

Bush Defeat from page 1 — Salvadoran Economic Vice Minister announced plans to travel to the US to join Ambassador René León in stepping up the pro-CAFTA lobbying efforts in the US Congress. However, members of Saca's cabinet have pre-maturely declared their intentions to introduce CAFTA before, and it's likely that the Central American governments will only put CAFTA up for a vote once it becomes imminent in the US. Central American leaders know that the popular resistance will be fierce, and they do not want to pay the political costs and deal with mass mobilizations unless they are guaranteed a victory in the US. The FMLN remains firm in its opposition to CAFTA, and continues to develop a case for its unconstitutionality in the Salvadoran Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, other important issues will affect the timing of the CAFTA vote. There remains a possibility that the Dominican Republic, which was "docked" into CAFTA in August, could be excluded from the deal when it comes up for a vote. The Dominican Assembly passed a bill in September that included a new 25% tariff on corn syrup imports, something the USTR claims would violate provisions of CAFTA. Angry US officials have criticized the tax and are pressing for President Leonel Fernandez to repeal it. Such strong-armed tactics show the weak position of those countries that choose to "negotiate" with the United States on trade, or attempt to assert their right to protect vital industries - such as the case of sugar in the Dominican Republic - in the face of liberalizing pressures. Most analysts expect the Dominican Republic to eventually back down and accept the US's terms.

Many Republicans hope to introduce implementing legislation for the deal at

the beginning of the 109th Congressional session, in late January or early February. However, as the U.S. pushes to complete the Andean Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) by December, some would like to see that deal introduced along with CAFTA and the soon-to-be completed bilateral deal with Panama. Such a "CAFTA-plus" would offset recent trade setbacks, such as breakdowns in negotiations for the FTAA. The recent victory of the leftist Frente Amplio coalition in the Uruguayan Presidential elections dealt another blow to the FTAA while strengthening Brazilian President Luiz Inacio "Lula"

da Silva's bid to build Mercosur as a regional trading bloc. This of course makes CAFTA all that much more important in the US agenda to consolidate its economic domination in the Americas, and means that a defeat on CAFTA could decisively derail the entire FTAA process.

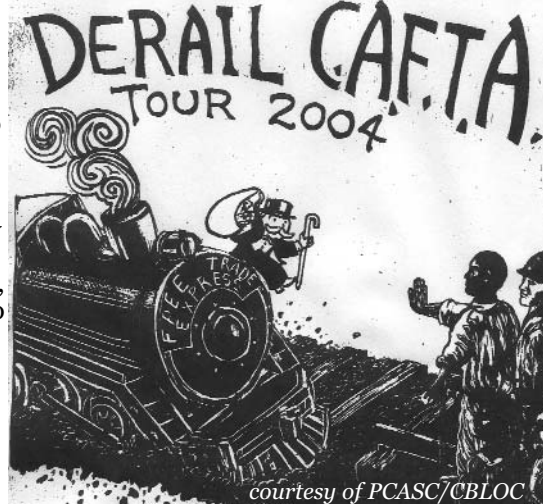
The anti-CAFTA movement fought hard to ward off threats of a lame duck CAFTA vote in November, and is now preparing to mobilize and put political pressure on the remaining key "swing" votes in the House. The Stop CAFTA Coalition is setting up phone banks to mobilize trade activists and pressure Representatives, and preparing for protest actions when the vote comes to the floor in Congress. The challenges we face looking at another four years of Bush are daunting, but there is no better way to begin the resistance than by building on 3 years of intense cross-border organizing and defeat CAFTA once and for all. A victory will represent a major blow for the Bush trade agenda, one we can build on in the years to come. ■

Milton from page 3 — We believe that it is possible for a Salvadoran government to establish trade relations based on another set of principles without needing to call itself "socialist," but rather simply nationalistic and working within the framework of our constitution. Another example of an alternative that we support is President Chavez's offer to sell Venezuelan oil to us and the rest of Central America at a 20% lower price than international prices, so that governments can lower gas prices. But El Salvador's leaders haven't accepted because they're so indoctrinated in the neoliberal model that the terms under which they would take the oil would pass all of the profits to transnational companies and wouldn't benefit the people. These types of changes would benefit the people of El Salvador, and also strong business sectors, because we're not talking about only benefiting the poor in this country, but also the productive sector.

C: What is your vision for the party going into the 2006 and 2009 elections?

M: We are going to stick with our program of doing strategic actions — we can't just be sitting at tables that are created only to be sipping coffee and fancy water. We need to continue with our strategy of supporting popular organizing since there are an immense number of problems that neither the legislature nor municipal governments can resolve — problems which the people cannot wait to resolve until 2009 and the possibility of the FMLN winning the presidency. Whether its getting potable water or getting their roads repaired, people need to organize and struggle for these things. The FMLN is going to stand behind these initiatives with increasing support.

We also need to help build consciousness.... Help young people understand, for example, that their problems will not be resolved by going to the U.S. Clarifying to the people that Saca's "dialogue tables" are just a show. Our strategy is to debate and to combat this propaganda ideologically. Which is to say, the FMLN is going to continue with its strategy of raising awareness, accumulating power, and gathering force. ■



courtesy of PCASC/CBLOC

NORTHWEST REGIONAL TOUR: Workers, community leaders and youth built resistance to CAFTA from Portland OR to Olympia, Tacoma and Seattle WA, [see page 2 for full story]

Close the SOA!

On the 15th Anniversary of the assassination of the Jesuit priests in El Salvador, CISPES members joined 16,000 people in Fort Benning, Georgia to demand the closing of the School of the Americas.
* www.soaw.org *

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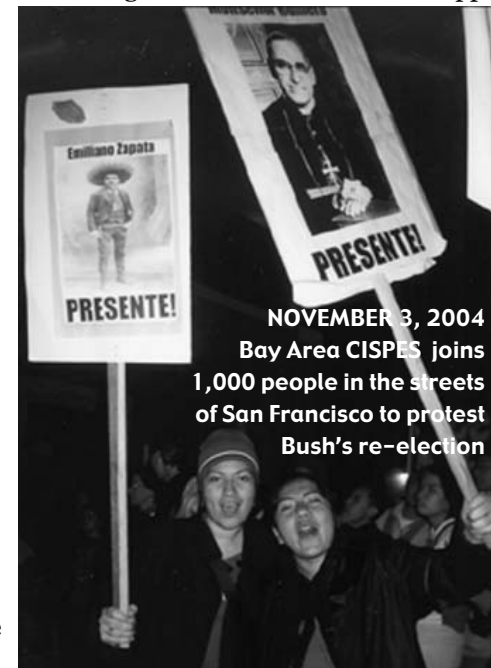
Produced by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)

Movement Poised to Make CAFTA First Major Defeat of Bush's Second Term

The victory of George W. Bush in the presidential elections, and the increase of Republican seats in both the Senate and the House, will affect the trade panorama in the coming months and years. Promoting free trade remains Bush's top priority in Latin America. In the first year of his second term he will seek to pass the US-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA), the Andean Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), and a bilateral deal with Panama, all with hopes of completing negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by 2006.

Despite the discouraging results of the elections, it is clear that Bush is far from having a mandate, and the growing movement against free trade now has the opportunity to mobilize the hoards of anti-Bush activists not previously involved in politics. Most Democrats have not proved to be the best

allies in stopping trade agreements, and Kerry's ambivalent statements about renegotiating CAFTA carried with it many challenges. As it is, one upshot of the elections is that the CAFTA that currently exists — a seriously flawed agreement that the movement in the US is united in stopping — is the CAFTA that Congress will vote on. The battle lines have been clearly drawn.



NOVEMBER 3, 2004 Bay Area CISPES joins 1,000 people in the streets of San Francisco to protest Bush's re-election

Despite Republican gains, a major fight remains. Of the Democrats that are retiring or have been voted out, many are ardent free traders, including California Democrat Calvin Dooley, one of the main proponents of past trade initiatives. (Also, 8 of the 21 Democrats that voted for Fast Track in 2001 will not be around for the 109th Congress.)

There was celebration on the part of Central American governments following Bush's victory, but nowhere was it more blatant than in El Salvador. President Tony Saca called it "a victory for democracy and freedom and a defeat for populism" and promised the rapid approval of CAFTA.

— continued on page 4

CISPES Interview with Milton Mendez

On November 7th, the FMLN held a popular election to choose the new leadership at all levels of the party's internal structures. Milton Mendez was elected as the new General Coordinator of the FMLN. Milton recently sat down with CISPES representatives to talk about his vision for the FMLN and for El Salvador in the coming years.

CISPES: Let's start by talking about your thoughts on the political work of the FMLN, and particularly the struggle the party is facing with the right wing's ongoing campaign of propaganda. What is the party's strategy for advancing its work and confronting this campaign?

Milton: One thing that I believe is fundamental is to increase the work of organizing the party's base committees. The FMLN's base committees have been developing for years, but the development of these committees is still weak. So my goal is to quickly, in two or three months, strengthen these committees and have 20, 25 or

30 thousand militants — whether they be party members or not — who can do the work of house to house visits throughout the country. This is going to be a priority for us. — continued on page 3



Milton Mendez celebrates FMLN internal victory

Workers Fight Free Trade on the 2004 Derail CAFTA Northwest Tour

* CISPES endorsed this tour and facilitated bringing Ana Carmelina Contreras de Guzmán from El Salvador

by Chelsea Blake, PCASC/CBLOC

Angélica Morales made slippers in Monclova, Mexico until she was fired six years ago for organizing women to seek medical treatment for work-related stress injuries. A factory worker for fourteen years, Morales assembled goods she would never be able to afford. Now, she and others on the Derail CAFTA Northwest Tour are speaking out and refusing to be stepped on. They came to build the resistance to slave labor practices that feed the insatiable appetite of the modern consumer. Morales organizes worker-led resistance to abuses in maquila factories with the Border Women Workers Committee (CFO) in Mexico. In an interview in Olympia WA, she shared her dream of sewing ties of solidarity between workers in Mexico and workers here in the U.S. Presenting along with Morales were Ana Carmelina Contreras de Guzmán, General Secretary for the Union of Salvadoran Telecommunications Workers (SUTTEL) and Félix Pérez of the Labor Studies Center (CETLAC) in Juarez, Mexico. Each came to share their experience of free trade to mobilize opposition to the CAFTA agreement. The tour touched down at union locals and universities in Portland, Seattle, Tacoma and Olympia November 8th to the 19th raising awareness and building solidarity throughout the Northwest.

Each speaker has a history of revolutionary organizing. Contreras' revolutionary consciousness formed when she witnessed the murders of fellow students for organizing a protest to demand desks and chairs at their school in El Salvador's violent and repressive 80s. Six years ago, she re-organized her union after the Salvadoran national telephone company was privatized and sold to CTE France Telecom which then targeted and fired union leadership and smashed worker organization. Pérez assists the self-

organization of workers in the US-owned factories on the border and has been a leader in opposing industrial contamination left by maquila factories in Mexico. He was part of a successful effort to defeat a proposed nuclear and hazardous waste disposal center, citing environmental risks.

Morales, Contreras and Pérez wanted an opportunity to bring awareness about the devastating effects of the free trade agenda and mobilize students and labor movement activists. In Portland, Jason Wallach, coordinator of the Portland Central America Solidarity Committee (PCASC) stated that the tour had given these labor leaders the chance to do just that. The tour included forums at Lewis and Clark and Reed College and interviews on public radio station KBOO 90.7 and Free Radio Olympia. At Evergreen College in Olympia, WA, 200 enthusiastic students listened as Contreras, Morales and Pérez told their stories.

In Morales' opinion, workers must unite across borders, for they share the same objectives and face the same battles against privatization and shrinking workers' rights. Union rank and file across the Northwest agreed resoundingly. Contreras and Pérez were joined by secretary of the Communication

Workers of America (CWA) local 7901, Madeline Elder at a panel discussion at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) local 49 hall in Portland. 100 attended a panel discussion hosted by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) local 19. In Seattle, 300 delegates representing the Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters passed a groundbreaking resolution that prohibits their unions from contributing to any candidate that supports free trade legislation based on the failed

NAFTA model. "[Workers across borders] are speaking the same language....the more that we yell, the more they are going to have to listen to us," Morales emphasized.

All in all, Wallach estimated that the tour brought these speakers face to face with over 500 students, 600 union



TROJAN CAFTA ACCOMPANIES TOUR: Seattle activists after a successful rally photo: Allan Paulson

workers, and dozens of labor activists while getting the word out to many more. It could not have been a greater success, Wallach stated enthusiastically. The tour raised \$3,100, more than double what organizers had anticipated thanks to the overwhelming support of union locals and hat-passing at events.

Thanks to Felix, Carmelina, Angélica and all who helped to coordinate this tour, people across the Northwest are rising up to demand workers' rights and an end to free trade!

Milton from page 1—
C: In terms of the party's relationships with different sectors, how do you envision the relationship between the FMLN and the social movement?

M: We are going to take concrete actions in terms of our relationship with the social movement. For example, we are planning to call for volunteers who are currently doing party work to focus more of their energies on building the social movement. Also, we have been giving our full support to the creation, growth, and consolidation of the Popular Social Bloc for Real Democracy (BPS) [a social movement organization made up of unions, campesinos, religious groups, and local community organizations that coordinates the mobilization of all these sectors at the local and national levels]. As a party we want to support the BPS in certain areas, for example, in the area of unions. We all know that as a result of the neoliberal [corporate globalization] assault and also of the dictatorships during and after the war, many unions were destroyed, both in the public

and private sectors, so we are going to put extra emphasis on our work in this area.

C: What about the right wing? What is the FMLN's analysis of the right wing's strategy today?



FMLN CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY: Thousands gathered on October 10 to commemorate 24 years of popular struggle

M: The right wing in this country has a serious problem. Their economic model is bad. Productivity – production – is stagnant. The economy is practically in

recession, and there are no predictions of things improving for them. They are hoping that CAFTA will pass in the U.S., although we of course know that CAFTA is not a remedy.

However, their greatest concern is our very existence as a party – a party on the left that is part of the struggles of the people. This is why their main strategy is to attack the FMLN, trying to divide and destroy the FMLN, to stop the FMLN, to create the image of an FMLN with problems. Their main goal is to get rid of this leftist political party called FMLN.

C: What does the FMLN propose, in the short term, to address this economic crisis?

M: The FMLN is making legislative proposals, including initiatives related to things like fiscal reform, which is related to a fundamental question of how the state brings in the funding necessary to provide

basic services to the population. We proposed to tax more those who have more and to tax less those who have less, since here in El Salvador a market vendor who sells tomatoes and onions out of her basket pays relatively more than a bank owner.

Our position is that CAFTA should not be approved. If we are in a bad situation now, with the approval of CAFTA we will even worse off.

C: What is the FMLN's strategy for stopping CAFTA?

M: The FMLN is clear that CAFTA can be approved with 43 votes in the Legislative Assembly, and that the right wing – combining ARENA [and the other parties] PCN, PDC, and CDU – easily has more than 43 votes. So the math is not in our favor in the National Legislature. But of course an important part of our strategy is to support social and popular movements in the struggle against CAFTA, so we are going to continue stand beside the social movement. I personally believe that we are not going to stop CAFTA in the legislature, but rather it will be the social movement in the streets that will stop CAFTA.

C: What is the FMLN's vision of economic relationships that are not the current "free trade" model? What is the alternative?

M: We are convinced that an FMLN government could establish fairer commercial relations with countries with which we share a vision of trade that is not the one that the U.S. and Europe impose, but one in which there can be a more equitable relationship. Of course a tiny country like this one, with 20 thousand square kilometers and 5 million inhabitants, cannot compete on equal terms with even a country like Venezuela. So there will have to be some things that favor an under-developed country like ours. — **continued page 4**

CISPES Action Alert: Pressure Salvadoran Government for Full Investigation into Death of Gilberto Soto!

On November 5, 2004, Jose Gilberto Soto was shot and killed outside his family's house in Usulután, El Salvador. Soto had lived in the US for 15 years and was a committed solidarity activist, union organizer, and community leader. His death was clearly politically motivated; the killers were waiting for him outside his home, and no attempt was made to rob him. However, the Salvadoran National Civilian Police (PNC) has refused to carry out a full investigation, stating that the killing was likely crime or gang related. PNC Chief Ricardo Meneses rebuffed assertions that the assassination was connected to Soto's union activity, while the Salvadoran Interior Minister claimed that US solidarity organization and labor unions were manipulating the case as part of their campaign to thwart the U.S.-Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA.)

In fact, through his work as a long-time organizer for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Soto had been involved in a campaign to organize port workers and truck drivers throughout Central America, and was in El Salvador in part to meet with representatives from different labor unions. Soto was also a member of the FMLN in New Jersey, and had most recently been in El Salvador to monitor the 2004 presidential elections. In another sign that his killing was part of a systematic campaign of repression, the offices of the labor organization CEAL were ransacked on November 14th. CEAL has been one of the lead-

ing Salvadoran groups publicizing and denouncing the killing.

The U.S. labor movement has joined solidarity activists in pushing the State Department and the Salvadoran Government to undertake a full investigation of the killing of Gilberto Soto. Teamsters President James Hoffa and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney met with Salvadoran Ambassador René León last week, and a reward of \$75,000 is being offered by the unions for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Soto's killers. Gilberto Soto was a close friend and long time supporter of CISPES, and we demand his assassins be brought to justice!



Gilberto Soto marching with New York CISPES against the Republican National Convention in August. photo: Ladawn Haglund

GILBERTO SOTO, PRESENTE!

TAKE ACTION!

1. Call René León, Salvadoran Ambassador in the U.S. at (202) 265-9671 ext. 229, and demand:

* A full investigation by the Salvadoran government and National Civilian Police into the killing of Gilberto Soto
* The suspension of the U.S.-Central American Free Trade Agreement due to the ongoing repression against unionists in El Salvador

2. Fax Colin Powell at 202 647-2283 and demand:

* That the U.S. State Department pressure the Salvadoran government to investigate the murder of Gilberto Soto, and that it cancel implementing legislation for the US-Central American Free Trade Agreement (go to www.cispes.org for a sample letter.)