

How long, Mr. President?

NAPOLEÓN GÓMEZ URRUTIA

THURSDAY 3RD AUGUST, 2017

Abuses of power, the violation of the rule of law and the ensuing impunity are largely the result of the arrogance and recklessness of certain business owners, politicians and civil servants who, whether motivated by collusion or group interests, take actions against workers and Mexicans in general.

It's unacceptable for the Mexican government to act with such apathy and total indifference towards the daily injustices committed in our country. We read, hear about and are often direct or indirect witnesses of such offensive deeds, a stain on the good reputation politicians should have, which they have effectively squandered through such brazenness and gall.

This Sunday marked 10 years since three miners strikes began against the Grupo México corporation on 30th July 2007, perhaps the largest disputes of their kind in the history of the workers' movement, and which remain unresolved to this day. Faced with the negativity, cruelty and arrogance of the company's majority shareholder, Germán Feliciano Larrea Mota Velasco, and his cronies, and backed by the Miners Union's national executive committee, mining activists from Taxco, Guerrero; Cananea, Sonora, and San Martín Sombrerete, Zacatecas decided to embark on a workers' strike to resolve the workers' rightful demands for better pay and benefits, improved working conditions, hours, health, safety and hygiene, and to call for respect for their trade union and its local and national leaders.

It was a little over a year earlier that Larrea and Grupo México had committed an act of industrial homicide at the Pasta de Conchos coal mine in the town of San Juan de Sabinas, Coahuila, which saw 65 miners losing their lives without the company even attempting to rescue those trapped inside the mine by the explosion, ultimately abandoning them to their fate five days after the tragedy began, without knowing whether they were dead or alive. There are still 63 bodies of excellent, decent men buried in the mine to this day, left there to die by the company and its president, in an act of unspeakable cowardice.

So it was that in 2007 during the following year's round of collective bargaining, unionised workers became bolder in their demands, especially concerning better working conditions, knowing the mean-spirited and spiteful position adopted by Larrea, his associates and board members. Naturally, the latter could also rely on the absurd support of the former presidents Fox, Calderón and even Peña Nieto's current administration, none of whom have ever called for Larrea and his accomplices to comply with the law and fundamental workers' rights.



La Jornada

We Mexicans often wonder why national and foreign companies are allowed to go on committing abuses without facing any consequences, and why they so rarely abide by the law.

It's clear that many government officials, whether for reasons of ambition, corruption or personal conviction, end up complicit with disreputable business owners. Instead of demanding that they fulfil their duties and responsibilities in a timely fashion, they turn a blind eye or completely let them off the hook; in many cases the Ministry of the Economy even grants them further concessions, exploitation permits and exemptions from their obligations, in a clear demonstration of negligence and lack of social and public responsibility.

It perhaps goes without saying, but 10 years of businessmen and politicians failing to abide by the law have left their mark, with terrible consequences for those brave Mexicans and their families who chose to defend their rights, including the right to strike, when there has been no government response to their needs and please. Furthermore, with regards to the case of the other steel magnate, Alonso Ancira Elizondo of Grupo Acerero del Norte, a rough-and-ready terrorist devoid of scruples, we sent the President of the Republic, Enrique Peña Nieto, a written account detailing all his breaches of the law, copied to a wide group of his cabinet members. This account denounced the abuse, threats and aggression against workers and their families at the Hércules mine in Sierra Mojada, Coahuila, and was sent on behalf of every unit of the company, but nobody has bothered to reply.

What are we to expect, given that they are completely wrapped up in collusion with the country's most criminal business owners. Their hope is that over time, the people and workers will forget the harm that has been to them, or will simply come to terms with it. I think that's not so far from the truth, given that employees and Mexicans now feel that cynicism, ineptitude and indifference have become the ultimate expression of government politics, with no real distinction between the outward signs and ideology of the various parties that have administered and governed this country.

As the National Miners Union rightly indicated in their press release of 30th June 2017: there is no way that just one person with a group of collaborators can go further than what is set out in the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States and can go beyond universal workers' rights, proclaimed and ratified by Mexico's government; it simply isn't possible that a single person can bring a country like ours to its knees, however much money they have, by not respecting the basic legal principles for which many thousands of millions of men and women have given their lives since the War of Independence to today.

The authorities, federal government and judicial powers still have a chance to proceed swiftly and enforce the law right down to its very last precept, and seek a joint solution to these strike



disputes; nothing should stop them for they have the law on their side, power given to them by the people of Mexico to impart justice.