

The need for increased security has been recognized by both the federal government and the Federal District administration. In July 1996, the government announced its *Programa Nacional de Seguridad Pública 1995-2000*, National Public Safety Program. The program allows for greatly increased expenditures by the police forces and for the modernization of the judicial sector. The Federal District has recently installed an emergency phone system, similar to Canada's 911 services, and it has sponsored a number of anti-crime public education campaigns.

THE COMMISSION FOR LABOR COOPERATION

As part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations, separate "side agreements" on labour and the environment were signed. The labour agreement is called The North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC). It set out a number of signatory obligations and established the Commission for Labor Cooperation. The commission includes a ministerial council and a secretariat located in Dallas, Texas, with staff drawn equally from the three NAFTA countries.

Under the NAALC, signatory countries are obliged to promote compliance with, and effective enforcement of, their own labour laws. They must also ensure access, transparency and due process of law, and provide public information.

Much of the responsibility for Mexico's poor health and safety record falls on lax enforcement rather than inadequate standards. For this reason, it has been anticipated that the activities of the commission would put pressure on the Mexican government to increase enforcement efforts.

Industry experts in Mexico who were interviewed for this publication do not believe that the NAALC has, so far, had a significant effect. They note that during 1994, before the commission was set up, there was a brief flurry of attention to health and safety issues. But this sensitivity to foreign observation was quickly swamped by economic concerns after the peso crisis. Nonetheless, over the medium term, the commission's activities are likely to call increasing attention to health and safety problems and ultimately spur increased enforcement. Health and safety is one of the issues that can be taken to international arbitration under the NAALC. But media attention to case studies developed by the commission will have a more immediate impact. So far, the high-profile cases have concerned freedom of association and the right to organize. Commission staff say that future cases will call attention to health and safety issues.