

MEMORANDUM

To: The President of the Republic, Minister of the Presidency
From: Kevin Casas^[1], Fernando Sánchez ^[2]
Date: July 29, 2007
Subject: Urgent actions to activate CAFTA's YES campaign

Dear don Oscar and don Rodrigo:

After a long conversation on Friday the 27th, following a debate about CAFTA in San Isidro de Heredia, an activity that turned out to be very revealing, we have decided to send you this memo which points out some actions that we feel would be convenient, to activate as soon as possible the pro CAFTA campaign. Evidently, these are not the only actions that should be taken, but we think they are important.

1. Establish a strategy committee for the YES campaign

This is probably the most urgent of all. At this moment there is no clear orientation of what we have to do in order to win, how to do it and who to do it with. But, even worse, there is no mechanism established to take those decisions. What we have, and only sort of have, is only an operational structure and only a tactical response, but no strategy. This gap has been filled with the decisions (or absence of them) taken by the communications group, which is clearly not enough. It is essential that the President of the Republic and the Minister of the Presidency participate in this committee.

2. Build a social coalition in favour of CAFTA

We transcribe here what one of us wrote almost 3 years ago in a memorandum addressed to Marco Vinicio Ruiz: "the debate will not be won by the government alone or by the businessmen by themselves, but it can be won by a coalition". One of the grave mistakes made by the sectors who favour CAFTA has been to delegate its defence to the negotiators of the agreement and, in general, to the government. Even before the recent scandals that have diminished trust in the political establishments, the levels of credibility of the government were very low and probably insufficient to give legitimacy to such a controversial project. At this time nobody believes a word said by the government or the politicians and for this reason, it would be lunacy to delegate in them the defence of the treaty. To form a coalition and to make the defence of the treaty a collective job is crucial not only to overcome this lack of legitimacy, but also to avoid that the discussion shows the same imbalance that was broadly visible during the "combo" conflict in the year 2000, when the organization of the opposition had no more counterweight than the lonely voice of the government. It is vital to demonstrate that in the discussion about CAFTA there are *two major* groups of interest, and that this implies that the favourable sectors –who's interests are not diffused and are as intense

^[1] Vice-president and Minister of Planning

^[2] Congress-member and cousin of President Arias

as those of the opposition- must be organized and articulated. This is essential in order that the discussion about CAFTA does not show the same results as the “combo”.

The importance of this point cannot be evaded. The campaign about CAFTA is becoming *what we should have never allowed it to become: a struggle between rich and poor, and between the government and the people*. The coalition against us is formidable: universities, the church, unions, environmental groups, etc. And, on the other side, in favour of CAFTA, there is only the government, and some of the big entrepreneurs. There is no way to win like this. *It is very urgent to include in the campaign, at least, the small entrepreneurs, the work unions, and whatever we can from the cooperative movements. And when we say they should be included in the campaign we simply mean that the faces of their leaders should “appear ” everywhere*. Obviously, if these leaders can also effectively control part of these social movements, it would be better. It is true that, in the work unions in particular, there is no strong national leadership. If this is the case, they will have to be created now. We have to give a presence in the media to some of the faces from the work unions, and that in itself will make them leaders. Who was Eugenio Trejos in our country six months ago? It is the media that has made him a national leader.

3. Negotiate a recess in Congress

The campaign urgently needs our presence in all the communities of the country. Decreeing a recess in Congress is the key which will enable us to bring our congressmen –who are greater in number than those of the opposition and who face no limitations with regard to campaigning - to the communities, to organize the “on foot” campaign. It is evident that this may have a cost on the progress of the legislative agenda, but at this moment that is a third order problem. The first is, evidently, to win the referendum. In any case, at this moment the legislative agenda is not advancing due to lack of a quorum. That leaves us in the worse case scenario: the press is holding PLN responsible for the lack of a quorum, while the opposition (and even many of our “allies”) are not seen as responsible and are in campaign. Besides, the continuation of negotiations in Congress expose us to constant blackmailing from our legislative “allies”, which end up reflecting on the YES campaign.

4. Formalize an alliance with the Municipal Mayors, particularly those from PLN

This is decisive and for reasons similar to those above: we need to have a presence in the entire country. There is a letter signed by 72 Mayors that is not, at all, insignificant. In it, they offer their support to CAFTA asking, as it is entirely to be expected, some things in exchange. The content of the letter has some elements which may be put aside, others that are entirely negotiable and others that are quite positive for the government (for example, the explicit support they offer with regard to tax reform). It is vital to answer this letter properly, answer it soon, and answer it during an important public act.

But there is something else which must be done, particularly with the 59 Mayors of the PLN. We have to hold them responsible for the campaign in each canton and make clear to them, with all coarseness, a very simple idea: the Mayor that doesn't win his canton will not get a penny from the government in the next 3 years. The

same reasoning can apply to the councillors, who can be made responsible for specific districts. In this last case, we have to remind them of their personal aspirations: their possibilities of continuing to be councillors or becoming Mayors or Congressmen lie in the winning or losing of the referendum. Not only because in the next election the outcome of the PLN will be very much affected by the result of the referendum, but because this election will allow the higher authorities of the PLN to determine who has leadership and who doesn't. *Many of the local leaders are not getting into the campaign so they don't "burn" themselves before the next election. The reasoning has to be exactly the opposite: the one who doesn't entirely cooperate, "burns".*

What is at the base of this is a deeper and more important issue: it is urgent to extend the circle of the people who are "willing to bet their lives" on this referendum. At this moment there is amongst our allies –both inside and out of the PLN- a general attitude of indolence, as if they feel that the only one that will be affected by defeat would be the President. It is vital that they understand that *they* will be directly and gravely damaged.

5. Make the support of the PLN official

To build the social coalition previously mentioned we have, unfortunately, very little time. What we have in our hands is something less palatable, but useful: a political coalition. And that implies the full integration of the PLN, which is by far the most important actor in this coalition. With the exception of our legislative faction, so far the role of the organisms of the PLN in support of CAFTA has been excessively moderate. There is not a single official pronouncement from the PLN in favour on CAFTA, nor is there a clear directive to the structure of the party. That has created great confusion in our leaders, who know very well that part of the party is against CAFTA. The official structure of the PLN (Directors, Executive Committee) has to start talking unmistakably in defence of CAFTA, in the understanding that one of the main winners or losers of the referendum will be the PLN.

6. Structure and launch of a massive campaign in the media

Beyond what can be done in the communities and in private enterprise, there is such little time left that *we should have no shame in saturating the media with publicity.* And precisely because of this short time, it is imperious to direct the campaign in two directions:

- 1) **Shatter the idea that this is a struggle of the rich against the poor.** That requires that we choose very well the faces of the massive communications of the YES, using almost exclusively, workers and small entrepreneurs. Likewise, we have to greatly increase the presence of the government in the media.
- 2) **Stimulate fear.** We can use four kinds of fear:
 - i. **Fear of loss of jobs.** Here it would seem very recommendable to use intensively testimonials of very simple people in precarious situations that might lose their job, or have already

lost it because of the non approval of CAFTA. This is also vital to reinforce the idea that this is not a struggle of the rich against the poor. In the same way, it is possible that in some specific regions it would have a great impact to show specific cases of companies that have postponed investments, that have cut shifts or that are considering leaving the country due to the non approval of CAFTA.

- ii. **Fear of attack to the democratic institutions.** *It is crucial to make YES the equivalent of democracy and institutionalism (this is what Eduardo Ulibarri said: we have to fill YES with a content of values) and make NO the equivalent of violence and disloyalty to democracy.* There is something very important here: this campaign is no longer rational and, in consequence, about the contents of CAFTA. So, the argument of the defence of democracy is the only resource we have left to move the *emotions* of the people who favour CAFTA. At this moment the people in favour not only don't have any motivation, but feel intimidated by the motivation shown by the NO people. We have to understand one thing: no one is willing to "die" for free trade, but maybe they would for democracy. We have to give YES an ethical motivation, and not only an instrumental one.
- iii. **Fear to the foreign influence in the NO.** *We have to insist everywhere on the connection of the NO with Fidel, Chaves and Ortega, in very strident terms.* It is possible that this kind of campaign might be uncomfortable to some people, *but it is almost sure that it can have a considerable impact amongst the simplest people*, which is where we have the most serious problems.
- iv. **Fear of the consequences of a triumph of NO on the Government.** All the surveys show an important degree of satisfaction with the President and the government. Many people simply haven't made the connection that a triumph of NO in the referendum will leave the government in a precarious situation, with its effectiveness totally reduced, and the country in a situation of poor governance. That connection has to be induced. This is an argument that might only work for certain sectors, but it can be very effective in planting doubt. There are three questions that have to be planted in the minds of people, that can make their finger shake if they are planning to vote NO:
 1. ¿Are you willing to risk the financial stability that almost everybody acknowledges as a government accomplishment?
 2. ¿Are you willing to return to the times of Abel, when no one governed, there was no sense of direction and nothing happened in the country?

3. ¿Have you considered who will rule the country if NO wins? (Induced answer to the question: Albino, Merino, Carazo, etc, will rule)

Likewise, it is very important to strengthen our presence in radio (both national and local) and in rural written media, where we have big problems. We have to have a presence in every opinion program, and enhance advertising of the government in a series of radio programs conducted by people who are willing to help the government (example Javier Rojas, Jaime Peña, etc). If the presence of YES on the radio doesn't drastically improve, this will continue to manifest in our weakness in rural areas. It is very possible that the problems we have in rural zones have less to do with the basis of the campaign (themes badly attended or non-attended by it) and more with the *way* that people get informed in the rural zone, where radio is a very powerful media of information.

7. Generate a great amount of printed documentation about CAFTA and about the opposition which can be easily distributed.

A serious problem some of us who are doing advocacy in favour of CAFTA have is the total absence of easy-to-digest documentation that can circulate massively. As it is known, this is a point in which the NO has developed particularly well. At this moment the whole country is wrapped in flyers. The documentation that has to be done is of three kinds:

- 1).The one that clears, in very simple language, some of the *most insidious arguments against CAFTA (medicines, water, cell phones, etc)*. As part of this, it is very important that some key institutions (for example, ICE, CCSS, AyA, MTSS) generate official flyers that answer in very clear terms the flyers that are being distributed *in their own offices* by the unions of the institutions. These are information flyers that cannot, in any way, ask for support for CAFTA (this because of the resolution from the TSE – Supreme Election Tribunal);
- 2).The one that exposes the effects of a rejection of CAFTA over specific sectors or aspects (example: the presentation used by Jorge Woodbridge);
- 3). *One that seeds ill feelings over the leaders, motives, methods, financing and international connections of the NO.*

8. Organize a systemic visit program to companies by high government officials.

At present, the space for campaigning which is the easiest to make use of and offers best opportunities is, by far, companies. There are more than a million workers there. We must organize a systemic visit effort to the largest companies of the country, with talks in favour of YES given by high level people and with documentation in hand. No campaigning effort is potentially as effective as this one. Ideally, this requires five steps:

- 1) *Obtaining information on which are the largest companies and where they are located.*
- 2) *Contact the entrepreneurs obtaining time for the talk:*
- 3) *Have the company send immediately a letter to the Ministry of Planning requesting that the government send a representative to speak about the*

National Development Plan or the future vision of the country or something like that (this to cover our backs when facing TSE - Supreme Election Tribunal);

- 4) Put together a program of visits to companies for, at least, 30 government dignitaries;*
- 5) The dignitary visits the company (in some cases accompanied by the congressmen of the area) and leaves documentation*

If 30 dignitaries visit 10 companies per week, it will be possible to cover almost 2500 companies in the next 8 weeks. We have put emphasis on the largest companies and those that are exportation oriented. What is important, in any case, is to make sure that the dignitaries of the government and the congressmen are not seen going around with the President. This is an unjustifiable loss of time and effort.

9. Organize a multitudinous act of strength to motivate the campaign

There is a great lack of motivation among those who favour CAFTA, disorientation due to the lack of a campaigning and, in many cases, fear of expressing an opinion. We have to motivate the party members of the YES, make them feel that the campaign is doing things, that they are not alone, that we are many. It is recommendable to organize a public act or festival that is multitudinous (it could be a march, but there we almost always have problems). But people have to feel supported and motivated.