

Ferdie J. Deering

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Cooperation With Mexico Vital Now

WITHIN a few days, nearly 100 Oklahomans will go to Guadalajara, Mexico, to attend a workshop at the University of Guadalajara which could have considerable significance for both countries.

The workshop includes members of the National Association of Partners of the Americas and the Mexican equivalent, Fondo Nacional Para Actividades Sociales (FONAPAS), which are working to improve education and opportunities for young people. Nearly 40 percent of Mexico's population is under 18 years old.

The neighborly cooperation has become more important since it has been determined that Mexico has vast oil reserves.

Over the years, the United States has poured foreign aid into Africa, Asia and islands of the seas, while doing little to help Mexico, other than to admit some hungry workers to find jobs.

Suddenly, Mexico has assumed political stature in Washington, while industrial and business tycoons are taking notice. President Carter is to

visit Mexico in February to improve friendship.

United States officials hope to buy oil from Mexico and the oil money is expected to turn Mexico into a vast market for essentials and luxuries of modern living.

Jim Billington of Altus, Oklahoma Wheat Growers Association president, says Mexico looks like a promising market for Oklahoma wheat, because of location and lower shipping costs than to other markets.

Unfortunately, the United States does not seem to be in a real strong position, due to our past neglect of Mexico. President Lopez Portillo has announced plans to limit oil exports so that these resources will accelerate inflation further.

Several weeks ago, Larry A. Willcox, Dolores Kerns, Jack Stewart and Lloyd Rader of Oklahoma City were members of a team which participated in a Partners of Americas-FONAPAS workshop in Puebla, Mexico. Later, two representatives from Hermosilla visited Oklahoma.

"Although mention was made of communism (in the workshop), it seemed apparent that the purpose

of this organization was to assist young people in training," Willcox said; "so that they would be less likely to succumb to propaganda being spread through Mexico by communistic countries."

FONAPAS is headed by Senora Jose Lopez Portilla, wife of the president of Mexico. State units are headed by wives of governors, and each Mexican state has been assigned to work with counterpart delegates from the United States. The Mexican state of Puebla was assigned to work with Oklahoma representatives.

FONAPAS is partially financed by the Mexican government, but money also is raised through donations and benefit performances. Rural youth clubs carry on work similar to 4-H clubs in this country.

When Partners of the Americas was organized in 1965, Mexico had little to offer besides manpower and tourism. Now the picture is changing and groundwork laid by these volunteers may prove to be unexpectedly valuable in improving political and business relationships.

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