

MIGRANT WORKERS ARE HONORED BY TRADE UNION OF WORKERS IN CIVIL CONSTRUCTION

Last December, around 500 migrant workers, mainly from the civil construction sector, were honored with a lunch organized by the Trade Union of Workers in the Civil Construction Industry (STICC), in Porto Alegre. The celebration, in a Christmas environment, received the support of the National Secretariat of Civil Construction of the General Workers' Union (UGT) and the Building and Wood Workers' International (ICM). The lunch consisted of typical Haitian food. During the event, bikes and prizes were given by draw.

The president of the STICC, Gelson Santana, affirmed that around 80% of migrant workers in Rio

Grande do Sul come from Haiti and the remaining 20%, from Africa, and they mainly work in the civil construction sector. He stated that this is the second year that this event is organized, in order to “show that ‘gaúchos’ – people from Rio Grande do Sul – are warm and friendly”. The aim, he said, is to be “an example for the world of how to take care of people”. The union leader stated that migrants enter the country, but then, governments do not provide them with the appropriate assistance. “We want them to reflect about their force and understand that they are capable of building a new reality for their lives”, he pointed out.



STICC SIGNS BILATERAL AGREEMENT THAT SEEKS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO WORKERS IN HAITI

During the lunch held in last December to honor migrant workers, the president of STICC, Gelson Santana, announced the signing of a bilateral agreement between the Brazilian organization and the workers' trade union in Haiti. He affirmed that all contributions made to the trade union by Haitian migrants in RS will be transferred by the STICC. “We are forgoing the collection of such contributions”, he assured, emphasizing the importance of solidarity towards the Caribbean country.

The intermediation was carried out by the Building and Wood Workers' International (ICM), with office in Panamá. The regional representative of the ICM for Latin America and the Caribbean, Nilton Freitas, stated that this unprecedented agreement is a type of help that is fundamental for the reconstruction of Haiti, which has a high rate of informal employment. “This is a supportive and humanist practice. It is fundamental”, he concluded, in regard to the agreement.

THE LABOR REFORM IN BRAZIL IS DETRIMENTAL TO WORKERS

In late 2016, the government of Michel Temer promised to submit to the Congress, at the beginning of 2017, a proposal of “modernization of labor laws”, which comes together with the package that includes the Social Security reform. This last reform is detrimental to the most vulnerable workers, such as those in the civil construction sector. The world is increasingly becoming more inhumane. Capitalism is increasingly becoming wilder, and we will not be the prey.

Among the various points analyzed regarding the labor reform, we find that agreements entered into between workers’ trade unions and companies may overlap with labor laws that have been in force for many decades. In addition to the fact that laws should not be undermined by minor negotiations, the proposal seriously affects the rights acquired, specially when we know that, unfortunately, in Brazil, there are entities that are suffering a serious crisis of representation. Could we

affirm that 100% of Brazilian trade unions should have the right to negotiate something that may overlap with the law? We, at STICC, believe that current labor laws and any other issue related to them should be discussed in depth, together with trade unions. Workers must be the focus of this process.

The National Industry Confederation, an employers’ organization, developed a proposal with “101 measures to modernize labor relationships”. A document that is in line with the labor reform proposed by the current government. We should bear in mind that no proposal of this type “is aimed at improving the life conditions of workers”. Why? Because it is a unilateral proposal, from employers. For us, Brazilian workers, some things are not negotiable. Among them, the right to a decent life, which is considered to include the right to a decent job.



WHAT WE LEARNED FROM CORRUPTION

The Lava Jato (“Car Wash”) operation, which has already exceeded the boundaries of Brazil, started with the discovery of public money embezzlement in Petrobras. As investigations proceeded, we were surprised to know that large companies from the Brazilian construction sector, led by Odebrecht, participated in a scheme of payment of bribes to public authorities and officers in exchange for contracts of major works.

The facts showed that workers were put in the last place in regard to the receipt of resources to improve their quality of life. Without left or right-wing ideology, “my wallet is what counts”, became the slogan of some politicians. There are no acceptable justifications for such a huge blow to the population. Figures are not small. They are not millions of Brazilian Reals, but billions of Dollars!

Today, we know that more than ten countries, including Brazil, have suffered in the hands of politicians and businessmen. Among the consequences of this process, in the early 2017,

Odebrecht has already committed itself to pay compensations of at least 7 billion Brazilian Reals. A negative legacy of this equation resides in the perspective that these unlawful acts are responsible for most of the 12 million workers unemployed today in Brazil. All these facts unleashed economic problems and, therefore, crisis in the areas of safety and precariousness in the area of health.

The country is contaminated by a dreadful lack of ethics. The truth is that doing well is only good when it is solidary, when it is addressed to the community. Laws for corruption prevention and combating are already part of our reality. However, political willingness is necessary to make them effective. Politics is about ethics. Politics is about constructing a society with plenty of values of justice, solidarity and honesty.

*Gelson Santana
President of STICC*

NO MORE DEATHS AT CONSTRUCTION SITES ALL OVER THE WORLD

Only in the last 4 years, almost 20 workers died in construction sites in Porto Alegre due to lack of safety at work. This does not only occur in the region, since eleven workers also died during the works for the Olympic Games, in Rio de Janeiro – whose construction attracted the attention of global public opinion.

The most recent death in Porto Alegre occurred in last December, during a restoration work in a shopping centre located on a busy avenue of the city. The worker fell from a height of over two metres. According to witnesses, he was not using



safety equipment. The STICC requested that the company submit all relevant documentation and provide special treatment to the victim's family.