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John Neagle

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Economy Minister Rejects Appeal For Emergency Minimum Wage Hike; Announces World Bank Loan Approval

by John Neagle

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On April 14, Economy Minister Juan Pugliese dismissed the possibility of an emergency minimum wage hike, and announced that the World Bank had approved a \$645 million loan for Argentina. He described the World Bank decision as a "vote of confidence" for his economic team's new policy measures. (See article above on new measures.) On the wage issue, Pugliese was responding to a request by Saul Ubaldini, secretary general of the General Labor Confederation (CGT), for an emergency increase to prevent a "social explosion" in response to the government's economic policies. Prior to a meeting of the CGT's executive council, Ubaldini told reporters that "every [economic] adjustment is realized on the backs of the workers." He asserted that the government and employers "those responsible for this situation" must "take measures to avoid social chaos." Pugliese reiterated the government's wage policy as part of a broader anti-inflation program: wage hikes are to be negotiated between unions and employers by industry. The CGT is demanding that members of the government's Minimum Wage Council convene to discuss an increase for the second half of April. Current legislation stipulates that decisions on minimum wage hikes and implementation of increases are to occur on the basis of two-month intervals. Increases in the minimum wage mandated by the Council serve as benchmarks in negotiations with public sector employee unions, and as a parameter for negotiations between workers and employers in the private sector. (Basic data from Notimex, 04/14/89)

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