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COSTA RICA

PRESIDENT DISCUSSES ISSUES WITH NEWSMEN

[Interview with President of the Republic Jose Figueres ;  
San Jose, La Nacion, Spanish, 9 March 1973, p 6]

"We should not harass the foreign investors who come to the country," said the President of the Republic, Don Jose Figueres, yesterday, when asked about Mr Robert Vesco.

At the press conference held at the premises of the SEDCA [Sistemas Electronicos de Datos y Ciencias Administrativas; Electronic Data and Management Finances Systems] in the Numar Figueres building, he was asked about this matter.

Interview

Since Vesco had said last Tuesday at a press conference held in the Costa Rica Hotel that "naturally, I met with President Figueres. It would be foolish to imagine that I would come to this country and not meet with the chief of state," Figueres was asked the details of this interview.

The President said that "I met with him (Vesco) several times, but not on Tuesday.

"We met to talk of matters involving investments in the country."

What Was Said

He said that "I have been told that he (Vesco) was irritated last Tuesday by something written about him, because the newspapers have published reports unfavorable to him. I believe that he is wrong since what has been said here constitutes reprints from the foreign press, except, obviously, for some editorials which are purely political.

"I believe that he is irritated," Figueres added, "by what some deputies have said, but what they are saying is against the government, and is political."

### Bringing in Money

He then went on to say more generally that "it is not proper to harass the investors, the people who bring money to the country, which creates jobs.

"It is an error to set ourselves to bother these people.

"I have no report of bad investments in Costa Rica."

### The Jenaro Valverde Case

"The attitude of certain deputies is inevitable," Figueres added.

He was asked about the fact that a prominent Liberation Party deputy, attorney Jenaro Valverde, is opposed to Robert Vesco.

"This is nothing new. The Jenaro Valverde case is well known. It did not happen to me, but came back to me settled. However, this is now known."

### The Political Campaign

Concerning whether he will participate in the coming electoral campaign to defend his government in recent months, he said that "it has been said that I will participate in the electoral struggle, but for the moment these are nothing more than speculations."

He was asked about the possibility of a more forceful attack upon him?

Figueres answered that "the attacks against me could hardly be more forceful. Baseless criticisms do not bother me.

"Now if you were to ask me whether I believe certain programs to be good or evil, I can tell you to what extent I will defend these programs, which I have launched in the government."

### The Country

He spoke of "the prosperity which is visible, the high commercial sales. It is plain that there is prosperity in the country. This is visible." He reiterated that "there is a drop in unemployment."

He spoke of those who earn "between 1,200 and ... 280 colons per month, who are very badly off." This was in reference to the Mixed Social Assistance Institute, which does very good work.

### Barahona

The President was informed that attorney Oscar Barahona says the opposite about the state of the nation and he indicated that "everyone can say what he wishes. There is no need to pay to say things."

### Chile

He commented on the results of the elections in Chile. "It seems to me, distant as we are and based on the published cable reports, that despite the wave of world propaganda against Allende, he emerged in good shape from the elections.

"The result of this popular consultation in Chile is a warning to America.

"I believe that the electoral masses are more responsive now than before. It is curious," he said, "that despite everything, things in Chile are decided by means of elections."

Allende has improved his position. He then said that "the people are becoming aware."

Concerning whether there is any relation between what has happened in Chile and Costa Rica, he said that "in our country the popular response to measures favoring the weaker is improving."

### Deficit

He spoke of the report released by the minister of finance to the effect that the deficit is only 23 million colons, according to the balancing of the budget.

Figueres praised the work of Minister Alpizar and said that "the deficit has been reduced to 23 million colons."

The former minister of planning and ambassador to Washington, attorney Marco A. Lopez, who accompanied the President on his visit to the SEDCA, said that "there are various types of deficit: legal, economic, and financial."

### Income Tax

Figueres commented that "it will be necessary to seek a solution to the well-known problem of income tax evasion."

### Other Matters

During the press conference, other subjects were discussed. Concerning school equipment, Figueres said that "I do not know much about these things, which are very costly."

Concerning the problem of milk, meat, and transportation, he made the following generalization: "These are sensitive subjects. The main problem lies in the low income of certain categories of persons."

"In the meat sector there is much to be done. A legal requirement that a sufficient percentage to guarantee adequate meat be left in the country is justifiable. We are working on this."

Concerning the group of meat packers which visited him, he said that "they are rendering a service to the country and will have representation on the National Commission. There will also be a representative of the consumers."

Attorney Lopez Aguero spoke to say that "there is a world problem concerning rising prices." He mentioned such cases as the United States, Great Britain, Switzerland, and Italy.

Figueres gave an incisive answer to a question about financial interests, saying that "they often play the game of the pinch pennies."

At the conclusion of the press conference he made two statements on different subjects.

He said that "La Nacion has always been anti-liberationist and anti-social reform."

And, going back to the subject of Vesco, he said:  
"Many of the things published here frighten investors. It is  
very hard for university circles to understand our environment."

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