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Enero 21 , 2010

## Letter from independent union leaders in Cuba to their American colleagues

Ciudad de La Habana.  
January 21, 2010

Compañeros  
Dena Briscoe  
Carl Gentile  
William Preston

Dear friends,

We were extremely surprised to read your statements published by the official newspaper *Trabajadores* on January 17, 2010, after completing your visit to Cuba.

We have no reason to trust what was published by the official Cuban Workers Confederation (CTC) newspaper, but since we haven't seen any rebuttal from you, we have to assume you agree with it.

We, the signatories, representatives of the independent labor movement in Cuba, want nothing less than what the organized workers in the US have obtained: freedom of association, autonomy of labor organizations from any parties or government and the respect of human and worker rights.

To visit Cuba with an agenda prepared by the Communist Party and the official CTC, with the purpose of assessing the current situation of the people on the island, is like trying to learn about the living conditions of Cuban political prisoners by only interviewing the Director of Prisons under the Ministry of the Interior.

To be a victim of the old and worn subterfuge upon which all ills are caused by "imperialism" and that the gaps and lacks in education, nutrition and health care are due to the heinous intentions of exogenous forces is a naive blunder.

We would like not know if you had the opportunity of meeting with a farmer, a professional, or an artist, without the presence of a member of the official CTC.

On the other hand, have you asked yourselves how much "sacrifice" the Cuban people have been subjected to in order for the government to maintain propaganda instruments such as the School of Medicine, the Lazaro Peña trade union school, or the Nico Lopez College of the Communist Party, whose primary goals are ideological and political rather than cooperation with other nations as they claim?

We ask ourselves the following: What can the CTC have in common with the US labor movement? Would the US labor movement accept to be an extension of the government or political parties to discipline and repress workers? Would you accept it if Sweeney in the past or now Trumka were appointed by George W. Bush or Barack Obama? We are sure the answer is no.

To state that Cuba has successfully "eliminated hunger, unemployment and illiteracy" after only receiving information from the Cuban bureaucrats, borders on ignorance.

Haven't you asked yourselves why the dissident movement cannot develop? Why are workers who want to organize outside of the official structure imposed by the government being sent to prison, threatened and harassed –violating all conventions of the ILO? Why is there no right to strike? Why do independent unionists remain in prison? Why are artists being incarcerated? Do you think that all political prisoners and the almost 2 million Cubans living in exile are traitors or agents of imperialism? And one last question: Why didn't you try to meet with somebody outside of official circles?

Just as the truth of the United States is not seen from the White House, the Capitol and its

surrounding areas, the truth about Cuba is not seen at the headquarters of the Communist Party, the CTC and all the propaganda showcase institutions you stated as having visited.

The truth is that the health care system is in shambles, the education is politicized and deficient, workers are subjected to appalling conditions and miserable wages. Whoever does not follow the guidelines of the party (including the CTC) cannot grow professionally or academically, individually or collectively.

It is true that the "embargo" makes economic trade, investments and the free flow of capital and US tourism difficult, but this is not the main cause for the problems we have in our country. The guilty parties are those inept leaders and their anti-democratic leadership methods. Is it them whom have imposed an economic system with deformed structures and an excess in centralization.

The embargo did not generate the lack of productivity and efficiency in our economy. Those responsible are the capricious old leaders who after 51 years in power continue blaming our powerful northern neighbor.

Cubans do not need guilty parties; we need solutions and radical changes.

We are sure that the majority of the delegation made the trip in good faith and this is why we would like to invite you to see the true Cuba, where we, the signatories of this letter, suffer and truly deserve the solidarity of the well respected and admired US labor movement.

We remain at your entire disposal,

***Confederación de Trabajadores Independientes de Cuba***

Carmelo Díaz Fernández  
Minaldo Ramos Salgado

***Confederación Obrera Nacional Independiente de Cuba***

María Elena Mir Marrero  
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***Centro de Capacitación Laboral y Sindical:***

Víctor Manuel Domínguez García

***Agencia Sindical de Prensa***

Reinaldo Cosano Alén

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