

NICARAGUA –

Champion of consumers' rights to head national public water system

RRN letters: Oct 8, 2004 and Oct 20, 2004

RRN members wrote to the president of the Inter-American Development Bank in 2004 to protest a \$13.9 million loan to the government of Nicaragua to “modernize” (i.e. privatize) ENACAL, the national water system. The loan violates a Nicaraguan moratorium on privatization, pending a national water law. Two separate bills on this subject were pending in the National Assembly, making it illegal to extend any concessions on water. The loan would have to be paid back by the people of Nicaragua.

October 2004, due to successful organizing by the National Consumers' Defense Network and international calls and faxes, the legislature postponed opening bids for privatization, but the loan itself still had not yet been canceled.

January 18, 2005: The Appeals Court of Managua put a temporary stop to the bidding for privatizing the water system. The Constitutional Panel of the Supreme Court now has to rule in the case. Ruth Selma Herrera, National Coordinator of the Consumers' Defense Network and regarded by the public as the leader of the anti- water privatization campaign of recent years, said, "This is a great victory for the Network in this exhausting struggle that we have been carrying out to prevent the privatization of our water."

January 19, 2005: The Appeals Court of Managua, Nicaragua, accepted an appeal introduced by the National Consumers' Defense Network in November 2004 and put a temporary stop to the bidding for the transfer of the management of the country's water and sewage delivery company, ENACAL, to a private firm for “modernization.”

GOOD NEWS! January 2, 2007: Ruth Selma Herrera was tapped by recently elected Sandinista President Daniel Ortega to become the new president of ENACAL. As coordinator of the Consumer Defense Network Herrera had been an outspoken critic of the outgoing ENACAL President Luis Debayle Solís. She pledges to restructure ENACAL and maintain water as a right for the Nicaraguan people.