

Musical Chairs Continue at Brazil's Lula Cabinet

Contributed by Carolina Pimentel
Wednesday, 20 July 2005

In the presence of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Jaques Wagner took office yesterday as the new minister of Brazil's new Office of Political and Institutional Coordination (Gabinete de Coordenação Política e Articulação Institucional).

The new office was formed by merging the Economic and Social Development Council, which Wagner headed since January 2004, and the Office of Political Coordination, which was under the command of Aldo Rebelo. Rebelo is a federal deputy and will return to the Chamber of Deputies.

Jaques Wagner was Lula's ministry of Labor before he headed the Economic and Social Development Council.

Ministry of Cities

The present executive secretary of the Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade, Márcio Fortes, has been named the new Minister of Cities, where he will substitute Olívio Dutra, who will return to the state of Rio Grande do Sul and work with his political party, the PT (Workers' Party).

Fortes is not a member of any political party, but he was indicated by the PP. In Brazilian politics, as it is impossible for the government to have a congressional majority, the party in power (the PT at the moment) has to negotiate alliances with other parties.

Removing an old-time PT politician (Dutra) so someone chosen by another party (Fortes) can have a post in government, is just part of the way things work in Brazilian politics.

Fortes is a lawyer and a diplomat. He does have executive branch experience. He has been the executive secretary at the ministries of Agriculture and Mines and Energy, where he briefly served as acting minister, as well.

He has been the president of the Brazilian Farm Research Corporation (Embrapa) and the National Supply Company (Conab). He also has much experience in foreign trade, having worked in the Brazil Foreign Trade Association (AEB), the Foreign Trade Studies Center Foundation (Funcex), the Brazil-US Business Council (Cebeu), the Mercosur Foreign Trade Council (Mercoex) and the Brazil-Russia Trade, Industry and Tourism Chamber.

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