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Bolivian Opposition Will Privatize Gas Reserves, Minister Warns

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Minister Luis Alberto Sanchez said that accusations of inefficiency was the rhetoric used to justify the wave of privatization in the '90s and early 2000s.

On Wednesday, Bolivia's Minister for Hydrocarbons warned that the country's right-wing opposition will privatize the country's state gas company (YPFB), which has provided much of the country's income since nationalization under leftist President Evo Morales in 2006.

The minister's warnings come after opposition candidates Carlos Mesa and Victor Hugo Cardenas criticized YPFB, accusing it of inefficiency.

Mesa said, "No more industrialization in half measures without enough capital or technology, no more populism with YPFB."

Minister Luis Alberto Sanchez said that accusations of inefficiency was the rhetoric used to justify the wave of privatization in the '90s and early 2000s. Furthermore, the minister also pointed out that both of these candidates were formerly vice president under Gonzalez Sanchez de Lozada, in administrations that had sold off the country's gas reserves to foreign multinationals.

The minister denied allegations of inefficiency in the YPFB, stating these accusations are groundless and the state gas company has enjoyed large growth since being nationalized.

The income the country received between 1993 and 2005 (When Mesa and Cardenas were VP) amounted to 3.5 billion dollars, whereas from 2006 to 2018, (as a nationalized company), income has amounted to over 38 billion dollars. The company is the country's largest industry.

"This is the golden age for YPFB in terms of production, in terms of profits, in terms of performance, management, marketing, refining," the minister added.

Analysts have argued that much of Bolivia's economic growth is thanks to the extra revenue provided by the nationalization of YPFB as it provides the state with the funds with which to invest in infrastructure and social programmes. Bolivia is currently the fastest growing economy in the region and is **projected** to maintain that position.