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Nicaragua: National Workers Front Rejects "voluntary Dismissal" Of Public Employees, Calls For Emergency Measures

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On Oct. 11, National Workers Front (FNT) leaders walked out of government-sponsored social pact talks (concertacion), following officials' announcement of a plan for the "voluntary dismissal" of 15,000 public sector employees. (See CAU 10/12/90 for previous coverage.) FNT spokespersons said workers were not consulted, and the proposal would only exacerbate unemployment in Managua by sending more workers into the already glutted informal sector. FNT leader Ronald Membreno told reporters Oct. 14 that the Front would rejoin the talks scheduled to resume Oct. 16 only when the government offers "modifications" of its plan for public sector layoffs. In a communique released Oct. 16, the FNT requested that the government prepare an "economic emergency plan" comprised of financing for industry, agro-exports and civil construction. Next, the FNT asserted that government economic planners must seek to achieve economic recovery with "manageable" levels of inflation, instead of fiscal deficit reduction through exacting increasing sacrifice by the poor majority. On the same day, government officials announced the postponement of the next round of social pact talks to Oct. 18. Nicaragua's bank employee union, currently engaged in phased work stoppages, announced on Tuesday plans for a general strike to paralyze all banking operations beginning Oct. 17 unless government officials responded immediately to their demands. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 10/14/90; AFP, 10/15/90, 10/16/90)

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