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INTERVIEW WITH
LEGISLATOR JORGE SAMPER
RENOVATED SANDINISTA MOVEMENT
(MOVIMIENTO RENOVADO SANDINISTA - MRS)
MANAGUA, NICARAGUA
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JOHN: I was asking the other legislators (*diputados*) questions regarding the internal operation of their *bancadas* . Are you the only member of your *bancada* (faction)? But before you were a member of the Front? For how long?

JORGE SAMPER: Yes, that's true. I was member of the Front up until 1995.

JOHN: And you were also a legislator?

JORGE SAMPER: No, I was the Chief of Advisors. Chief of the counsel (*asesoría*) and later I was the *bancada's* Executive Secretary.

JOHN: Well, speaking of the *bancadas* in the National Assembly, in general terms, how's it decided what the *bancada's* position will be when it votes in the plenary?

JORGE SAMPER: In connection with what's called experience, you could say that there've been three periods in Nicaragua's modern parliamentarian history: one comprehending from 1984-90, the second from 1990- 96 and the third, from then on, the period that we're currently living. In the parliament from 1984-90, there was practically only a single *bancada* , that was conformed as such, which was the Sandinista Front's *bancada* . The 34 legislators, who were instruction legislators (*diputados de instrucción)* at the time, never formed a *bancada* because the statute that regulates the National Assembly didn't establish it then. It was established almost at the end of this period, in the years 1988-89, but during those years the legislators weren't given any type of material support for their *bancada* 's operation. They didn't have offices, they didn't have advisors, they didn't have any economic appropriation and therefore, the *bancadas'* operation didn't exist as such. If the Sandinista *bancada* functioned as a *bancada* , it was for two reasons: first, because it was our government's party and, therefore, being the government's party it had advantages and it could accede to the advisors who supposedly were advisors for all the parliamentarians; it had greater opportunities to accede to these advisors. In addition, it had more opportunities to have access to the parliament's physical installations. The *bancada* did function as such, but with a peculiarity. There was a very timid parliamentary discipline and therefore the discussions or meetings that were held by the Sandinista *bancada* were more formal than effective as far as carrying out decision-making. During the period from 1984-90, there were only a few times when the opinions of the Front's legislators had incidence (*incidencia*) on the plenary's final decisions. Usually the party line (*línea de partido*) was upheld, as it was dictated at that moment, and the Front's legislators were simply informed. What the legislators usually did more than anything was make observations with regard to format than things of substance. However, in the Constitution's elaboration, yes, there was a small group of legislators who did have some incidence in its

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elaboration. Now, looking at it retrospectively, the staff of advisors that existed around the presidency, at that time, yes, had an enormous incidence in the parliament's decisions and then, on the decisions that were made in the *bancada* . For me, during the period from 1984-90, the real operation of a *bancada,* as we know it in the modern parliament, didn't exist. The opposition, let's say since it was totally dissolved and disintegrated, wasn't organized as a *bancada* although there was a relatively numerous opposition that could've had some influence. They were close to thirty-four legislators, but they were never able to unite or organize themselves as a *bancada* . Instead, they were divided. There was the Conservative Party *(Partido Conservador*) on one side, and the Popular Social Christian Party (*Partido Popular Socialcristiano*), as it was called at that time, and the Independent Liberal Party (*Partido Liberal Independiente*); they were the three main forces, but they never joined together or functioned as a *bancada.* Later, they themselves, like it's almost a tradition in partisan formations in Nicaragua and in other parts of the world, divided. Some formed alliances with the *Sandinista* Front and others remained, we could say, in a vertical opposition. Let's say, this was 1984-90's operation.

In the period from 1990-96 there was a really big, quite huge qualitative change. And yes, the functioning of *bancadas* began to take place. In 1990 the *Sandinista* Front became the main opposition party at that time; in the transition, some modifications were made to the Assembly's General Statute which established material support and economic appropriations for the parliamentary *bancadas* . The *bancadas* were even provided offices which they had never had before, in other words, they'd never had office space during the period from 1984-90. I still remember because I was there my first five years as Chief of Advisors and later, I acted as Executive Secretary. The whole fifth floor was the *Sandinista's bancada* and the whole first floor was the National Opposition Union's (*Unión Nacional Opositora -UNO*) *bancada* , which later became the government's party. There the *Sandinista bancada's* operation was changed, it was radically transformed. The legislators began to play their role as legislators and the relationship that existed in the 1984-90 period of only waiting for the party lines (*líneas de partido*) to be dictated ended. The legislators elected their own board of directors, the *Sandinista bancada* had a board of directors. There was a *bancada* leader *(jefe)* , there was a *bancada* vice-leader (*vicejefe*) and in addition, an Executive Secretary who didn't necessarily have to be a legislator. That was my case, I wasn't a legislator but yes, I was the Executive Secretary. At one time I was given the post as Executive Secretary of the *Sandinista bancada* . There were two periods where the Executive Secretaries were legislators, and a third period, that was mine, when I wasn't a legislator. So, this is the way it was formed and during the period of 1990-96 this was reproduced inside the *Sandinista bancada* , as well as in the parliamentary commissions. At that time the commissions in the parliament weren't as numerous as they are now; as time passed, there were three hundred. So, each legislator was responsible for..... one of the commissions within the *bancada* . The *bancada* met weekly and extraordinarily we could meet up to two or three times per week depending on the parliament's state of affairs and the country's political situation. Normally, we met almost always twice a week. In the internal operations regulations it stated that we'd have a meeting per week and that decisions would be taken by majority. At these meetings, let's say, the project of the government that'd been sent to us or even the project presented by some legislator of the *bancada* would be submitted. Once it was presented and the *bancada* approved it, it stopped being the legislator's project and it became a project of the *Sandinista bancada* . It was discussed and approved internally by a majority decision. The only thing that was allowed was that if a legislator had

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voted against it, he had the flexibility, if his conscience dictated that he should vote against it, to say that it'd be better for his substitute to assume this adhesion, so he wouldn't feel thwarted with a decision he felt he should vote against or that he should vote in favor of, since the *bancada,* in its majoritiy, had decided contrary to him. That procedure was applied practically from 1990 almost until 1995, when a division took place afterwards inside the *Sandinista* Front. Most of the legislators of the *Sandinista* Front later went on to form what is now denominated the Renovated *Sandinista* Movement (*Movimiento Renovado Sandinista*). Actually, it was at the end of 1994, which was what later produced the constitutional reforms of 1995.

We could say that was, in general terms the procedure of the *Sandinista bancada* . The other *bancadas* ....., the National Opposition Union (*Unión Nacional Opositora -UNO*) didn't conserve its operation as a cohesive *bancada* for long. After a few months, I'd almost say that the very same day of the National Assembly's installation, the National Opposition Union's *bancada* was dissolved. But they still conserved some joint decisions and later each atomized into their partisan groups. I have no knowledge of that. Normally, what the *Sandinista bancada* did during those years, from 1990 through 1995, was to constitute alliances with some of the *bancada's* auto-factions (*autofacciones de bancada*) of the former National Opposition (*UNO*), to the point that the National Oppostion Union's *bancadas* plus the votes of the Sandinista Front's *bancada* , ended up having the majority in the Assembly. That was when they accused us of having a co-government; that's what they said back then. But the truth is that that was the product of an alliance. Sometimes those of the Front accuse us saying that they have the right to make the pact, because we were entitled to continue the co-government. Normally, undoubtedly these relationships were ones of respect and many proposals were presented. They they met separately and discussed the proposals, and later we were able to form what was called the *Bancada* Council (*Consejo de bancada*), which allowed us to gather all the *bancadas* of the National Opposition Union and it was where the decisions were made; this, in fact, was what permitted the constitutional reforms. This occurred in such a way that the *Bancada* Council was able to have almost 75 to 80 legislators and it was in the *Bancada* Council meetings, where I attended as Executive Secretary, that the parliament's main decisions were taken, which were at least previously discussed in the *Sandinista bancada* . The *bancada* leader brought the decisions to the interior of the *Bancada* Council or the mandate that the *Sandinista bancada* had given to the *bancada* leader.

The *Sandinista bancada* had several *bancada* leaders. The *bancada* leader's mandate only lasted one year and every year the *bancada's* Board of Directors had to be elected again. Let's say that this *Bancad a* Council was formed more or less in 1994 and it was also accused of being like a parallel body to the National Assembly's Board of Directors. I'd rather say that the reality was that they coincided, because the *bancada* leader was usually a member of the National Assembly's Board of Directors, except in the case of the *Sandinista bancada* . In the case of the *Sandinista bancada,* the *bancada* leadership never coincided with being a member of the Board of Directors. In the other cases, yes. The *bancada* leaders were also members of the National Assembly's Board of Directors. In that sense, it wasn't a parallel body because there was a confusion of functions.

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Then in the current period of 1996, there are three experiences: on one hand, a *bancada* that I call the administrative *bancada* , which are really *bancadas* that have only united to conserve material matters; they don't have any *bancada* operation, they don't meet as a *bancada* , they don't hold discussions nor do they make any proposals to the parliament.

.....: These are two or three or four legislators who were from different parties and in order to have, let's say, an office, they have to unite.

JORGE SAMPER: That's how it is. The case of the Patriotic *bancada* , the case even now of the Independent *bancada* which I think is named, Christian Path (*Camino Cristiano*) and the Conservative *bancada.*

.....: There are two.

JORGE SAMPER: Yes, two. Well, there's really only one. Yes, only one because Noel's alone, but due to his specific importance (*peso*), Noel has his own office. Well, it's my case, I'm a sole (único) legislator but I have my own office because of the dynamics of national politics and incidentally, I'm in the Patriotic *bancada* but I have my own office and in practice it functions like the *bancada* of the Renovated Sandinista Movement *(Movimiento Renovado Sandinista -MRS)* although it has just one legislator. According to my opinion, the Front's *bancada* diminished (*retrocedió*) in this period, because once again the [party] line, the vertical decision was imposed. In other words, that the party's National Direction (*Dirección Nacional*) made the decisions and the legislators have to accept the party's direction's decisions. They suffered a fissure but only of four or five legislators and they're the ones who've tried to maintain an independence and vote according to their own criteria, but the rest are totally aligned to accept the party's decisions, without even discussing them. That's to say, they don't have an autonomy like the *Sandinista bancada* had in the period from 1990-95; that was really an unedited experience and apparently the Front was en route to being a much more democratic and more open party.

The Liberal *bancada* has also had -it's my impression, but I don't know the internal experience that much- at least it looks like it's also a very partisan *bancada* , very obedient of the party line and that it's also had some fissures. I believe that there were the same number of legislators, four or five legislators. A permanent fissure. In the Front's case, it's not a permanent fissure, it's a hybrid that's a bit strange because excepting one of them, the other four remain inside the Front and within the *Sandinista* Front's *bancada* . Only one broke away definitively, but the other four, yes, they're still inside the Front. In the case of the Liberal *bancada* , this fissure was permanent because the four legislators left definitively.

.....: Around a year and half ago, there was a division. The division was due to matters of a presidential nature because at that time they were discussing who could be the candidates for president; so, this situation separated eight legislators of which four returned.

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JORGE SAMPER: In the....., the most common term, but well, that's part of the national folklore, not only the national folklore but the world's folklore. In any part of the world they cook beans. It's not exclusive of our country.

But well, going back to the subject, the Liberal *bancada* - in my criteria - has also functioned as a very obedient *bancada;* more to the presidential discipline, than to partisan discipline. They've hardly taken autonomous decisions from the president's and when they have done so they've had to withdraw them when the presidential veto takes place. Perhaps, it's because one or another legislator's made the decision to vote against the president's will but later a prebend materializes and the prebend, due to it's importance (*peso*), brings the legislator's vote to be withdrawn and he returns once again to vote as the president ordered.

JOHN: What are examples of prebends?

JORGE SAMPER: Public posts, for legislators and relatives. For both cases, many times the legislator's sent as ambassador to some country, and then they send him with everything and his family or relatives.

JOHN: Do you have to cease being a legislator?

JORGE SAMPER: He ceases temporarily but later, if he finishes his post as ambassador, he always has his post as legislator. The substitute assumes the post or they give relatives positions in the government. It's part of what happens here and everywhere. It's not that I'm justifying it, but it's our reality. I don't agree with it, I believe that it's a practice which should be eliminated but it's the reality. So, unfortunately for me, when the Front's *bancada* was in, it returned to the practice that it had had in 1990-94. And the Liberal *bancada* has had an operation with a discipline that's been, more than partisan, I'd call it presidential. The rest of the *bancadas* , the legislators, except for my case because I'm a single legislator, my actions are usually decided together with my party's authorities. Normally we meet, the Party's Executive Committee meets weekly and in my case, I present how the legislative situation is and we discuss the decisions, strategies and the policies that should be made within the legislature. There in the Executive Committee, which is conformed by seven members, then voting's also the same, we make a reproduction of what was the Sandinista *bancada* was in the years 1990-94. Usually the position that I take is the party's position, but it's one that I've taken after a discussion and after we've adopted a majority resolution.

The Conservative Party has a similar operation, too. Unfortunately the Conservative Party had three legislators, which later was reduced to one. Now the Conservative Party has only one representative and one of them died; Friday was José's first year mass. He was murdered. He was a very good friend of mine.

JOHN: [He was murdered] for political reasons?

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JORGE SAMPER: There were no political reasons, it was an assassination that made no sense, it was totally absurd. Those things happen in our country. He was also a coffee grower and he had his property up north, he was working, he was renovating and on his return a worker killed him. There was no reason to murder him or rob anything. He killed him because he wanted to kill him. So the Conservative Party was reduced. And the other legislator, Mr. Adolfo Calero, resigned to continue in the ranks (*fila*) of conservatism and he went on to form another conservative party. But yes, the Conservative Party has an operation similar to mine, to that of my party, and even when they had three legislators, we made an alliance and formed a *bancada* back then. We formed a *bancada* and functioned as a *bancada* and voted in the plenary. Those first two years we voted together, coincident, we were always constant and we also had previous meetings where we reached an agreement as to the strategy that we'd follow in the plenary of the National Assembly. This experience was thwarted with José's death and because don Adolfo also abandoned the Conservative Party's *bancada* . So, the first two years we formed that *bancada* , which wasn't a legislative *bancada* , but a real and effective *bancada* that later, regrettably, was dissolved due to, let's say, those circumstances of life. That is, more or less, I think, the panorama of the operation of the *bancadas* and of the votes in the plenary.

Thence, the other legislators who aren't of the *Sandinista bancada* nor of the Liberal *bancada* , many of them formed alliances with the government - the majority of them - but an alliance to my taste, of very bad taste, despite the redundancy. Because it wasn't a true political alliance, but rather an alliance based on economic prebends. Frankly it leaves a lot to desire, but that alliance was formed that way. So the votes in the plenary of that group of legislators who're allied with the government, isn't an alliance of a political nature. I believe that alliances aren't criticizable, on the contrary, they're healthy, but they should be based on political issues not economic prebends. That's been the operation. Later, the pact's luck, but it escapes the topic of the *bancadas* .

JOHN: It seems to me that the alliances between the government's party and other parties, the Front or the small parties, are more or less alliances in exchange of favors, but are the party alliances outside of the government alliances more or less ones of common ideology?

JORGE SAMPER: Yes, well, it's necessary to make a distinction in all this. Because really the coincidences or the alliances, if we can call them that, which the Front made with the Liberals, while there are also economic coincidences, there's not an exchange of prebends. There's no direct prebend that the government offers to the Front, but rather, yes, there's truly a political coincidence. Unfortunately these political coincidences are anti-democratic but that's another subject.

JOHN: But what are these political consequences?

JORGE SAMPER: Agreements to force the legal bipartisanship in the country. With the Electoral Constitution reformed, there's no electoral law. Yes, this was a true political alliance made between the two strongest parties. The two strongest parties, resulting from the 1996 elections; however, the results of surveys reveal that they no longer are. But the reality is that they had the control in the Assembly; yes, they had a real political alliance. Yes, that's true. I was speaking of those who were elected from minority parties who didn't make alliances but rather simply sold their vote, to say it in pointed or crude

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terms, because it wasn't a real alliance on these programmatic points. We are making an alliance because we believe that it's necessary to democratize the Assembly. It's necessary to modify the general statutes and it's necessary to change the voting system. The Modernization Commission must play a more important role. The economy should be integrated more towards the social sectors. What do I know, except that they did it [made alliances] exclusively for prebends. But in the case of the Front, no, there I have to recognize that it's not exclusively for prebends. It's true that the cost's a distribution of positions and there are also economic prebends. However, strong, anti-democrat political coincidences also exist, that's my opinion, but reality is that there is political coincidence. They coincided with the Constitutional reform and they coincided to reform the Electoral Law. The reality is that yes, there was what you could call a political alliance, although there's *subyacencia* in things that aren't to my liking and moreover, also aren't good for the country and they're not doing good for the country.

JOHN: Aside from making it more agile, has the electronic voting system in the parliament changed the Nicaraguan legislative process in other ways? In other words, has it changed the *bancadas*' dynamics, the relationships between partisan leaders and the legislators, among the majority assemblies and journalists' and legislators' oppositions, between legislators and citizens? Has it had an impact or effect on the legislative process or on legislative representation?

JORGE SAMPER: Well, the voting system hasn't varied. The Assembly's internal voting system is identical to the one that was approved in 1984. It's been a..... in the desert, clamoring to change that voting system. So far it's not been achieved. The Statute's been modified for exclusively current topics (*temas coyunturales*), but topics of substance (*de fondo*) like the law's formation process was only modified in the 1995 Constitutional Reform, but that wasn't a reform of substance either. The modification of substance was that presidential powers were diminished with regard to the topic of the veto, the use of the veto and in relation to the law's publication. Really what was done was the incorporation of the General Statute's norms into the Political Constitution, but what wasn't done....

Now, the electronic system undoubtedly permitted a greater transparency in the voting. That yes, the slate (*pizarra*) allowed for a greater transparency and it also permitted the media to have better access as to how the legislators voted. It was a technical question more than.... it was established since 1984. There were no resources to establish the electronic slate, but when the resources became available for it, it facilitated, let's say, transparency and also the media to have a better way of knowing how each legislator voted in the National Assembly. However, to say that this allows for a greater rapport with the citizens, with the voters, I don't really believe that that's taken place.

JOHN: The citizens don't know, for example, how you voted? They don't ask you why you voted that way?

JORGE SAMPER: Yes sure, of course, that's why I was telling you that the slate facilitated that. Once the electronic slate was installed, the media's publishing of the way each legislator votes, undoubtedly has provided the citizen, the voter with the knowledge of how the legislators vote. Indeed,

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the electronic slate facilitated the knowledge a bit more as to how each legislator votes, since the voting's public.

.....: The voting's public but it doesn't have a presence; in other words, it wouldn't be seen as a form or a medium for an ONG to review the whole thing and then, permanently and systematically publish it. That's because when in political discussions, it's the discussion of a legislator who's dissenting from his party, then the members fight him (*lo agarran*) and make it evident (*lo resaltan*), ah, that they're against him. That's what comes out on the list (*palaestra*), but it's not that there's a publication by the media saying that the [legislators] vote this and this way, all of them. However, now, we're already publishing the votings on the webpage, in what's called the record of proceedings (*actas*). That's to say, the publishing of those laws that're voted, the quorum and who voted, with names. So-and-so voted "yes", such-and-such voted "no". But nowadays it's still in the realm that no..... it's published but there's been no diffusion, it hasn't been given much notoriety because we hope that the personal learning process which enhances the information of the page is completely in place, so that it's a routine thing. Right now some employees still have some resistance to publish things without someone giving them orders to do it. Sometimes they're a bit afraid.

JORGE SAMPER: It's still one of the deficiencies of the Assembly's modernization. That's another topic; there should be a parliamentary career law so officials of a certain rank feel trust and stability, which isn't happening now. Up to now, regrettably, this hasn't taken place either.

.....: There was an attempt to make the administrative career and the regulation's organization into a bill *(proyecto*), regrettably it didn't prosper, it remained in the bill process; we've proposed that at a later date that the bill can work on this program because it's important that there be career officials who will be the institutional memory who attest to what's done and that it be published. That they be a guarantee, with apartisanship *(apartidismo)* , independent of who's in the government or who has the majority in the parliament, in order to provide real, effective, and concrete information, without of any sort of tendencies. I hope we can work on it at some time.

JORGE SAMPER: One of the reasons I don't agree with the alliance between the Front and the *PLC*, is precisely that topic, because one of the consequences is that there's been an institucionality setback (*retroceso de institucionalidad*). This apartisanship (*apartidismo)* and that people work for the institution and not for the party, has experienced a lamentable setback.

JOHN: In your opinion, what would be the most important reform that the Assembly could make to improve the transparency of the legislative process?

JORGE SAMPER: First the law formation process. It's necessary to modify the law formation process, so it's not subject like it's subject now, to the Board of Directors' discretion. Because one can present their legislative proposal and if the Board of Directors wants to, it's included on the agenda. If the Board doesn't want to, it doesn't include it on the agenda. That'd be a central point which I've been requesting to be addressed for three years, but obviously it hasn't happened for political reasons. However, I believe that it [the reform] would be this: to modify some points of the law formation

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process. The first thing would be that the agenda not be at the discretion (*arbitrio*) of the Board of Directors, but rather that there be more or less an order. I'm not saying that if there's an urgent point, that this point won't be passed to first place on the agenda; however, it shouldn't become a practice where urgent is everything that's sent by the government and that's of interest to the government or the government's party. I'm clear that the government's points will usually have prevalence, but it can't be that all of them prevail over the rest of the points of the legislators' legislative faculty. There are bills (*proyectos*) that have been presented and there they are, still detained in the National Assembly and they're not going to be passed, I'm sure that they won't be passed.

A central point is that the law formation process be effective, be fulfilled and not be at the Board of Directors' discretion, nor that it be at the discretion of the commissions. The commissions should speak out (*pronunciarse*) at a given moment because once one passes, if it's able to pass the Board of Directors' discretion, not to say arbitrariness, later it's up to the commission's discretion. Because the commissions arrive and what the commissions do is to file away the bill and it remains there. The bill that the legislator presented dies there. If it was able to pass the Board of Directors, it still has a second hurdle which is the commission. There's still a third hurdle because if with luck, like I accomplished on these occasions, it was achieved that the commission rules, later if the Board of Directors doesn't like the commission's judgement (*dictámen*), it simply isn't included in the agenda. In other words, the whole law formation process is centralized in the hands of the Board of Directors or of the majority party, which is totally anti-democratic and unfair. The legislators are completely in the hands of the majority party and the government's party, in the hands of the decisions that they make. It's enough to review the parliamentary agenda to realize that or they were simply presented on the agenda or there'll be cases that weren't presented. The majority are government proposals, very few are of the legislators and the bills presented by those legislators don't pass the second hurdle. Those which were able to pass the second hurdle, of the commission, don't pass the third hurdle when they're returned to the Board of Directors' decision. For me, the law formation process has been fundamental in the General Statute's reform and within the General Statute. I think that that's been essential and I even believe that there's a communication where I had an intervention that was coincident, that wasn't programmed; however, since the *bancada* is precisely an administrative *bancada* , I had to assume the *bancada's* representation at that time and my position (*planteamiento*) was that the Assembly's modernization should not only be accompanied from the technical point of view, but also from the political point of view. That the modernization ought to be within the General Statute and the law formation process.

.....: I don't know if as support I could mention that we had a similar problem to this in Lima; between the Board of Directors and the plenary there was nothing, and the four Board of Directors members were all of the government's party. In the Congress the government's party had 60% of the Assembly's votes. We formed a body *(instancia*) - it took a lot of time, a lot of effort, but we were able to convince them - it's called the Directive Council *(Consejo Directivo*) that's formed by the four members of the Board of Directors, by the commissions' presidents and the *bancada* leaders. So they were some 25 or 30 persons out of the 120 legislators who formed the Directive Council which discusses the parliament's problems and decides what enters [on the agenda]. There, at least, the minority parties have a voice; they at least have the possibility to say or discuss and know what will enter or not on the agenda. Also, since it's a Council, it has its own records (*acta*), its own discussion.

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So after they said, we've put it in the records three times and you don't want to pass it, so now it leaves the ambit (*ámbito*) and goes to the stream (*corriente*) of opinion, of pressure. But it was an excellent decision. It also facilitated the agenda's publication, because before in Lima what was to be discussed on the agenda was unknown. The legislators found out what would be discussed at the time they arrived at their benches (*escaños*) and they were told, "this is going to be discussed". Not now, now it's published a week before the physical agenda, and what's to be included in the monthly agenda is published a month before. So now the legislators know and they can get prepared; they can document themselves and can be advised on the subject matter in order to be able to discuss it with more ownership (*propiedad*). Not before, they didn't even know. So, all this was achieved through changes in the legislative aspect of the formation, in the regulations and in reforms within the modernization process that was carried out. It's working.

JORGE SAMPER: I believe that an error was made in the last Assembly because the *bancada's* council (*consejo de bancada*) was precisely like what you said there was in Peru. But it wasn't institutionalized, it wasn't included in a reform to the Statute. So, what happened later was that, in 1997, the *bancada's* council didn't continue due to the political dynamics. The new Assembly that was installed in 1997 didn't continue with the practice of the *bancada's* council and since it wasn't part of the Statute, there was no legal violation. There was an attempt to do it. I remember when the crisis occurred, in fact, when the eight liberal legislators retire, I can recall that..... with intelligence I proposed (*plantee*) that a *bancada* council be created and a *bancada* council was created that unfortunately only lasted one month. Once the liberals were able to recompose their group, the *bancada* council once again passed into history. But I believe that it was an error in 1995; the Statute should've been modified and the *bancada* council should've been incorporated and institutionalized in that manner. That was the way things functioned, the agenda was reviewed and all the parties had the opportunity to express their opinion in the *bancada* council and know the agenda's formation in advance.

.....: It's also an insight (*fondo*) where you can see into the insitution's interior; matters that suddenly when you're in the plenary are very difficult now, but there it's much more easy, more manageable, easier to find consent. Although we might've had discrepancies, all of a sudden we would say we're going to do such and such a thing, we'll do this other thing, but we're looking for what's the most important thing for the country.

JORGE SAMPER: That's the way it is. That's exactly what happened and that's why the *bancada* council in 1995, permitted the reform to take place.

JOHN: Thank you, these are all of my questions.

JORGE SAMPER: So few, I thought that there were more. Perhaps I spoke too much.

JOHN: No, the truth is that I have an enormous list of questions, but you've already answered the majority of them without my having to ask.

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