

Mexican workers face no alternative in 2012 vote

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The Mexican “left” populist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) has selected its 2006 presidential candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, to be its standard bearer once again in the 2012 Mexican presidential election. López Obrador officially lost the 2006 election by a half percentage point to President Felipe Calderón, although belief in Mexico is widespread that the result was due to fraud.

The PRD’s selection of López Obrador occurred even though he had informally left the party, ostensibly over its state election alliances earlier this year with the ruling right-wing National Authentic Party (PAN), a maneuver which resulted in some governorship wins for the PRD.

López Obrador had fought with the other leading PRD presidential prospect, Mexico City’s current Mayor Marcel Ebrard, and other factions in PRD, over his future candidacy, as well as his supposed rejection of the current government’s policies and direction.

Starting in 2008, the right wing of the PRD abandoned López Obrador’s demagogic populist approach—in reality a brew of nationalism and hollow anti-imperialist rhetoric—over issues such as privatization of the national Mexican oil company. It favored instead compromise with the PAN, its one-time sworn enemy, and an orientation to identity and lifestyle-based politics.

The reconciliation of the PRD’s factions around a López Obrador candidacy show that the disputes in the party over the last three years were based on little more than tactical and electoral considerations, rather than any fundamental political principles.

In the final analysis, the PRD remains the principal means of keeping Mexico’s radicalized workers and the poor under the domination of the Mexican bourgeoisie. The party assiduously avoids any program that would threaten the interests of the Mexican ruling elite. If the working class goes into struggle, the PRD is there to tether it to calls for toothless reform.

The PRD itself was formed in 1989 as an amalgamation of disaffected members of the then long-ruling Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) such as Cuahtémoc Cárdenas, along with the Mexican Socialist Party, the party formed in 1981 by the merger of the Mexican Communist Party and the Socialist Party. The PRD will now again sweep up into its

election campaign all the fake “left” political currents in Mexico.

In announcing the López Obrador candidacy earlier this month the PRD also announced it had entered into an alliance with two other political groups, the Workers Party, a party of Maoist origins that supported López Obrador in the 2006 election, and the Citizens Movement.

It is highly likely that the Workers and Peoples Political Organization (OPT), formed in August by 1,000 delegates from labor unions, social movements and other political organizations with the ostensible goal of “driving from government those responsible for the national disaster,” will now also cast their lot with López Obrador in the election.

The main forces behind the OPT are the Mexican Electrical Workers Union, whose 44,000 members were fired and then locked out at the point of army guns in October of 2009 when the Calderón administration dissolved the national power company servicing central Mexico, and the dissident wing of the National Union of Education Workers, the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers. Both are closely tied to the capitalist PRD and seek to divert their increasingly disaffected members to support it instead of fighting for socialism.

Last but not least, Socialist Convergence, which has replaced the old pseudo-“Trotskyist” Revolutionary Workers Party as a sympathizing section of the Pabloite United Secretariat of the Fourth International, will almost certainly also support López Obrador.

According to its web site, Socialist Convergence “does not pretend to limit its efforts to “Trotskyist regroupment,” but rather “seeks wider regroupment with militants supporting other diverse socialist, communist and Marxist currents,” what it broadly terms the “socialist left,” as well as “the new anti-capitalist generation.” It says its militancy will include affiliation with and participation in electoral parties. These are code words for all-out support of the PRD.

Another fake “Trotskyist” current in Mexico, the Marxist Militant Tendency, which pushes the reformist politics peddled by the Socialist Appeal group in Britain, itself has worked in the PRD for years.

The current wisdom in Mexico is that the PRI, following

electoral victories earlier this year, is likely to take back the presidency next year. The PRI candidate, former Mexico State Governor Enrique Pena Nieto, leads his potential competitors by double digits in recent opinion polls.

Faced with the huge unpopularity of Calderon's drug war, which has claimed over 50,000 lives, and the economic privation of the last five years, sections of the bourgeoisie view the PRI as better able to accelerate the assault on the living conditions of Mexican workers, and prevent the destabilizing popular movement that was unleashed by the 2006 election.

Last Friday, however, the head of the PRI, Humberto Moreira, was forced to resign over a corruption scandal arising out of public works spending in Coahuila, the state Moreira formerly governed. Moreira had been widely promoted as the face of the new PRI, often appearing in national campaign ads with party candidates for key state races. The financial scandal threatens to undermine the party's efforts to rebrand itself as corruption-free.

While Mexican workers face no alternative in the 2012 election, conditions are growing increasingly ripe for mass struggles against the current political and economic setup.

In 2010, over half of Mexico's population, well over 50 million people, lived in poverty. This is an increase of 10 million during Calderon's presidency. 18 million Mexicans go hungry.

95 percent of the 800,000 jobs created in 2010 paid only \$10 a day. Although by law the minimum daily wage is \$5, upwards of six million workers make less than a dollar a day.

Yet the cost of food and other necessities continues to rise. Food prices have increased by 21 percent since the global economic collapse of 2008. The price of corn, a national staple, has risen 73 percent since June 2010.

In contrast, the wealth of the richest 39 Mexican families amounts to \$135 billion, almost 13 percent of the country's gross domestic product. The wealth of the 10 richest people in Mexico equals 10 percent of GDP.

The wealth of the world's richest man, Mexico's Carlos Slim Helu, amounts to \$74 billion. The chairman of the mining company Grupo Mexico, German Larrea Mota Velasco, has \$16 billion. Alberto Bailleres Gonzalez, another mining magnate, is worth \$11.9 billion. Media oligarch Ricardo Salinas Pliego has \$8 billion, and his competitor Emilio Azcárraga Jean \$2.3 billion.

Officially there are 1.6 million more unemployed over the last five years, but a more realistic figure is three million more are jobless. The unemployment rate has not significantly lowered since it plummeted in the wake of the 2009 economic crisis.

A week ago the government reported that the economy grew at an annual rate of 4.5 percent in the third quarter, or 1.3 percent faster than in the second quarter. The official unemployment rate lowered from 5.7 percent to 5 percent of the economically active population of 47 million over the last year, an increase of 296,000.

These numbers represent a short-term blip, and hide a grimmer reality. Most of these jobs are temporary, part time or poorly remunerated. The official rate of those "subemployed," rose from 8.5 percent to 9.3 percent over the last year, reaching 4.354 million. Those working short hours have increased this year to 8.9 percent, or 2.14 million. In the third quarter, 534,000 left employment for the informal sector of the economy, which now includes 13.4 million people.

Manufacturing growth in the third quarter slowed to 0.54 percent, less than half the pace seen in the second quarter. This reflects the recent slowdown in the global economy, especially in Europe and China.

Moreover, according to Gabriel Casillas, an economist at JP Morgan in Mexico City, the "problem is going to be next year. With the global deceleration, Mexico will grow only a little."

It is little wonder that 53 percent of Mexicans consider that their personal financial situation worsened during the last 12 months, and 56 percent say they expect it to continue to worsen over the next year.

The rights and social benefits of the Mexican working class are also under concerted attack. The bourgeois parties act largely in unison in pursuing a revision of the country's liberal constitution on questions of executive war powers, democratic rights, labor law and education.

For example, the security reform legislation promoted by the PRI would legalize and expand all the worst excesses of the drug war militarization. It would authorize the president to unilaterally deploy the military to squelch social, political and labor movements by declaring a "state of exception" over certain regions, or "entities", within the country.

The only way forward for workers is to build their own organizations independent of all bourgeois parties, including the PRD, and its "left" supporters, and the rotten union apparatus. This requires a new leadership based on an international socialist perspective and the fight for a workers government.



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