

Labour Policy Must Be Rescued and Put Right

NAPOLEÓN GÓMEZ URRUTIA

THURSDAY 3RD MAY, 2018

The malign attempt to pass a labour counter reform bill has been halted, albeit temporarily. This reform would have put an end to Mexico's historic and progressive legislation in this area, and would also have left the country's workers and the public socially and politically abandoned. This proposed reform was formally driven by two PRI party senators, one from the CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) and the other from CROC (Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Rural Workers), but was actually drawn up by business owners and reactionary politicians who had recently been asserting, via visible and covert spokespeople, that it had been successfully passed by the Senate. Much to the relief of the entire country and the true working class, this pair of traitors of workers and the nation did not in fact get their way.

Their names, already widely known in the public domain, are Tereso Medina of the CTM and Isaías González Cuevas of the CROC, and even the highest ranking CTM leader, Carlos Aceves del Olmo called them what they are: traitors to the nation and to the working class, who will carry this burden for life, and he even warned that they should refrain from going into the streets as they would be targets for ignominious taunts and attacks, which they deserve.

This, then, was the episode - or rather the assault - of the bill, engineered by ideological and practical authors who ultimately failed, much to the frustration of their paymasters, the businessmen and conservative lawyers who prepared this so-called reform and placed it in the hands of this pair of shady but ineffectual operators. The most sensible and logical outcome would be for this dishonourable attempt to be cast to the rubbish pile of history, never to be seen again.

This is not, however, something that will happen spontaneously or naturally; it will need to be an effort guided against what has been the dominant grain for several five-year terms, over which time the interests of the rich and powerful, those who hold more than 90 per cent of the country's wealth, have been imposed on the vast majority of the workers and middle classes. Mexican society must ready itself from now on to prevent not only this but other attempts at social regression in the future. A very important task awaits the Congress of the Union which will be elected on 1st July: to clean up the areas where neoliberal politics have been dominant and caused such division, inequality and harm to Mexico.

The next legislative body, including both federal and state deputies and senators, must begin by preparing to tackle all of the cases where Mexico's progressive labour legislation has been targeted and twisted by the interests of the handful of multibillionaires who dominate society, and to

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restore it to its rightful position of protecting workers' interests, since the current PRI-party government and its two PAN-party predecessors were so evidently complicit with those at the top of the pyramid, and the excessively rich. There can be no doubting this, and it explains the sheer scale of the social task that will face our national political representatives following this year's elections.

The next Mexican government must take a completely different approach to the current one in terms of labour policy. The International Labour Organisation's Convention 98 which concerns genuine collective bargaining is currently suspended in stasis in Mexico without being enforced, despite having already been signed by our government; it simply needs to be checked over by the legislative powers and it can then be implemented. Convention 87 has been in force for over 60 years since the Mexican government first subscribed to it, but it too suffers from a lack of enforcement. The trade union freedom and autonomy it proposes have been under attack from the constant onslaught of employer protection contracts pushed through by successive governments to such an extent that they now represent 90 per cent of all existing agreements, as well as by the abusive system of outsourcing that prevails in a huge number of labour relations which are, by their very nature, anti-employment. Neither employer protection contracts nor outsourcing value the principles of trade union autonomy and freedom of association set out in Convention 87, in fact favouring the opposite: the subjection of workers to their companies through such supposedly legal instruments.

The legislative powers that will take up their roles at the end of this year have a moral and political duty to correct this improper deal that benefits those with the most and inflicts harm on the immense majority who have the least. Otherwise the country will continue to edge closer to total social breakdown, since the pressures generated by the formula of the highest performance for only a few and hopelessness for the majority won't be allowed any form of release through institutions. This will aggravate not only political excess, but also frustration, anger and social resentment, because these miserly individuals aren't at all prepared to share.

It's about taking the right path, the path of reality, rather than the reactionary fantasy of keeping workers and the public in a state of economic asphyxiation. When a regime or a government goes against the prevailing economic and social reality, they tend to invent unreal justifications that will sooner or later be revealed as fallacies and, therefore, unsound and even suicidal. Mexican business owners and the chambers that represent them so often say that we in society have to be realists in order to avoid mistakes: they should take a dose of their own medicine.

They all need to realise that the world is as it is, not as they would arbitrarily like it to be. In that sense, the truth is not reactionary but progressive.

The actions to be pursued through the next federal and state legislation must be undertaken with such realism and resolve that no one can oppose their determination - for it will be based on



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such patent justice and rationality - that labour policy has to move in the same progressive direction as society.