

The Global Trade War

NAPOLEÓN GÓMEZ URRUTIA

THURSDAY 14TH JUNE 2018

World trade is currently in the midst of a serious crisis, as a result of the protectionist policy of the United States and predatory strategies on the part of countries like China, India, Indonesia, Turkey and Russia, among others. Conservative governments, for their part, have tried to treat workers like pawns in a global chess game, with the intention of boosting their corporate revenue.

Big companies across the world have taken an interest in trade solely with a view to profiting enormously from jobs in contracting firms, exploiting workers as mere peons with no rights or prospects, and creating arguments amongst trade union organisations to divide them, and amongst workers themselves, by pitting them against one another.

Failed reform to protect rights

Mexico's government, for example, failed to implement a constitutional reform designed to protect labour rights, collective bargaining and the freedom of association. It also rejected a fair and decent increase to the minimum wage, while at the same time seeking to attract foreign investment based on low salaries and costs, leaving workers to shoulder the debt.

In the United States, wage inequality has been increasingly sharply, as governments have refused to enforce strong measures to promote growth and open up new employment opportunities, while simultaneously introducing anti-trade union policies that favour major corporate groups.

The imposition of steel and aluminium tariffs announced by President Donald Trump on US allies like Canada and Mexico, as well as on some European nations, is partly the result of corporate greed and the lack of response and inaction of many governments, combined with the trade system's own failings and inconsistencies.

The working class is well within its rights to criticise and condemn the weakness and failure shown by administrators and political leaders through their inability to address these issues. Trade policy is undermining the interests of workers worldwide, and so now the moment has come to take action and demand the changes and reforms required to protect national values, as well as to defend labour and human rights above any other specific concern.



Along with fair and balanced trade, manufacturing industries are vital for the future of our economies and trade bodies. The global protectionism crisis is gaining momentum as a result of the improper imposition of tariffs, because tariffs impedes the normal and effective exchange of goods and services between nations which have already signed prior international treaties. This trade war is just beginning to be unleashed, and its consequences for the majority of the global population are unpredictable.

Meetings were held last week in London, UK, where we the miners and trade unions representing millions of workers under the international collective Workers Uniting, alongside some of the most important world leaders from Great Britain, including Scotland, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia and Mexico, agreed to look for a global solution to the issues of overcapacity, excess production and subsidised prices, as well as to put pressure on governments to take the necessary measures to set new targets and objectives.

The solution must include reinforcing the systems that defend the legitimate interests of countries and workers, with capable and visionary politicians and administrators being supported by national industries and the actions of proactive governments which promote investment in infrastructure, market diversification and new project creation. In turn, WTO (World Trade Organisation) and OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) rules must be changed to allow nations to defend jobs and fundamental workers' rights.

Global solidarity must come before the specific interests and tactics of any one government and current rules, if we are to avoid an imminent trade war.