This watermark does not appear in the registered version - http://www.clicktoconvert.com

Notes from interview with Diputado Juan Jose Pons, Congreso de Ecuador, 5/22/01

[Pons had agreed to an interview at his office, but his flight up from Guayaquil was canceled, so he spoke with me on the phone. Unable to tape the conversation, I took notes during, and produced this transcription/notes immediately after.]

Como se decide, dentro de la bancada, que sera la posicion de la bancada respeto a un proyecto, o a una votacion?

We analyze each proposal, discuss its possible effects for the nation, look for a majority position within the bloque. Sometimes, when there are radical differences within the bloque, we might permit a deputy to vote against the majority. Sometimes we will also allow this on the grounds of regional differences.

En general, votan juntos todos los miembros de la bancada?

Yes. Well, for the first two years of this Congress, the bloques generally voted together. Since around, say, August of last year – 2000 – that discipline has fallen apart.

Que pasa si un diputado vota en contra su bancada en una votacion disciplinada?

A deputy who breakes discipline can be expelled from the bloque, or even from the party, depending on the seriousness of the issue on which he breaks discipline.

Existen en el Congreso coaliciones estables multipartidarias, o que incluyen legisladores de varios partidos o movimientos?

No. Well, there are some coalitions, that we call "portable coalitions." But they change all the time.

Existe un sistema electronico de votacion?

No, we don't have an electronic system, which is really too bad. A system that registered every vote would increase the tranparency of the system. It would force every deputy to be accountable for his votes.

Se ha considerado adoptar tal sistema en el Congreso? Por que no se ha adoptado?

You should ask the President of the Congress.

Por mayor parte, desean ser reelegido al Congreso los diputados? O desean otras posiciones politicos? O no tienen ganas de seguir la carrera politica?

Most want reelection.

Para reelegi rse, cuales son las cosas mas importantes hacer?

First, you have to maintain popularity in your province. This requires close attention to local issues and concerns, not a national vision. Second, the people want you to produce local projects, public works. You do this by negotiating with the executive for projects in the budget.

Que ha sido el efecto de la reforma al sistema electoral, del ano 1997 -98, para la representacion legislativa?

This watermark does not appear in the registered version - http://www.clicktoconvert.com

Overall, the reform has increased the level of disorder within the Congress.

Me interesa, en particular, una combinacion de procedimientos que es unico a Ecuador: la combinacion de la iniciativa ejecutiva de urgencia economica con el veto parcial del presidente. Cuales son los efectos mas importantes de esta com binacion de procedimientos para el funcionamiento del Congreso?

This strengthens the president. Nevertheless, the current president has misinterpreted the meaning of the procedures, and has tried to exceed his constitutional powers.