

"EL RODIN"

TRADE UNION BULLETIN

Men and women comrades working on banana and pineapple plantations.

For many years, banana and pineapple plantation companies have used all sorts of lies, tricks and repression against trade unions, all with the aim of intimidating workers so they don't set up a union. Consequently, they continue to violate all workers' labour rights and, what's worse, is that these activities are being carried out by companies by middle-management who are unaware that they are also common employees who are poorly paid and badly treated by their superiors.

This has been carried out by the Juan XXIII Social School and more recently another organisation called *Paz Social* (Social Peace). They respond to the companies' interests and simply act as puppets to intimidate and break up worker organisations. They take workers' labour rights and guarantees and serve them to employers on a silver platter. Rights and guarantees which workers struggled and sacrificed to obtain in the past. These organisations don't defend the workers nor are they genuine – they are more like informants and accomplices of the companies.

In order to hide the reality, companies have used social responsibility certifications; however, the certifying authorities are paid by the companies and, therefore, they respond in the companies' interests. These certifying authorities cannot demand that these companies comply with labour rights given that they would be out of a job. One of these very companies has used the idiom **"to kill the goose that lays the golden egg"** to express this, given that the company could look for an alternative certifying authority who would help strengthen their image and without this authority making major demands. It is important to clarify that these certifying authorities do not represent workers or any other state institution, they are not recognised by the ILO, they are not specialists in labour rights and they have never worked on a pineapple or banana plantation. The board of directors for these certifying authorities are in Europe and the United States.

In other words, these certifying authorities do not have any authority to certify a company on good practices. The one thing that are doing is endorsing the bad working conditions of thousands of men and women workers. The only genuine and independent organisations are the trade unions.

Meanwhile workers continue to be influenced by these lies and are too scared to join the trade union SITRAP, an organisation run by and for workers and is legally founded . SITRAP has a legal department with the ability to represent the workers. Even so, the social responsibility certifications continue to be granted to companies.

Some companies have ...

Eliminated social and wage guarantees that were won through union struggles in the past.

Unfairly dismissed workers without giving them the right of defence.

Introduced new tasks in addition to those that workers must already carry out for the same wage or they have modified tasks for the same wage, or worse, for a lower salary and with longer working hours.

There are cases where workers **are not paid** the minimum wage that reflects the normal and overtime hours worked.

Workers are forced to work more than 10, 11, or 12 hours a day and, in many cases, more than this. Workers do not have the right to say anything because they can be dismissed, all in clear violation of the law.

On some plantations when a person has an accident or becomes ill from work, they are refused recourse to the INS, Costa Rica's National Insurance Institute. In worse cases the worker is dismissed, leaving them and their family in a situation of great need.

Workers are denied wage adjustments for all tasks and piece-rates even though this is decreed by the Costa Rican Government.

Work stability continues to be undermined. Many companies do not ensure work stability as workers are unable to claim their labour rights and, in addition, they do not have the right to severance pay. (Record)

Many managers of varying levels do not respect and treat workers poorly in the workplace. They forget that they too are employed by the same company in a different role and that, at some point, they too have been on a daily contract and have experienced unfair treatment.

Until now, this has taken place in full view of Ministry of Labour and with its full knowledge. The Ministry defends nothing, it does not have the means, the willpower or the political power to make companies respect labour rights.

Some very brave and honest comrades on permanent committees make some effort to defend the workers, but they are limited in their negotiation skills. They do not have the means to negotiate, they do not have recourse to legal advice and they do not have the necessary independence and ability to study the issues that affect workers and present these issues to the company and the Government. Moreover, in many cases, there are companies that take advantage of the permanent committees' limitations and through "direct settlements" they impose working conditions upon them as well as trialling the infamous new and modified tasks.

The company disrespects workers and on occasion, they do not even comply with the direct settlement. In many cases they do not listen or answer the proposals made by the permanent committees. On some plantations companies have dismissed permanent committee members, by order of the company itself, disrespecting the protection these workers have by law.

In the 30 years that workers have been represented by permanent committees and used direct settlements, it is evident that labour rights are being violated more frequently each day, more guarantees are being lost, there is more injustice and the poverty is increasing.

DON'T YOU THINK THAT THE TIME FOR CHANGE HAS COME?

Comrades!

The only way to take control is to join the SITRAP union

Workers deserve respect and better working conditions.

Fairer wages with respect and the right to health.

Workers and their children have the right to education, health, recreation and children have the right to a toy at Christmas.

JOIN SITRAP

WE HONOUR BANANA AND PINEAPPLE PLANTATION WORKERS.
WHAT WE HARVEST PRODUCES WEALTH SO WE HAVE A RIGHT TO LIVE A
BETTER LIFE.

WE DON'T BEG FOR RIGHTS
WE DEMAND RIGHTS

Join us today

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