

Work begins on building a new focus for Mexican workers

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With the bastions of Mexican combative and democratic trade unionism present, a “Provisional Junta for a new Confederation of Workers” was set up on Saturday, April 21, 2012 at the headquarters of the primary school teachers of the Federal District.

Represented were the Mexican Electricians’ Union (SME); the Union of Mineworkers, Metalworkers and Similar of the Mexican Republic, (STMMSRM); the democratic sections of the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE) of the states of Michoacán (18th), Oaxaca (XXII) and the capital (IX) as well as currents from other parts of the Republic; the Mexico Tram Drivers’ Alliance (ATM); the Transport Workers’ Union of the Federal District (STTPDF); the Academic Workers’ Union of the Autonomous University of Chapingo (STAUACH); the Independent Workers’ Union of the Autonomous Metropolitan University (SITUAM); the Single Union of Workers of the Institute of Middle and Higher Education (SUTiems); the National Council of Workers (CNT); section 33 of the Trade Union of the Secretariat of Social Development; also various democratic currents bureaucratized unions, democratic lawyers and labour organizations participated. All together, these unions represent a workforce of close to half a million members.

The session began with a brief statement of the reasons for the creation of a new workers’ federation by comrade José Humberto Montes de Oca Luna, external secretary of the SME, who said that faced with the violent offensive of capital and its government, isolated and defensive responses were not enough, it was necessary to present a political and strategic response. The formation of a new Confederation of Workers, which could overcome the dispersal of democratic trade unionism and start the task of organizing the millions of unorganized workers, is the first step in this direction.

The secretary general of the eighteenth section of the SNTE, Jorge Cazares Torres, reported the readiness of nearly eighty thousand workers he represented to support this proposal together with the trade union organizations that form part of the Alliance of Workers of the State of Michoacán (ATEM). He explained that one of the most important challenges is to promote organising new sectors, especially in services, because there are enormous obstacles to this, created both by enterprises and the labour authorities.

Comrades Pedro Hernández Morales and Santiago Ramírez Ortiz, from sections IX and XXII of the democratic teachers respectively, pointed out that their committees are studying the proposal and then will submit it to their rank and file to define a position. They also pointed out that this initiative should have as its spinal column unions which are genuinely representative and independent of political parties.

Comrade Isidro Méndez Martínez, on behalf of Napoleón Gómez Urrutia (exiled in Canada), General Secretary of the Mining Union, highlighted his interest in supporting this initiative to unify the Mexican working class, which is the spirit behind the Miner-Electrician Pact. It was reported that the mining union participates in several States, Coahuila and Sonora among others, on various fronts that bring together local union and social organizations, which also would be able to join the

new federation. He stressed that this unitary process must have international scope, because it is time that the workers of the world unite against an offensive that has no borders and that everywhere it is the workers who pay the burden of a crisis caused by the greed of capitalists.

Comrade Hector de la Cueva, from the Centre of Labour information and Trade Union Consultancy Association (CILAS), stressed that this meeting is just a first step in the construction of the new federation, which is a process that can take months to carry out and the doors of the Junta should be open to the incorporation of many other trade union sectors who were not present, but who sympathize with the proposal.

Comrade Martin Esparza Flores, Secretary-General of the SME, called on unions to leave aside all kinds of arrogance and pettiness, which are the greatest obstacle to unity, and join together to strengthen the power of the workers. He contrasted other parts of the world where workers have major trade union confederations and advance processes of unity and resistance with the situation in Mexico where workers are so disorganized and divided. To emphasize the sincerity of the SME in this initiative, he offered the full integration of the Mexican Trade Union Front (FSM) in the new federation.

Finally comrade Humberto Montes de Oca emphasized the historical importance for the working class and the people of Mexico of this initiative being realized. He called on all the union representative present to take this initiative to their bases and promote the construction of the new federation from the bottom upwards and with total democracy and political independence. He proposed to establish immediately the "Provisional Junta for a New Confederation of Worker" from those trade union organizations present and agreeing to participate. This Junta will be the central column of the new federation and will encourage proposals to integrate all organizations and trade union currents, the unemployed, cooperatives, students and individuals wishing to adhere to it. The aim is to launch an aggressive campaign to organize all the social sectors exploited and oppressed by capitalism.

Also participating in the meeting as observers, were leaders of the trade unions of telephonists (STRM) and workers at the Autonomous National University of Mexico (STUNAM). Both organizations are members of the National Union of Workers (UNT), which as a whole represents a force close to 100,000 members. The comrades noted that they have not yet had an internal consultation to define their participation in the promotion of the new federation. Meanwhile they will maintain communication with the Junta and agree on common actions.

Finally the union organizations attending, with the exception of the members of the UNT, agreed to set up the above-mentioned Junta, and will meet shortly to create the committees responsible for drafting the basic documents and making a tour to promote this effort at the national level.

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