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Uruguay: On President Lacalle's Privatization Bill

by Barbara Khol

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On Sept. 21, Conrado Hughes, director of the government's Office of Planning and Budget, told reporters that state-run companies must adapt to the "culture" of competition. His comments occurred following a top-level meeting to discuss legislation proposed by President Luis Alberto Lacalle that would restructure government involvement in the provision of goods and services. According to Hughes, "Our public companies had the certainty of exclusive access to the market without competition." If the national congress approves the reforms, state-run companies would no longer act as exclusive suppliers of alcohol, insurance, and gas and telephone services. In addition, unprofitable enterprises, such as the state-run fishery company, would be eliminated. Rosario Medero, recently installed director of the telephone company, said that to perceive the bill as a privatization measure is inaccurate. According to Medero, "The proposal would modernize and make more efficient the functioning of public enterprises. In some cases what you're actually talking about is selling some assets and transforming them into resources for education and housing." (Basic data from AFP, 09/21/90)

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