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## **National Endowment Foundation Support For Costa Rican President-elect Calderon**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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On Feb. 4, Rafael Calderon Fournier was elected president of Costa Rica. Godson of ousted Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, Calderon opposed President Oscar Arias and his Central American peace initiatives, and has been a long-time supporter of the Nicaraguan contras. He has said he would like to create a police force for Costa Rica trained by US military advisers. One of the National Endowment for Democracy's core grantee organizations, the National Republican Institute for International Affairs, spent \$434,000 in the 1986-89 period on the Association for Defense of Costa Rican Liberty and Democracy. The Association is a front group for Calderon's Social Christian Unity Party. In a recent report, Vicki Kemper of Common Cause Magazine quoted Republican Institute president Keith Schuette as follows: "The Association was created to receive the grant; it was not a pre-existing institution." After his defeat in the 1986 election to Oscar Arias, Calderon was named executive director of the Association. He resigned the post in 1988 to run again for president. Republican Institute funding made it possible for the Association to hire and train 200 political organizers and to fund the creation of an anti-leftist labor union. Republican Institute money helped support the Association for the Defense of Costa Rican Liberty and Democracy's publication, "The Forge of Social Christian Thought." In the magazine's September 1986 inaugural issue Calderon described Arias's peace plan "a deformation of masculine values" that was "impugning the national virility" of Costa Rica. (Basic data from In These Times, 03/21-27/90)

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