

Comment

This issue of the Berkeley Review appears at a unique moment: the intersection of an historic U.S. presidential election and a devastating global financial meltdown. The challenge for President-elect Obama will be to convert a message of hope and change into a program capable of addressing a painful economic downturn. Against this backdrop, many are looking for the contours of a new U.S. policy toward the Americas.

Central to the future of the Americas are issues related to global warming, energy independence and jobs. We begin with three articles that have renewable energy as their theme. The first article reports on a CLAS workshop on alternative energy and the Americas with Stan Ovshinsky, the legendary scientist and inventor, who has been one of the most important pioneers in this area for the last five decades. The workshop brought members of the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum, as well as other guests, to Detroit to see new production technologies in operation and to discuss the policy challenges ahead. The economic trauma the city is experiencing underscored the urgency of developing new industries for the future.

The second article describes the visit of Chilean President Michelle Bachelet to the UC Berkeley campus. While in Berkeley, she laid the foundation for a University of

California–Chile agreement and studied the most advanced renewable technologies under development on campus and in the area. Important highlights of her stay included touring the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and receiving the Berkeley Medal, the university's highest honor, from Chancellor Birgeneau.

The third article examines Costa Rica's ambitious attempt to achieve carbon neutrality by 2021. One of the architects of the plan was the article's author, Roberto Dobles, Costa Rica's Minister of Energy and the Environment. Minister Dobles was also a participant in the Detroit workshop on renewable energy.

Another highlight of this issue is Professor Peter Evans interview with noted Cambridge University economist Ha-Joon Chang about issues related to development and trade. Chang draws a sharp distinction between the formative practices of industrial countries and the mainstream advice given to developing nations today.

Finally, we are saddened by the death of Ruth Cardoso, the gifted anthropologist and former first lady of Brazil. She taught at UC Berkeley several times, most recently in February 2000, and became a vital part of this community and a lasting influence on all those with whom she came in contact.

— Harley Shaiken

Chile comes to Berkeley, June 2008: (front row from left): Chilean Minister of Energy Marcelo Tokman; Chilean Minister of Economy Hugo Lavados; Berkeley Professor of Physics George Smoot, winner of the Nobel Prize in 2006; President Michelle Bachelet of Chile; Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs Alejandro Foxley; Professor Harley Shaiken; and Mariano Fernández, Chile's Ambassador to the United States.



Photo by Peg Skorpinski.