

La Jornada

Strength and global solidarity

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The leader of the miners' union, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, and Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the Labour Party

Last week two very important events took place, notable for their international significance and their impact on the labour and political relations that we are undoubtedly set to face in coming years. The first was the meeting of the steering committee of Workers Uniting (WU), a global organisation comprised of the most important trade unions in the UK, USA, Ireland, Canada and Mexico. The other was my direct, face-to-face meeting with Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party in Great Britain, which involved discussion about the planning and preparation of his political campaign to position himself as the best candidate to win the next general election and put the Labour Party at the head of the British government.

I had the opportunity to attend and take an active part in the WU conference. The meeting's outcomes and hopes for positive change to human and employment rights were enriched by the opinions, ideas and proposals of each and every leader in attendance.

Workers Uniting, which can be translated into Spanish as *Trabajadores Unificándose*, is a group founded nearly eight years ago based on the shared progressive vision of trade union leaders from five countries who had begun to analyse the political struggles of the working classes over more than 150 years. Its principle of solidarity came from the assumption that all workers have or should have the right to a common place within the economic system, a series of collective values



and a generally optimistic future about building a better standard of living, beyond any boundaries of gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, language or nationality, age or physical ability.

Workers Uniting is a collective of members who are conscious of the political situation facing the world. Ever since it was first founded it has rejected the right's arguments that systematically seek to divide the working class, denying us the values and common future that it is in all of our interests to strengthen and consolidate. At the same time, we as a key group of leaders reject the neoliberal philosophy that the market will resolve all of society's divisions and problems by itself.

Although the politics of resentment and intransigence of the conservative governments of the United States and Great Britain are wrong, they are really happening, and the blind faith of the political elite of our countries in free trade and flexible markets has inflicted serious harm on the working classes. The global economy does not recognise borders and decisions taken in the corridors of power are all closely interconnected, and we know that the strategies of politicians from Mexico and other countries, whether or not they have this criterion, are strongly influenced to attack members of the labour sector on an international level.

The 2016 election in the United States and in the UK with regards to Brexit, suggest a realignment of the democratic forces and their allies within the trade union movement, as well as with young people and women voters. Despite the fact that 16 million people voted in the US primaries for the democratic and socialist platform put forward by Bernie Sanders, with the message that it was time for a political revolution, the reality was it just wasn't enough, because Donald Trump exploited populist slogans promising to reverse job losses and rebuild the nation. All the while he has maintained a hostile and offensive attitude towards neighbours like Mexico and against other nationalities, which fundamentally reflects a policy of aggression against working people who maintain a social conscience.

In the case of the UK, these same extreme populist and nationalist narratives confused and convinced a good number of workers and the wider population to reject the social solidarity of Europe and vote for Brexit, the UK's exit from the European Economic Community. The political battles that followed this closed ballot, won by the conservatives, have done some harm to the country's Labour Party, but at the same time they have delivered its members a leader in Jeremy Corbyn who has the knowledge and experience to share and defend the values and interests of the majority of the population.

From the conversations I had with Jeremy last week I could tell that he is extremely clear about the problems that the UK is facing, and those that could arise when the process of negotiating the withdrawal from the European Union is completed in a year and a half's time. He is also perfectly aware of the acts of abuse and violation committed against workers' human and labour



rights internationally, and he knows that Workers Uniting is committed to justice, respect and dignity for all, to a strategy of global solidarity that could just as easily be applied to Mexico as any other country where workers' rights and principles are violated – to call it out and put an end to injustice.

Jeremy Corbyn ran a strong and innovative political campaign that appealed to many young people and female voters. He worked with his team to write a manifesto called *For the Many, Not the Few*. During our meeting last Thursday he told me more about the content of its vision and programme, some of which I was already aware of, albeit not in so much detail. After exchanging ideas and suggestions for the future, he kindly gave me a copy and signed it with a dedication in Spanish that simply highlights his political sensibility, his awareness of issues and, above all, his support, solidarity and good wishes.

The manifesto given to me by Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the UK Labour Party, simply says this: *“Para el Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares (de la República Mexicana). Gracias por venir a mi oficina y buena suerte en la lucha por la justicia para los obreros”*, which translates as “For the National Union of Miners and Metalworkers (of the Mexican Republic). Thank you for coming to my offices and good luck in the fight for justice for workers.” Signed, London, 31st October, 2017.