



The Hope of the Working Classes

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Since the World Trade Organisation (WTO)'s Convention 98 regarding the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining was ratified by the Senate, and once the initial issues of its rejection by some business owners and senators from various parliamentary groups had been overcome, a process of understanding, adjustment and acceptance was immediately set in motion, albeit in some cases reluctantly, concerning its reach and future benefits for the Mexican working classes.

It is vital that we understand what we are experiencing in terms of inequality, exploitation and poverty, all the result of a failed economic and social policy model, the product of government inefficiency, greed and corporate interest, as well as widespread corruption among the dominant sectors of society. The future awaiting workers at the moment is one of frustration, misery, disillusionment and neglect caused by the authorities and the machinery of economic power.

Little wonder then, that the lack of opportunities and decent, fair and stable incomes are leading people, metaphorically speaking, to the brink of collective suicide, evidenced by their desperation and anger at seeing their children and families fall sick and die in a state of helplessness, with no hope of regaining a dignified and humane life.

What has happened has been terrible, and the strategies and instruments that have been used over at least the past three decades have condemned the vast majority to this state of mere survival, with no hope for the future, which has led to so much harm being inflicted on the country's major population centres.

The cynicism of employers, governments and many trade union leaders has led to the establishment of a system, which urgently needs to be eradicated, of employer protection contracts (CCPP by their initials in Spanish), against and behind the backs of workers and their fundamental rights, and in opposition to Mexico's constitution, its Federal Labour Law and the WTO Convention 87, the sister provision to Convention 98 on trade union freedom.

This model of employer protection contracts is now very widespread across the whole country, above all in factories, plants and transnational companies; it emerged since the original North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was first instituted in 1994 and, as part of Carlos Salinas' labour policy, served to benefit foreign capital and large national companies.



The method was and continues to be about cheapening the cost of the work force as a factor of competition and flexibility, which degrades human rights, despite relevant national commissions having been set up on this issue. In practice, Salinas discounted employment as a human right from the Mexican constitution.

So, it was that employer protection contracts came to replace collective bargaining agreements, which were once in common use. Under the neoliberal governments of 1983 to 2018, they grew and multiplied like parasites in the ideal conditions of corruption and unlawful actions by successive governments, authorities and business owners.

Many trade unions became employer-led, called no strikes and introduced maximum salary thresholds, while contracting bosses and outsourcing companies grew up rapidly, which were committed to finding ways to interpret employment law that would favour large business corporations through conciliation and arbitration boards, and benefit big money, with very few exceptions.

The landscape facing workers today is bleak, and to top it all the large trade union confederations have backed one of the worst labour reforms in history to the detriment of the work force. This is shameful and they even went to the extreme of enshrining clauses in employer protection contracts which use language that verges on enslaving, such as the phrase that states that the worker will be subject to the company's authority, or that the company will be freely permitted to contract third parties and dismiss workers without any responsibility towards employees.

Added to this, these contracts indicate that the company is responsible for selecting staff with absolute freedom, while workers are described as unionised co-workers, who are obliged to belong to and remain a member of the company's union via an unconditional membership document. This naturally always favours the mandate and interests of bosses, who order employees to work in all areas of production without the appropriate or required training, safety and protection criteria.

In summary, this aberrant situation simply must change with the arrival of the new government, to bring an end to the indiscriminate exploitation of the working classes. If it does not, balance between the factors of production and the social justice that the Mexican people are so vehemently calling for will never be achieved. This is one thing, amongst others, that the Mexican working classes are realistically hoping to see.