

July 11 and mining dignity

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Since it was founded 82 years ago, the National Union of Mineworkers has been in a constant process of reaffirming its political and social integrity. Nothing and no one has been able to knock down the principles and objectives established on 11 July 1934 in the city of Pachuca, Hidalgo. These principles are democracy, union autonomy and the defence of the rights to freedom of association and to strike, which we have always defended as sacrosanct both in theory and in practice. Our goals are to maintain the drive for the continued economic improvement of our union's members and their families, their right to health, physical integrity and industrial safety as well as education and housing, in addition to our ongoing search for partnerships with other organizations and sectors of society, both in Mexico and abroad.

1934 was crucial. The 27 regional unions which then existed in Mexico's mining, metallurgical and steel-working sector, faced with the national prospects for worker agreement at that time and the urgent need to unify and strengthen the unity and solidarity of the sector, took the historic decision – which has had a powerful influence on the fate of the working class – to merge to form a single large national organization which is currently the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Allied Workers of the Mexican Republic, known worldwide as Los Mineros.

Over the intervening 82 years we have made progress and had important victories, as well as crises, commotion and important challenges, not only for the miners, but for the Mexican working class as a whole. The leaders who created this representative and strong trade union organization were visionary men who decided to give identity to a major sector of industry and the national economy through our current National Union of Mineworkers. And they were not mistaken.

In 2002 the National Union of Mineworkers chose me as its leader. My colleagues considered that I was the one to lead Los Mineros, as has been the case, into a new stage of modernization and consolidation of our social struggle. For me it is an honour that they have placed me in this position as worthy successor to Don Napoleon Gomez Sada, a wise, upstanding, honest and strong man who guided the destiny of the miners for 40 years, who the union's workers value as our moral guide.

Given the undeniable progress made and victories won by Los Mineros, especially at the beginning of this century, certain businessmen and corrupt politicians tried to destroy this union. We suffered a violent and cowardly attack for nearly 10 years, the repercussions of which are still being felt. Never before had we suffered a mafia of Mexico's most corrupt politicians and businessmen, allied in their interests and ambition against an entire union with myself as its leader. Today Mexico is a nation out of control whose image is tarnished around world as a result of that attack and the failure to fight firmly and committedly against inequality, poverty and insecurity, as well as the lack of respect for the rights of all workers in the education, extractive, manufacturing, service and



agricultural sectors.

Despite all this, the Miners' Union has defeated all these attempts to destroy it and grows stronger every day. It is constantly moving forward, with growing support from powerful international worker organizations and through the strength, loyalty and discipline of its members. The historic feat of having founded the union in 1934 has been confirmed through the course of its existence. Today everyone in Mexico, except for some of the union's enemies and other ignorant people, are in no doubt that we are an organization which will not give up in the struggle for workers' rights and interests, which has not yielded nor will it do so, faced with those who claim that in Mexico there are no unions that work responsibly and effectively, nor for shared welfare for all our society.

Due to the weakening of unions, many of which have betrayed their goals or prostituted their functions, we should not be surprised at what is currently happening in Mexico, and the growing damage to the country's international reputation. The business and political class's irresponsibility and lack of sensitivity in failing to realize the serious crisis we are suffering are incredible. Those responsible, businessmen, politicians, and media enlisted in this persecution as well as traitors, have names and surnames and history will surely catch up with them and judge them as befits true enemies of the nation.

These are the same individuals who have never explained or corrected the abuses and injustices committed against the miners, and so the government has maintained its same closed and mistaken position. These are also the groups that attack us, not because they see us as weak, but because the miners are strong and they want to do away with us.

Fortunately the Miners' Union increases its great strength and constantly struggles for justice, equality and greater wellbeing. It is at the forefront of efforts to overcome the serious problems of lack of freedom and democracy of the working class, and is a great example and an inspiration for human dignity.