



LABOUR'S PLATFORM FOR THE AMERICAS

WHAT IS THE PLATFORM?

The Platform is a broad range of actions governments of the Americas can take to create healthy economies based on full employment and social and economic justice for all.

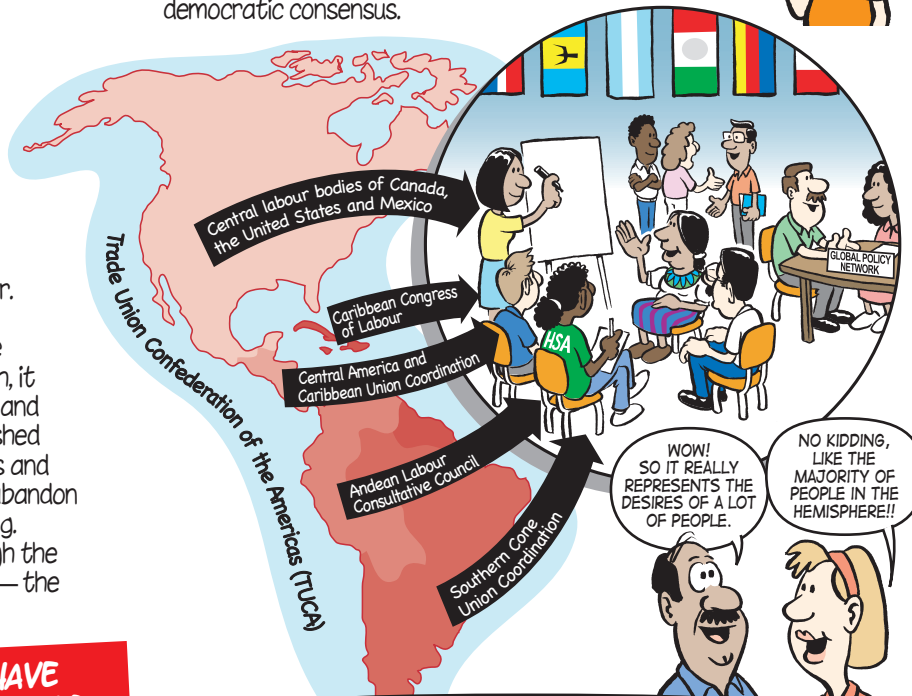
WHO CREATED THE PLATFORM?

The Platform was developed by labour and civil society organizations across the entire hemisphere. People of many cultures and backgrounds worked on it together, discussing, debating, and building democratic consensus.

WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Because free-market fundamentalism has FAILED! The world's powerful financial and business leaders (and their friends in government) have been preaching that globalization and policies like free trade, privatization and down-sized government would make our economies grow and help the poor.

What has happened over the last 30 years is the opposite. Where there has been economic growth, it has been jobless growth. Millions of working men and women have been forced into unemployment, pushed into poverty, battered by bad working conditions and labour "flexibility". Farmers have been forced to abandon their land because they can no longer make a living. Social programs have been slashed. And all through the Americas — both within and between countries — the gap between rich and poor has grown.



WORKERS ACROSS THE HEMISPHERE HAVE HAD ENOUGH. WE DEMAND A BETTER WORLD WITH DECENT WORK* AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT!!**

* work that's productive and generates an adequate income, has adequate social protection, and where workers' rights are protected.
 ** does not only look at economic growth and development but also takes into account environmental and social issues

HOW WILL THE PLATFORM HELP US?



REAL DEMOCRACY... WITH REAL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION!

THE PLATFORM CALLS ON ALL GOVERNMENTS TO BE **MUCH** MORE RESPONSIVE TO PEOPLE'S NEEDS

SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA.

YEAH, IT'S ABOUT TIME.



PRO-ACTIVE GOVERNMENTS FOR A CHANGE

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Governments must play an active role in developing society and the economy. Just doing favours for business is not enough.

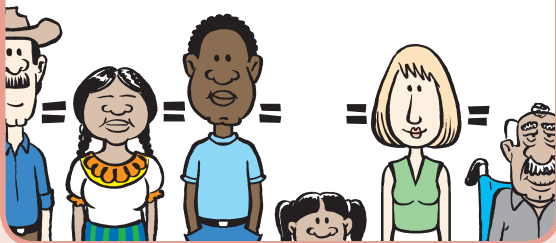
They should dedicate themselves to making sound public policies, and economic policies that help create decent work for all citizens.

LEAVE NO-ONE BEHIND

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

We must ensure no man, woman or child is excluded from our societies.

We're calling for government policies that respect everyone's human rights. We want social justice for all, and we want to get rid of all forms of discrimination. No one should be left behind — and that means getting rid of poverty!



FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE!

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

We need more opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making — locally, nationally, sub-regionally and regionally.

Decisions that effect the lives of millions of people should NEVER be made behind closed doors and only among government and business leaders. Important international decisions should be approved or rejected by the citizens affected. And, we need more women decision-makers in all governments, as well as organizations like unions.



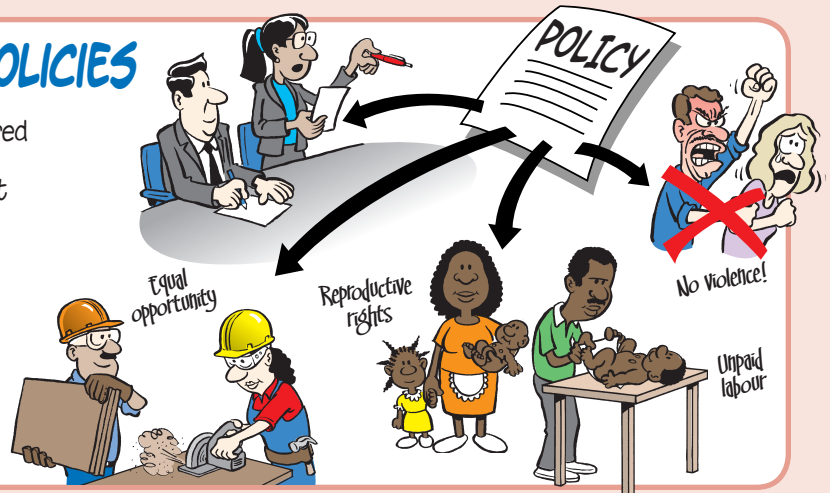
WOMEN'S CONCERNS IN ALL POLICIES

Women in many parts of the Americas have been ignored for too long, and that must change. But just creating a few programs aimed at improving women's lives is not enough.

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

All policies and budgets, whether in governments or other organizations, must be made with women's concerns in mind.

We call this making policies "from a gender perspective"



ECONOMIC MEASURES

WORKERS ARE CALLING FOR CHANGES TO THE WAY OUR ECONOMIES ARE RUN — CHANGES THAT WILL LEAD TO GOOD JOBS FOR EVERYONE.

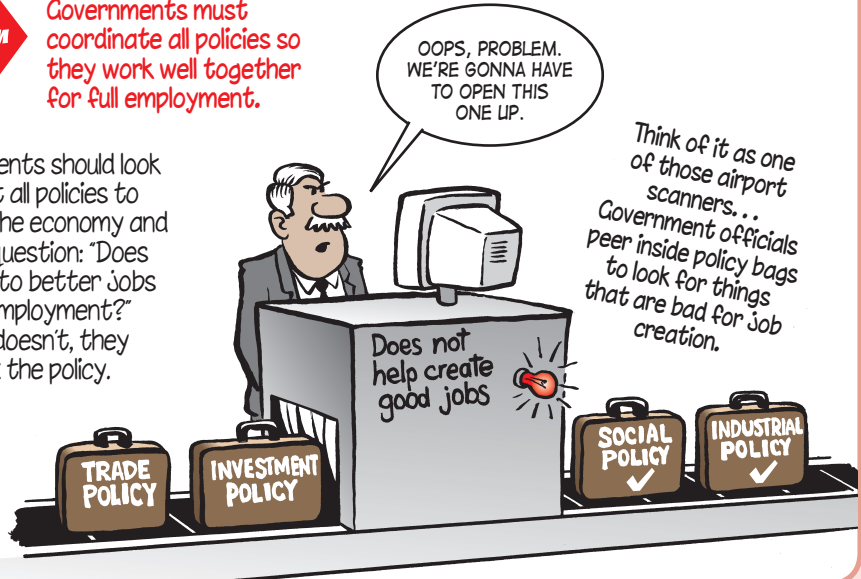


ALL POLICIES MUST LEAD TO DECENT JOBS

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Governments must coordinate all policies so they work well together for full employment.

Governments should look closely at all policies to do with the economy and ask the question: "Does this lead to better jobs and full employment?" And if it doesn't, they should fix the policy.



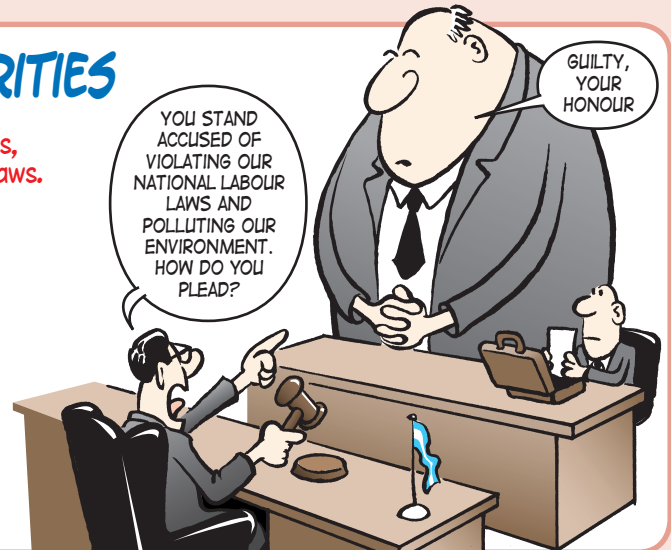
INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Governments should focus on productive investments, and making sure foreign investors respect national laws.

Governments shouldn't just sit back and tinker with things like interest rates. Productive economies need hands-on government action in the right places. They should encourage investments that are productive, and prevent the ones that only suck money and resources out of our economies. And, they should provide good public services for all.

They should make sure foreign investors respect workers' rights and obey national laws. And that means obeying the decisions of the courts.



CANCEL THE WORST FOREIGN DEBT

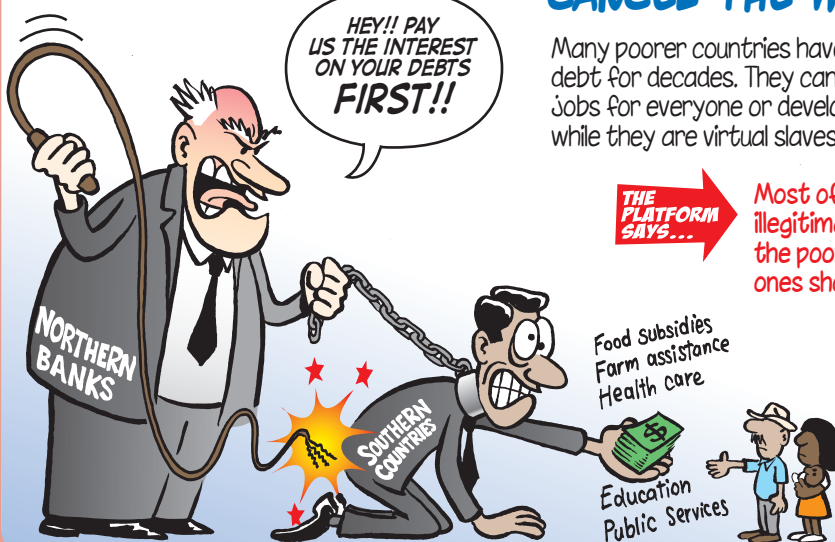
Many poorer countries have been crushed by foreign debt for decades. They can't fight poverty, create good jobs for everyone or develop sustainable economies while they are virtual slaves to foreign banks.

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Most of the foreign debt is illegitimate and unfair. Debts owed by the poorest countries to the richest ones should be cancelled now!

POOR COUNTRIES COULD DO SO MUCH MORE FOR THEIR PEOPLE IF WE COULD ONLY ABOLISH THE DEBT SLAVERY!!

Banks and lending institutions must share in the responsibility for the bad debts they authorized.



SHARE THE WEALTH!!

The income and wealth gap is growing in all of the countries of the Americas, including the rich countries. Right across the hemisphere we see more billionaires and many more poor people. Not only is this unfair, it's unproductive.



Governments must help redistribute society's wealth more fairly by focussing on the needs of workers.

Full employment ➔ Make sure everyone has work.

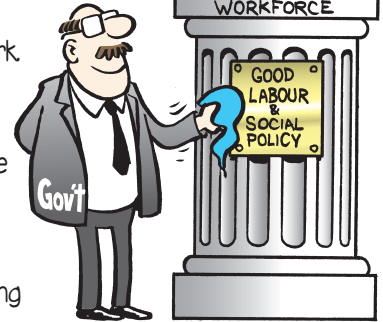
Living wages ➔ Make sure every job pays enough to cover basic needs.

Universal unemployment insurance ➔ Make sure everyone who loses their job has some money to live on while they look for another job.

Public Services ➔ Provide universal health care, education, and other services so poor and working people can benefit too.

Reduction of the work week ➔ Knock a couple of hours off the work week, and you've got enough work to go around for everyone!

Tax reform ➔ Make sure people and corporations are taxed fairly. The richer you are the more you pay, and the poorest shouldn't be taxed at all.

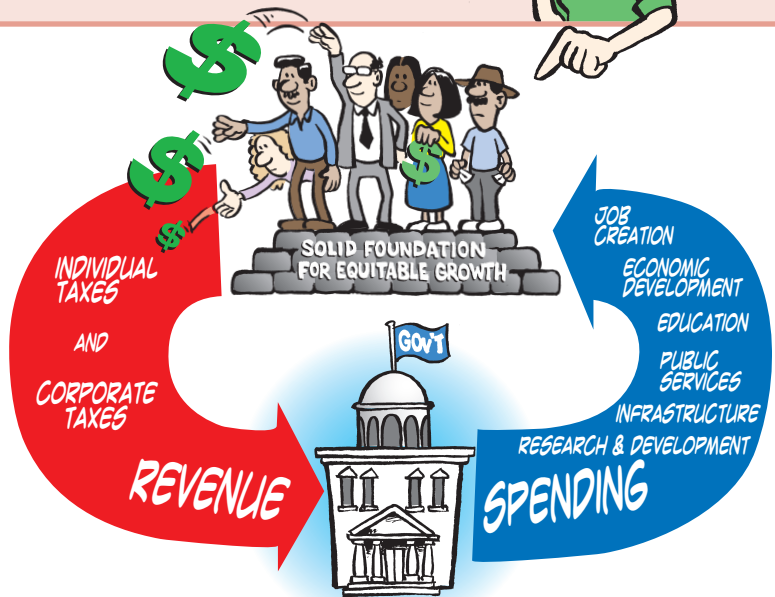


TAX AND SPEND... IT'S NOT A CRIME



Governments must follow good "fiscal policies".

That's where governments use their powers to collect taxes and spend the money on things that help the economy. Taxes should be "progressive". Progressive taxation means the more you earn, the more you pay. Wealthier people can afford it. By using the tax money to pay for things that benefit society at large, governments help spread society's wealth around, and that creates a healthy, productive economy.

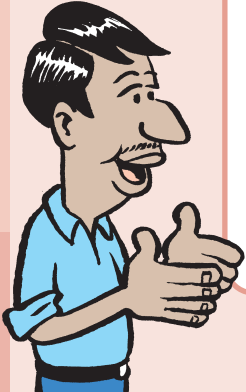


LOCAL IS WHERE IT'S AT!



Governments should provide support and protection for networks of small, local producers and distributors.

Governments can help build links among local producers and distributors who provide the goods and services local people need to survive. When local regions become more self-sufficient, they become less vulnerable to damage from the international profit-making machine of globalization.





SUPPORT FOR FAMILY FARMING

The people who know how to produce our food are disappearing! All over the Americas, family farming is in decline. Small farmers have been pushed off their land by the practices of giant transnational agribusiness corporations, by falling world commodity prices, and by free trade which favours large corporations. As more and more farmers give up, communities all over the hemisphere are becoming less able to meet their own food needs, and more dependent on food imports and big corporations.

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Each country must support its small, independent farmers, and they should do it as part of a larger plan for becoming self-sufficient in food.

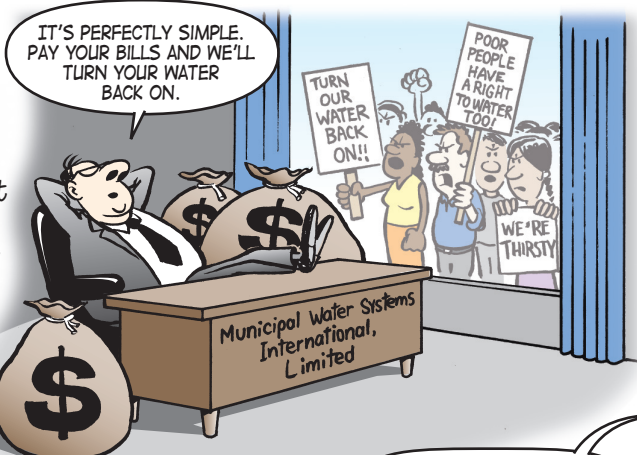


WAIT!! DON'T GO!!
WHAT DO YOU NEED? CASH? LAND? LEGISLATED PROTECTION AGAINST THE VAGARIES OF INTERNATIONAL COMMODITY MARKETS?



PRIVATIZATIONS: HAVE THEY REALLY BEEN WORTH IT?

In recent years governments have privatized everything from phone companies, to city water systems, to hospitals. Sure, privatization has meant big profits for the companies involved. But most citizens have not benefited. Often, the service is poorer while user fees make it too expensive. Poor people end up having less access to vital services.

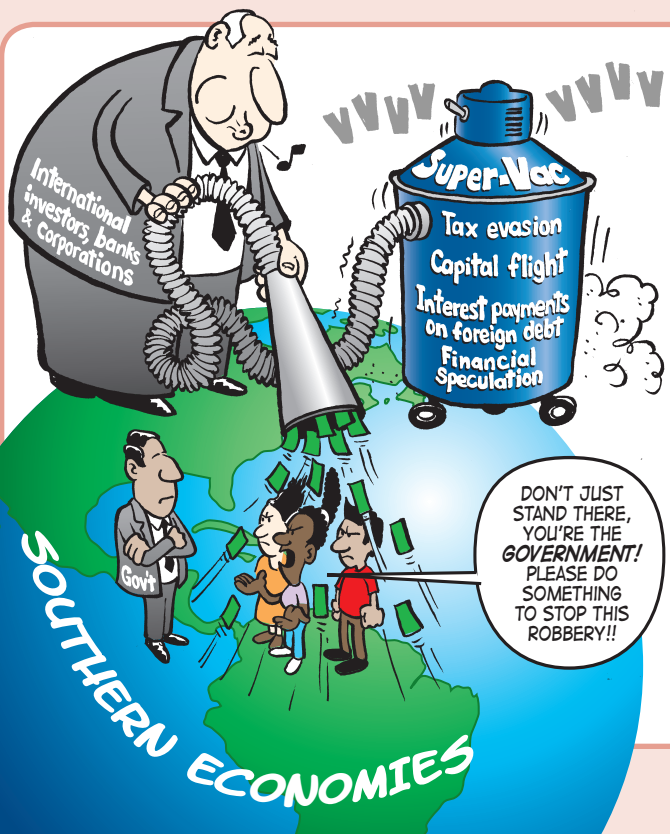


THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Governments and international development banks should take a good hard look at all of the privatizations they've been involved in.

In each case, they should ask: Has it benefited the economy? Has it benefited people? Has it given too much control to profit makers? Was any corruption involved? If there's been no benefit to society, they should fix it.

MAYBE THIS ONE WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA.



GOVERNMENTS... SHOW SOME MUSCLE!

Governments have a responsibility to work for the benefit of citizens. But these days, many have their hands tied by right-wing political and economic forces that only suck money out of poor economies and keep people in poverty.

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Governments need to get control over the market, and find ways to raise funds to meet the needs of citizens.

A good start would be to get corporations and wealthy individuals to stop sneaking their way out of paying taxes and royalties. The Organization of American States can do their bit to help shut down tax havens in the Americas.

GOVERNMENTS NEED TO FIND A WAY TO UNPLUG THAT VACUUM CLEANER!



BIG BUSINESS MUST COOPERATE

Too often companies just do whatever they want, ignoring their impacts on people and communities. They are anti-union, they pollute the water people drink and the air people breathe, they avoid paying taxes, they pay workers poverty wages, and sometimes they just take their profits and leave town! Globalization and free trade have allowed big companies to get away with this behaviour.

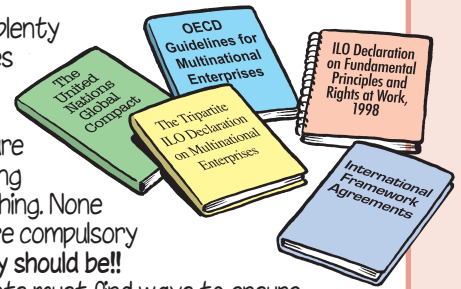


THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Companies must fulfill their social responsibilities, and contribute to sustainable development.

There are plenty of guidelines companies can follow to make sure they're doing the right thing. None of them are compulsory — but they should be!!

Governments must find ways to ensure that business lives up to these "voluntary" international regulations.



HEMISPHERIC FUNDS

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Rich countries and regions have a duty to help the poorest ones, and they can do so through special hemispheric funds.

We need to set up international funds to help regions that are struggling to develop. Some funds can be organized to cover the whole hemisphere, while others can be organized within sub-regions. Funds can be used to help poorer areas build infrastructure, eliminate hunger, provide job training and good public health care, and combat pandemics such as HIV AIDS — just to name a few.



NO MORE CHILD LABOUR!!

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

We need serious government policies to stop all kinds of child exploitation.

Governments can do this by making sure all children have the right to free public education from pre-school on — and by making sure their parents have decent work.



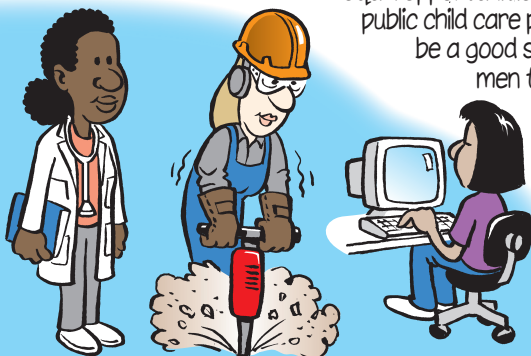
No one should ever feel desperate enough to have to send their children to work!

JOB FOR WOMEN, AND YOUTH

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

We need programs that help women get jobs, and ensure their equality in the workplace and society. We also need policies to help youths get good jobs — but not at the expense of older workers!

It's high time women were guaranteed equality when it comes to work. How do we ensure women have equal opportunities? Creating public child care programs would be a good start. Getting men to share in family responsibilities would be another.



LIFE-LONG LEARNING

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

Governments should guarantee access to free, public education and job training for everyone.

A good public education helps people become informed citizens, and job training helps people get the skills they need to work in a modern economy.



SOCIAL AND LABOUR RIGHTS



ENFORCE THE LAW!

As we have seen, the Platform calls on governments to work in all kinds of ways toward the creation of jobs, so everyone can have work. But, a job without adequate pay or safe working conditions does not make DECENT work.

THE PLATFORM SAYS... Governments must strictly enforce their national labour laws. And, they should work to IMPROVE the laws so workers have all the protections they need.



UNIVERSAL SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

Social security is a human right — that means protection from economic losses due to health problems, old age, or lack of work. Yet millions of people across the Americas are not protected. This is a crisis in our economies. Some programs have been cut, others privatized, while others never existed at all.

THE PLATFORM SAYS... It's government's responsibility to guarantee social and economic protection for all citizens.



UNIONS AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Strong unions promote workers rights — and lead to a healthy democracy.

THE PLATFORM SAYS... Governments must work with labour organizations to come up with ways to strengthen the collective bargaining process.



END DISCRIMINATION!

WHY CAN'T I APPLY FOR THE JOB? LOOK, I'M QUALIFIED!

No one should face discrimination in the workplace — or when they're trying to find work. Shutting people out based on gender, race, sexual orientation, culture or nationality is wrong.

THE PLATFORM SAYS... We need strong anti-discrimination policies, and these should be enforced by special sub-regional boards.

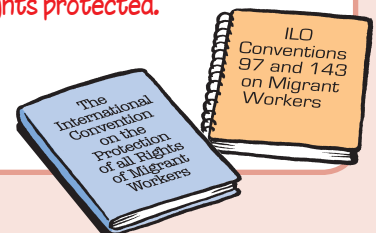


FREEDOM TO MIGRATE — OR NOT!

Tens of millions of poor workers across the Americas are forced to migrate in search of work. They are pushed from their homes or their farms by poverty and desperation, and many end up in the slums surrounding the big cities.

THE PLATFORM SAYS...

All people should be guaranteed the right NOT to have to migrate. But for those who have migrated, they need to have their human rights protected.



MAKING THE PLATFORM A REALITY

WOW!!
THIS PLATFORM
COULD REALLY MAKE
A DIFFERENCE IN THE
LIVES OF MILLIONS
OF PEOPLE IN THE
AMERICAS!!

ABSOLUTELY.
BUT MAKING IT
A REALITY IS
GOING TO BE
HARD WORK.

WE CAN'T
JUST SIT AROUND
AND WAIT FOR
GOVERNMENTS AND
BUSINESS TO PAY
ATTENTION.



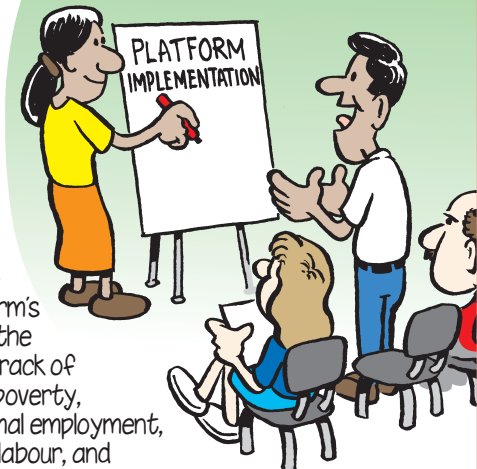
WE NEED STRONG UNIONS

The Platform will have teeth only if it is "owned" by activists at different levels. Use it as a tool to organize working people in both the formal and informal sectors and to get active on public policy issues from job creation to energy, privatization to health care.



A FOLLOW-UP PLAN

Over the coming years, labour organizations will be working with each other and with citizens' groups, regionally, and sub-regionally, on ways to implement the Platform's goals. Groups across the hemisphere will keep track of things like inequality, poverty, unemployment, informal employment, gender equality, child labour, and the Gender Development Index (UNDP). Participants will meet in yearly forums to discuss how the implementation is going, and what more needs to be done.



GET THE PLATFORM

This document is just a brief introduction to Labour's Platform for the Americas. The full Platform document contains much more information, and we encourage everyone to read it. To get copies of the Platform visit one of the following web sites:



For copies in English:

http://www.csa-csi.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=21&Itemid=181&lang=es

For copies in French:

http://congresdutravail.ca/index.php/labours_platform_for?language=fr

For copies in Spanish:

http://www.csa-csi.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=183&Itemid=181&lang=es

For copies in Portuguese:

http://www.csa-csi.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=66&Itemid=181&lang=es

Labour's Platform for the Americas is a policy proposal developed by the union movement of the hemisphere with representatives from the following organizations:

- Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) • www.csa-csi.org
- Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) • www.clc-ctc.ca
- Southern Cone Union Coordination (CCSCS) • www.ccscs.org
- Andean Labour Consultative Council (CCLA) • www.ccla.org.pe
- Central America and Caribbean Union Coordination (CCSCAC)
- Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL)
- Central labour bodies of Mexico and the United States
- With the support of the Global Policy Network (GPN) • www.gpn.org

WE CAN
BRING SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC JUSTICE
TO ALL OF THE
AMERICAS!!



Designed, written and illustrated by Tony Biddle.

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