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Deborah Tyroler

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El Salvador: 300 Demonstrate Against Government's Austerity Policies

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Nov. 8, about 300 persons organized by the Committee for Defense of the Consumer (CDC) comprised of 75 religious, civic and trade union groups marched through downtown San Salvador demanding that the government reduce prices on basic consumer goods. CDC spokesperson Armando Flores said that if the government fails to respond, the group would escalate its "struggle in the streets," since current economic policies are clearly a failure. In January, President Alfredo Cristiani's government implemented "economic liberalization" policies, including the elimination of price controls, and public spending cuts. In October, gasoline prices were raised 55%. According to the CDC, food prices have escalated 75% thus far in 1990, compared to a 17% hike in 1989. The Central Bank has reported that the consumer price index rose 11% between January and August, compared to 14% for the same period last year. The protesters mainly women and agricultural workers delivered a draft of proposed legislation at the National Assembly complex that would establish regulations on prices for basic goods and services. Participants said that during his election campaign, Cristiani promised to "govern for the poorest of the poor," but instead he is "helping the rich to get richer." Isabel Hernandez, leader of one of the CDC organizations, said the draft would be turned over to government officials, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), and political parties to be discussed at the next round of peace talks. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, AFP, 11/08/90)

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