



**ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE CUBAN
ECONOMY (ASCE)**

Newsletter, Spring 2004

March 30, 2004

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VICE-PRESIDENT:

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TREASURER:

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Dear ASCE members:

We would like to briefly report to you on three main activities of our Association since our last Newsletter: (1) the Nominations Committee Report for our coming elections, (2) ASCE and the Cuban Research Institute (FIU)'s first Cuba Forum to be held on May 3 in Washington, and (3) the Letter supporting our imprisoned colleague Oscar Espinosa Chepe sent to several human rights organizations on March 25, 2004. We have been busy with these and other activities during the last month, and are looking forward to new activities as we approach the summer.

Best regards,

Rolando H. Castañeda
Secretary of ASCE

1. Nomination Committee Report, March 25, 2004

Roger Betancourt, Chair of the Nominations Committee which was also composed of Stuart Lippe and Carlos Montoulieu as members, reports that the nominations process is complete:

Dr. Ernesto Hernández Catá has agreed to run for President of the Association.

The following members of the current Board of Directors that are eligible to run for a second term have agreed to do so:

Ramon Barquín
Rolando Castañeda
Juan Carlos Espinosa

Oscar Echevarría
Joaquín Pujol
Matías Travieso Díaz

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Two members who have served in the past but not in the immediately preceding biennial period have also agreed to run:

Armando Linde

Carlos Seiglie

Three members who have never served on the Board also agreed to run:

Juan Belt

Ted Henken

Art Padilla

The Secretary will get send you a short biographical sketch of each of the candidates, probably together with the ballots, sometime between April 13 and May 1st. These sketches will also be put up on the website as soon as possible.

The Nominations Committee, on behalf of the Association, thanks all the candidates for agreeing to participate in this election process.

Sincerely,

Roger R. Betancourt
Chair
Nominations Committee

2. ASCE and the Cuban Research Institute (FIU) announce the First Cuba Forum on May 3, 2004 in Washington, DC



Topic: Cuba's Economy and Social Welfare in the 21st Century

Guest Lecturer Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Economics and Latin American Studies at The University of Pittsburgh

Date: May 3, 2004, 4PM to 6 PM

**Place: The Brookings Institution
Stein Room**

**1775 Massachusetts Ave NW,
Washington DC 20036**

Dr. Mesa-Lago's lecture will be based on his recent book *Economía y Bienestar Social en Cuba a Comienzos del Siglo XXI* (Madrid: Editorial Colibrí, 2003. Pp. 210. ISBN 84-9323II-4-2).

The book covers the following six main topics:

- **a summary of economic policies in socialist Cuba during 1959-2003, identifying ideological-economic cycles;**
- **description of the island's socioeconomic crisis (1990-1993) and of the partial recovery (1994-2003);**
- **analysis of social welfare and growing inequalities in income, wealth, foreign remittances, social services, etc.;**
- **discussion of Cuba's rank within Latin America based on the Human Development Index (UNDP) and assessment of flaws in such index and rank;**
- **comparative evaluation of the outcomes of Cuba's socialist model, Chile's market model and Costa Rica's mixed model; and**
- **summary of policies suggested by Cuban economists to improve the current situation and the author's own recommendations for a future transition.**

3. Letter sent to several human rights organizations supporting our imprisoned colleague Oscar Espinosa Chepe on March 25, 2004

The Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE) is a private, independent, nonpolitical academic organization dedicated to the production and dissemination of information, knowledge and understanding about all aspects of the Cuban economy. This mission is accomplished by the free and independent contributions of researchers and other professionals interested in the welfare of the Cuban people. ASCE is an institutional member of the American Economic Association and the US allied Social Sciences Association.

Notwithstanding its non-political character, ASCE cannot remain indifferent or silent to the imprisonment and inhumane mistreatment of its colleagues by the Cuban Government. ASCE strongly considers that there cannot be economic justice or economic development in Cuba in the face of patent economic and political repression and that there cannot be economic well-being for the Cuban people when priceless bodies and minds are impeded in their unalienable right to freedom of thought, expression, and association. Therefore, ASCE is gravely concerned about the imprisonment in a facility far away from his home and the lack of appropriate medical treatment of Mr. Oscar Espinosa Chepe in spite of his age and life threatening illnesses.

Mr. Espinosa-Chepe, a 62 year old independent economist and journalist, continues to serve a twenty-year prison sentence. He was arrested during a massive crackdown by the Cuban Government in March 2003, during which at least 75 dissidents were detained. He was subsequently tried on April 3, 2003 in case number 351/03. He was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, according to provisions of Articles 7 and 11 of Law 88, the national security legislation that criminalizes peaceful dissent, because of his activities “against the integrity and sovereignty of the State”. ASCE considers Mr. Espinosa-Chepe a prisoner of conscience who has been imprisoned solely for the peaceful expression of his dissenting economic analysis and views

Mr. Espinosa-Chepe suffers from a chronic liver condition, a thoracic hernia, persistent hypertension, and weight loss. His wife, Miriam Leiva, and his niece, Dr. Ileana Prieto-Espinosa, both of whom had provided medical treatment to him for years, have visited him in prison and reported that he is experiencing symptoms of acute liver failure and life threatening conditions.

Mr. Espinosa-Chepe was a former employee of the National Bank of Cuba and also worked for the Government as economic counselor for the Cuban Embassy in Belgrade. Later he became an independent economist and journalist, reporting on economic and other matters. He spent more than a decade peacefully attempting to exercise his profession as an economist and journalist independent from the Government based on his basic rights to freedom of expression and dissent. He was imprisoned on previous occasions.

ASCE respectfully urges you to request the Cuban Government in bringing about the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Espinosa and to provide him immediate and appropriate medical attention. ASCE thanks you in advance for your swift intervention in this awful situation.

Sincerely,

**Beatriz Casals
President**

**Rolando H. Castañeda
Secretary**