

For democratic, national development of North America's energy resources

Montreal, August 18, 2007

A joint solidarity statement of:

Energy Workers Unions

- Union nacional de trabajadores de confianza de la industria petrolera (UNTCIP)
- Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME)
- Alianza nacional democratica de los trabajadores Petroleros (ANDTP)
- Sindicato unico de trabajadores de industria nuclear (SUTIN)
- Comite nacional de la energia
- Frente autentico del trabajo (FAT)
- United Steelworkers (USW)
- Syndicat des employées de techniques professionnels et de bureau d'Hydro Québec - Section Locale 2000 SCFP
- Syndicat des spécialistes et professionnels d'Hydro Québec - Section Locale 4250 SCFP
- Syndicat des employées et employeuses de métiers d'Hydro Québec - Section Locale 1500 SCFP
- Syndicat des Technologues d'Hydro Quebec - Section Locale 1500 SCFP
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
- Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP)
- SCEP Section Locale 121 - Montreal Shell Refinery
- Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ)
- Centrale des syndicats démocratiques (CSD)
- Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN)
- Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain (CSN)
- International Federation of Chemical Energy Mines and General Workers' Unions (ICEM)

Networks and social movements

- Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC)
- Réseau Québécois sur l'intégration continentale (RQIC)
- Fédération des femmes du Québec
- Association droit a l'énergie - SOS Futur

- Coalition of Québec – Vert – Kyoto et Association Québécoise de lutte contre le pollution atmosphérique (AQLPA)
- Common Frontiers Canada
- North South Institute
- KAIROS
- Council of Canadians

Energy workers from Mexico, the United States, Canada and Quebec together with our social partners in civil society and hemispheric solidarity movements, declare to our respective members and citizens in each country our commitment to democratic, national development of our energy industries.

We are meeting at the time of the Montebello summit of the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) that links our countries in a new political and economic framework for continental integration based on the security agenda of the George Bush presidency. This agenda has the complicity of President Calderon and Prime Minister Harper, but has no democratic mandate from the people of Mexico, Canada or the United States.

We share the concerns of civil society movements that the SPP is a new and powerful instrument created by government and corporate elites to shape the destinies of our nations without democratic participation or oversight. We reject the security agenda of the SPP which links NAFTA and trade to the limiting of civil liberties, mass surveillance, racial profiling and the failed and disastrous military and foreign policies of George W. Bush. We challenge the neo-liberal assumptions of prosperity which have led to increasing disparities of wealth and power in each of our countries.

However, as energy workers we are compelled first of all to respond to the SPP energy agenda. Through the SPP and the North American Energy Working Group, the governments of Mexico, United States and Canada have formed an unprecedented collaboration with energy corporations to promote the continental integration of our energy industries and infrastructures. Nine working groups have been working intensively to integrate oil, natural gas, electricity, nuclear power, hydrocarbons, science and technology and regulatory agencies. While these working groups bring together government, regulators and corporations at the highest level, they have excluded labour, environmentalists and civil society movements and circumvented the oversight of our elected legislatures.

The SPP-corporate agenda of substituting continental corporate rule at the expense of national and local plans of development includes:

- The complete integration of electricity grids between our countries and the continuing deregulation of electricity in each country to promote electricity generation for export.
- The promotion of a continental integrated natural gas system and imports of liquefied natural gas to meet a continental shortage of natural gas which is expected within a short period of time.
- The “streamlining” of regulatory processes and deregulation in each country for cross-border oil pipelines, including a five-fold increase in Canadian tar sands production, and continuing privatization of energy industries.
- The direct intervention of the US to guarantee the security of energy installations.

These and other elements of the SPP-corporate energy agenda are unsustainable and sacrifice the needs of workers and communities in each country to the profits of energy corporations. This is an agenda that fails to address the need for each country to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including a new round of far reaching goals after 2012. Nor does this corporate-continental model of energy development respond to the needs of national economic development or recognize the primary role of energy industries for community economic development.

We share a concern that the promotion of bio-fuels and ethanol puts at risk agricultural economic stability and food sovereignty in North America. North American farmers and consumers must not be sacrificed to facilitate unsustainable, speculative investments in new bio-fuel industries.

Energy workers in each our countries have fundamental and urgent concerns over the misguided energy policies that are being pursued in the context of the SPP.

United States:

- Bush/Exxon opposition to world efforts to combat global climate change
- Deregulation of electricity resulting in Enron corporate fiascos
- Rising energy costs for working families and industry
- Closure of 50 oil refineries in last 12 years
- Growing dependence on foreign oil

Mexico:

- Unconstitutional privatization of Mexico's constitutionally protected energy industries
- Threat to privatize PEMEX
- Oil industry operating at 80% capacity and petrochemical industry at 50% capacity
- United States prohibitions on development of Mexico's nuclear sector
- Neo liberal economic policies
- Trade union freedoms for energy workers
- The weakening of the guiding role of the state with respect to energy and development.

Canada:

- Failure to meet Kyoto targets
- Canadian energy security needs
- Tar Sands development based on bitumen exports
- Natural gas exports and loss of petrochemical industry jobs
- Electricity deregulation and market failures

The energy industries in each of our countries must be guided by the common principles of democracy and sustainability.

We affirm the responsibility and the right of democratically elected governments to establish national and local energy policies, to defend and promote public ownership of energy production and distribution, and to regulate the activities of private sector energy corporations within the context of national and local policy. Access to energy resources for basic human needs is a right of citizenship and must not be denied by unfair markets and corporate greed. Energy resources in each of our country are publicly owned and must be democratically managed in the public interest.

Electricity grids, home heating and transportation fuels, and energy sources for industry are necessary and strategic factors in national and local economic development. These industries provide good jobs which are family and community sustaining. We reject the model of energy development which sacrifices local generation and supply systems to be replaced by continental corporate grids and never ceases its obsession with eliminating labour. We support the right of local communities to demand that energy resources are processed locally to achieve the highest possible value.

Energy workers understand the historic transformations which are necessary to achieve global energy sustainability. The petroleum, gas, coal and other carbon based industries will be impacted by measures to address global climate change and dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Large scale hydro-electricity and nuclear power are also faced with many formidable environmental challenges. Energy workers understand the necessity for conservation and energy efficiency, and new renewable energy industries, as well as for new policies in each country which may impact our employment security. We are ready to be part of the solution on the basis of Just Transition that ensures that workers and communities do not unfairly shoulder the burden of social and environmental change.

Sustainability and national and local development of energy resources cannot take place without democratic involvement of workers and communities. Energy policy will not achieve these goals without the voices of energy worker unions and communities.

We condemn the policies of union avoidance by many energy corporations and the failure of our respective governments to assure the right of workers to freely organize in independent and democratic trade union structures.

We commit to forge a new hemispheric worker to worker solidarity to ensure the growth of our unions and the negotiation of strong collective agreements with employers. Through the ICEM, the UIS-TEMQPIA (Union Internacional de Sindicatos de Trabajadores de la Energia, el Metal, la Quimica, el Petroleo e Industrias Afines) and other international trade union bodies, we will establish strong networks and respond to calls for solidarity when our membership engages in trade union and community struggles.

We commit ourselves to establish co-ordination between this forum and the Energy Workers Forum of Latin America and the Caribbean to share experiences and joint actions with respect to energy integration plans.

We will continue to work with our social partners in the hemispheric solidarity movements to bring workers of each country together and to jointly challenge the harmful consequences of unfair trade agreements and neo-Liberal globalization policies.

Energy policies will shape our world in the 21 century. These policies will lead either to democratic, sustainable development or to global environmental disaster and new wars of aggression. Energy workers, their unions and social partners in Mexico, Canada and the United States will act together for democratic, sustainable national development of our energy resources.