separate document).

On the issue of the UTCN, Chepón reiterated his claim that should the CUS lose its campesino base to the UTCN, he would consider it justified, in that the UTCN would be better qualified to represent campesinos. He feels that the UTCN will necessarily have to divorce itself from the CPT in order to make any progress, and he supports this concept. He believes that Julio Paladin made a tactical error in allowing the creation of the CCTAN, their campesino confederation, because now it is expressing its own claim to independence. He thinks that the CGTí campesino base will insist on its independence, and will strengthen its ties to the UTCN.

He observes that Antonio Jarquin has attempted to exert control over the UTCN, and that there exists jealously and mistrust on his part. He also believes that Roberto Moreno has held back from full participation with the UTCN because he perceives that the CAUS may loose campesino affiliation to the UTCN.

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The position of the CUS now is that as long as the different CPT confederations squabble over who can influence the UTCN, it will not progress. He sees the time when the UTCN will force its own independence from the CPT, and he considers this a necessary and important step. When I asked him about the relationship between the union movement and a newly independent campesino organization, he responded that this organization would by default be a labor organization. He then went ahead to contradict what he had said earlier; that he would permit the CUS to lose its campesino base.

Espinoza believes that the CUS can "rescue" the UTCN when it is cut loose from the CPT. He even believes he can rescue it if AIIFLD cuts subsidies to the UTCN. This was considered a possibility if AIIFLD were to use the criteria of CPT affiliation to continue funding. The CUS just received a visit from a high ranking representative of the CLC, who according to Chepón, expressed interest in supporting the UTCN. Chepón also related that the Italian Labor Confederation is interested in supporting this organization. His argument is that the UTCN is growing into an important political and union organization that will provide an alternative in the countryside to campesinos uninterested in sandinista dominated organizations. José believes that the future of the UTCN must include independence from the ever-present bickering within the CPT, and that once it attains its independence the history of CUS solidarity with campesinos and the backing of the aforementioned organizations will allow the CUS to assume leadership of the organization.

My analysis is that the UTCN has taken on some characteristics of Frankenstein; it is an awkward grouping of campesino interests that has found strength in its own self, and is sincerely interested in exploring the limits of its abilities. Because it lacks a legal base, and because it will not likely be able to acquire one through the CPT, it will search for a legal base outside the CPT.

The implications of this on the future of the CPT are interesting. I believe that Chepón has really given up on the CPT. He says he still believes that the CPT has an important role to play, and that it should seek a political unity rather than an organic one (which contradicts the CPT proposal presented to us in San Jose this year). The CUS does not believe that a legal organic structure can be created for the CPT. Therefore, in order for the UTCN to acquire the legal recognition it needs, it will have to withdraw from the influence of the CPT.

Espinoza and Martinez spoke in detail about the relationship the CUS has had with the Institute; specifically how the CUS has served as a channel for the Institute to work with the other
labor confederations. CUS questions a bilateral relationship between AIFLD and other labor confederations outside the parameters of the CPT. This issue will need to be analyzed when the social projects committee considers the CTNa bus project.

I asked these CUS representatives directly whether they had any objection to the Institute sponsoring a project with the CTNa in order to provide income for that confederation. I was informed that the CUS, prior to my arrival in Nicaragua, had been denied a project that would have permitted self-financing. I have no details of such project. CUS also considered that if we provided a project to the CTNa, we would really have to be prepared to provide one to each of the other confederations. I rebutted this argument, saying that each project had to be considered on merit.

Espinoza's original reaction was that it wouldn't be a problem. Thinking it over, however, he considered that the political implications of a direct relationship between the Institute and the CTNa would be substantial. Several times he told me to be very careful with the idea. He said the project would increase Jarquín's feeling of independence from the CPT, believing that he had achieved a direct bilateral relationship with AIFLD. Nevertheless, the project for the CTNa should be considered on merit. The CTNa shouldn't be punished for being an aggressive organization trying to guarantee its own survival. The political and union ramifications of accepting the CTNa project are best judged by the Regions Office, based on the history AIFLD has working with these organizations, and future directions it wants to take.

To summarize: CUS believes that the UTCN will and should seek independence from the CPT. CUS intends to "rescue" the UTCN once it achieves that independence, using resources other than the Institute if necessary. CUS considers that the CPT is important politically, but that an organic structuring will not be probable. CUS opposes the CTNa bus project proposal.

Best regards.

c.c. Jack Heberle