

Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social



**Centro Interamericano de
Estudios de Seguridad Social**

Este documento forma parte de la producción editorial del Centro Interamericano de Estudios de Seguridad Social (CIESS), órgano de docencia, capacitación e investigación de la Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social (CISS)

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REVISTA CIESS

PUBLICACIÓN DEL
CENTRO INTERAMERICANO DE
ESTUDIOS DE SEGURIDAD SOCIAL

EDICIÓN
BILINGÜE
BILINGUAL EDITION

PRIMERA ÉPOCA

JULIO

2003

NÚMERO

4/5



R E V I S T A

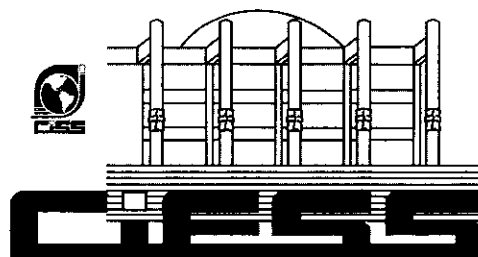
CIESS

Revista
CIESS

4/5

July
2003

SEMI-ANNUAL PUBLICATION



**INTER-AMERICAN
CENTER
FOR SOCIAL
SECURITY
STUDIES**

Educational, training and research organ of the Inter-American
Conference on Social Security

40 years at the service of social security in America

ADDRESS BY DR. LUIS JOSÉ MARTÍNEZ VILLALBA,
DIRECTOR OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CENTER FOR
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*Chairman to the Inter-American Conference on Social Security, Dr. Santiago Levy,
Minister of Health, Dr. Julio Frenk Mora,
Vice-Chairman to the Inter-American Conference on Social Security, Mr. Joseph Gribbin,
Social Welfare Under-Minister, Mr. Francisco Javier Salazar Sáenz who honors us with
his presence in representation of the Minister, Mr. Carlos Abascal,
Secretary General of our Inter-American Conference on Social Security, Dr. Jorge
Meléndez Barrón,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps, representatives of international organizations, former
directors of the CIESS, Senators, Congressmen, authorities of the Inter-American
Conference on social Security and of its different organs,
Friends:*

Forty years ago, the Inter-American Conference on Social Security, integrated at that time by a group of institutions considerably smaller than at present, materialized a dream long-time cherished when inaugurating in Mexico this Inter-American Center for Social Security Studies. A fruit of the concern, yearning and decided will of the men that at that time headed the social security institutions of the Continent, its creation was possible, also, by virtue of the notable generosity of the Mexican government and of one of its most representative and emblematic institutions, the Mexican Social Security Institute whose support and backing has never been denied since that time. These facilities were then built which still maintain, severe, austere and to a certain point despoiled, that beauty that made them since then unmistakable and continues to distinguish them as a frankly functional ambit for the development of the activities entrusted to the center.

There were obviously, at that time, innumerable problems that social security faced in the Continent and that were the subject of studies, analyses and investigations carried out by the Center in those years; these same problems are still present today under different forms, or some of them that existed at that time have ceased to be present, while other new problems arose as new challenges and defiance for social security systems in our times.

What purposes were pursued then when the Inter-American Center for Social Security Studies was created? Basically, the purpose of filling a space long time yearned for by the organizations of the field in the Continent.

The studies on the matter were not systematized at university centers nor at other academic entities and they are certainly not so up to this date, because most of the time they hold a marginal place in the study of other subjects or questions; and then it became, due to this multitude of reasons, due to the hierarchy of the professors

and of the employees that were the seed of what the Center is now after four decades, and due to the decided will of its promoters, a point of reference in education, training and research on this exciting topic.

So exciting, no doubt, that it represents one of the disciplines that – as has been properly said – summons to its help many other disciplines of human knowledge; it connects social security directly with the economy, because without its prescriptions and without the knowledge of the norms of economic science and of the realities on which it is necessary to operate, there is no social security system that can be healthfully structured.

It is connected with the science of public finance, a discipline that analyzes how to obtain and then use the always scarce resources to satisfy the ever growing social needs.

It is connected with the science of law, that regulates and establishes the prerogatives and obligations of the inhabitants of a nation and endeavors to realize justice among them, through, together with other media, a social security system that will make it possible to reach what the human rights actually are, in fact always denied in the past and never fully attained at present, but that constitute an eager search on the part of all those that consider the social cause a moral imperative.

It is connected with medicine, a science whose application in its different aspects of a prophylactic, curative or rehabilitative type, no doubt constitutes one of the pillars of social security.

It is connected with anthropology and also with philosophy and politics, with science, with the disciplines that bring us in direct contact with the great social and ethic values, with the value of justice, with the value of solidarity and, naturally, with the value of freedom. In such manner that the importance of the Center

transcends a mission of a simple analysis to become a scenery for the encounter of ideas and useful reflections, and where experiences are poured that permit enriching knowledge and generating new stimulus and incentives for action. It also becomes an ambit of exchange and contraposition of concepts, because this is what fundamentally and essentially nourishes the social policy.

For this to be possible, international organizations, whose representatives honor us today with their presence, the Pan-American Health Organization, the Organization of American States, the International Labor Organization, to mention only a few, gave their decided support both then and at present to make our activities viable.

We were allowed therefore the possibility of gradually identifying the great topics of social security which today are not, I repeat, the same of the past, but that continue being a reason for concern and that find here an ambit of fermentative and useful discussion for the subsequent adoption of decisions.

In these years we have evidently been able to join theory and practice together, many times postponing decisions, through a modest but not less decided influx, of the mere voluntarism that frequently leads to hasty and ineffective resolutions and to failures and frustrations, in order to fundament them on the knowledge that we have been capable of generating to the measure of our strengths.

We have done all these and much more as the fruit of an effort shared among a contingent of workers, undoubtedly integrated by all those who have preceded us, that is, many who have worked here and who in this precise moment are with us, many who also worked here but who were prevented by special circumstances to accompany us, an enumeration that cannot omit those who

left their efforts here and have been unable to come whether because they are not with us definitely or because the circumstances of their labor or professional life have lead them to other parts or to other sites. All of them are worthy of our recognition, without distinction of category or status, all of them left their contribution making true the sentence of Whitman in the sense that the greatest heroes of history are not more important that the anonymous heroes that remain unknown forever.

At the time of finding new objectives and defiances, we perceive in the horizon the certainty of new challenges, conscious of the need, of the imperative, of facing new problems, with the certainty, sometimes unfortunate but always stimulating, that although we may achieve some of the intermediate goals that will lead us to the final objectives, these are always far away and are finally a motivating element for our task and for our work.

I wish to express the appreciation of the Inter-American Center for Social Security Studies that I have circumstantially the honor of directing, for the presence of all of you which is indeed very stimulating for us. Such is the case of the authorities of our entire Organization who came from diverse countries, whose presence here is a testimony of the will and support never disproved in their actions; it is also such the case of the representatives of the countries, ambassadors accredited before the Mexican government and diplomatic functionaries who come to our Home, now like yesterday, to testify their support, understanding and evaluation of this Organization which is fundamentally a collective task.

As collective task, I am given only the possibility of speaking on behalf of all those that integrate it at present and that integrated it in the past, leaving the seeds without which this reality would not have been possible.

Accept at this time that fundamental appreciation translated in a very special manner in the feeling that it is possible within our modesty, to build in order to improve the living conditions of our peoples. To build knowledge is absolutely indispensable, to debate about the experiences of different countries and of different institutions is absolutely necessary, because as I have just said, there is no solution possible if it is not based in the reality which must be scrutinized and examined very closely in order to really understand it.

I said a moment ago that social security connects us with the great values: that of solidarity, an imperative that encourages us, as an effect of the natural gregarious impulse of man, to find links with our fellow men and to weave alliances for the reciprocal succor of our needs.

It connects us with justice, which is a desire to distribute in an equitable and undisturbed manner the goods that society can produce, among its

components that contribute in a different way, but all of them in a certain measure, to make this possible.

It connects us with the value of peace, because finally social peace is also the product of a harmonic living together founded on the exercise of the rights of all.

It connects us, above all, with freedom, because there is no authentic freedom without having certain basic and elemental goods.

It connects us with the most important and transcendental values, but most of all – as I have said – with that value of freedom which, if you will permit me to paraphrase the unforgettable professor Couture in one of his many sentences that he left for posterity, without this precious gift of freedom there cannot be solidarity, nor justice, nor peace.

Thank you with all my heart.

