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The situation in the Americas: a trade union perspective

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Democracy is under threat in most countries of Latin America. This attack occurs especially where the progressive governments reverted neoliberal policies to a greater or lesser degree, through measures that promoted a greater presence of the State in the economy, the increase of the distribution of income for workers and the implementation of public and social policies. The current change in the political scenario which coincides with a lower international demand for Latin American raw materials and a further impact on the Latin American economies, has raised uncertainty about the region's socio-economic future and put the democratic life of nations in jeopardy.

The struggle against those progressive measures is felt nowadays in Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile and particularly in Brazil, a country going under an alarming situation, with a real possibility of implementation of a coup d'état against the President Dilma Rousseff through a process of impeachment based on quite doubtful allegations, rejected by most of the trade union, social and intellectual movements.

Looking at the north, to the United States, the rise of the tycoon Donald Trump shows us the worst aspect of the conservative wave in the region, with a strong speech which not only discriminates minorities but also threatens the international relations of his country. We are concerned with the impact in the educational field throughout the world, in view of the performance of corporations such as Pearson, whose business thrives on formulation of tests for private schools.

On the other hand, in Canada, the new Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau unprecedently composed his office with gender equity. However, his government has not yet reversed the illegal normative attacks of the previous government in relation to collective bargaining and the federal public employees' right to strike.

In Honduras, the recent murder of Berta Cáceres, a militant for indigenous people's rights, is clearly identified with the violence promoted by the interests of transnational enterprises of the mining industry in this country. In the same way, in Caribbean, the power of corporations promotes the dismissal of 600 workers in Trinidad and Tobago, and more than 20 thousand people could be affected by the simple shutdown of ArcelorMittal. This steel company claims economic hardship and it proposed to sell its debt of more than a million dollars to the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is known that the great power represented by corporations lies behind the onslaught against democracy in Brazil and in other countries. Through their bond and/or property with the media oligopolies consortium, the corporations want to legitimize the neoliberal economic model: on one hand, by manipulating the information they deliver to the public opinion in favor of their interests and, on the other hand, by funding millionaire electoral campaigns to ensure that the majority in parliaments adopt their agenda at national level. Furthermore, there is the fact that these companies also control part of the Judiciary which, to say the least, is susceptible to neoliberal ideas.

In addition, corruption is a core element of the power of corporations. However, and again with the help of the media, these corporations present corruption as a moralist theme and they do not accept the adoption of measures aimed at fighting corruption such as the end of the private funding of campaigns and the effective tax collection in order that the corporations themselves pay for their fair share.

Unfortunately, this reality is common in many countries of the world. The increasingly influential role of corporations within the States holds all governments hostages, and those who do not surrender end up being attacked. Such attack includes the trade unions in the public sector: they have their right to collective bargaining often denied and they are impacted by the processes of privatization, the implementation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and the tax evasion.

Finally, we want to highlight that this complex crisis which affects the whole humanity and the Americas region in particular should not be an excuse for us to disengage handling with such crisis and submitting proposals for action to struggle together against the serious threats previously outlined. It is common ground for most of the workers that the path to annul these threats goes necessarily through creating accelerated conditions to raise large social mobilization, in order to defend our incipient democracies and the governments of progressive cut and to obstruct the insubordinate plans of the transnational consortium intended to replace politics and democracy by some way to reach to government through operations coordinated with the media and judicial powers.

We therefore reassert our struggle for:

- Defending the democratic system in all its aspects, such as the defense of the rights of most of the population and the defense of the trade union rights;
- Defending the public services' trade unions, collective bargaining and the right to strike;
- Defending the social achievements in the region, such as measures which fight poverty and seek better distribution of income;
- Fighting for tax justice, so that transnational corporations pay taxes on their profits; and promoting a progressive tax system. Fighting against the "tax havens" as well;

- Fighting the free trade agreements such as TISA, TPP, CETA and TTIP, which only make the power of corporations grow;
- Fighting the policies of privatization and job instability which benefit even more businesses and their brutal concentration of income;
- Fighting corruption in its origins, such as the media monopolies, the private funding of congressmen and government electoral campaigns, and modalities of tax avoidance by corporations;
- Rejecting the new laws which under the "fight against terrorism" motto, in fact seek to criminalize social protest, the right to strike and the struggles of the trade union movement;
- Rejecting the attacks against democratically elected governments, such as it happens in Brazil, and condemning the fact internationally, as an attack on democracy and an action to benefit to the interests of transnational corporations and their local allies.