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Ecuador: Public School Teachers On Strike

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On Oct. 13, Deputy Juan Jose Castello, who is also president of the national teachers' union (Union Nacional de Educadores-UNE), said an indefinite strike which began Sept. 28 will continue until the government pays back salaries. In addition to over 100,000 public school teachers, about 2,000 Education Ministry staff members were participating in the walkout. Education Minister Eduardo Pena offered to pay back salaries by the end of the week if the teachers returned to work the following day. Castello, leader of the leftist Popular Democratic Movement party (Movimiento Popular Democratico-MPD), said 7,200 teachers cannot retire because of government failure to fund social security benefits. Next, the deputy pointed out that 17.15% of the 1993 federal budget was allocated to education, compared to 30% as established in the constitution. Castello said he planned to sponsor legislation in congress that would reallocate 38.45% of the budget earmarked for domestic and foreign debt service to social welfare programs. After President Sixto Duran Ballen took office Aug. 10, government officials said teachers' salaries could not be paid immediately because of the "financial crisis" inherited from the previous administration. (Source: Agence France-Presse, 10/13/92)

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