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Uruguay: Senate Majority Approves Privatization Of State-run Telephone Company

by Barbara Khol
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On July 3, in a simple majority vote (16 of 30), the Senate approved a bill to privatize the state-run telephone company. To the present, the only private firm expressing interest in acquiring a controlling interest in the Uruguayan phone system is Spain's state-run telephone company. Approval of the measure by the Chamber of Deputies required before the privatization can proceed is not expected to go smoothly. For Colorado Party Sen. Americo Ricaldoni, approval would be a "form of punishment," since the telephone company is considered by politicians as the nation's most efficient public enterprise. Sen. Danilo Astori of the Broad Front (Frente Amplio), a coalition of leftist parties, said approval of privatization would send a green light to the Spanish company, without taking into account that the latter has an enormous backlog of telephone installation requests (529,000) in Spain. Telephone service in Spain is described as saturated and inefficient. (Basic data from EFE, 07/03/91)

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