

'A symbol for all of Latin America'

Jorge Carrillo Rojas, who has just left office as the first trade unionist to serve as minister of labor in Colombia, made these remarks at the Aug. 15 meeting of trade unionists with Peruvian President Alan García.

Congressman Luis Negreiros, friends:

You have wished that I be the one who gives the President, Dr. Alan García, the warm and fraternal greetings of the trade unionists we proudly represent. It is for us a high honor to be here with you today, because your figure not only represents the wish for redemption and change of the Peruvian people, but the wish for change and improvement of the entire Latin American population.

Mr. President, we have gathered in the city of Lima at the compelling and generous invitation of our friend and fellow Luis Negreiros, whom we view not only as a fighter in his own right, but as an heir of a line of trade unionism, since his father, Mr. Negreiros, was not only a bold labor leader but a martyr of democracy.

Thus I have answered that call, together with my fellow trade unionists, and have come to this city to pledge the solidarity of Colombian workers with the Peruvian government's position on the most serious problem of the foreign debt, which comes close to \$400 billion, and for the sake of whose payment our countries are being subjected to adjustment programs which plunge our peoples into misery and despair. As you, Mr. President, have aptly put it, most of our countries devote to the payment of debt service an average of 50% of their exports. Thus the development of our peoples is being sacrificed in order to satisfy the international banks. Those countries subjected to adjustment programs have lost close to 10 million jobs because of those programs. Our currencies continue to drop every day, and everything we import becomes more expensive and what we export is ever cheaper. It is a policy that loots our resources and our efforts.

You, Mr. President, have had the courage and moral integrity to tell the world that Peru shall pay its foreign debt, but only according to its possibilities; that it will only devote—as indeed it has—10% of its export earnings to payment of that debt; that the Peruvian people comes before the payment of debt; that life comes before debt. This is a nationalist and anti-imperialist position, one of social justice that fits in with the principles which have given life to the Western

world, the principles of Christianity. I find no difference between the voice of the President of Peru, Mr. Alan García, and that of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, when the latter said, during his recent trip to Colombia, that Man comes first, first comes the dignity of the human individual, first comes the development of peoples, then the payment of a debt which has grown by the unilateral decision of our creditors.

Thus our meeting in Lima was meant to reaffirm our will to fight and continue fighting for those ideals, but also to call for a giant conference of workers of Latin America in the

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month of October here in the capital of Peru, where all existing labor unions and confederations without distinction may participate in giving support to this position. We believe, Mr. President, that this encounter will be successful and transcendental for all our countries. We would wish to count—as we surely will—on the acceptance and approval of the Peruvian government in this call.

The necessity of integration

Finally, Mr. President, I wish to reiterate this line of Latin American integration. If the adjustment programs imposed by international financial circles continue to be applied, the efforts of our peoples to topple dictatorships and impose governments which express the will of the people shall not last long. Thus such an extraordinary effort which has been made in many countries is at stake. Little would it help, for instance, if the Chilean people, which is fighting bravely to rescue freedom, justice, and democracy, had a victory in the short term, if on the other hand, these economic policies kept being implemented.

You, then, Mr. President, in our judgment as trade unionists and sincere workers not in the habit of flattering Heads of State, are a symbol for the entire population of the continent.