

Páginas Sindicales

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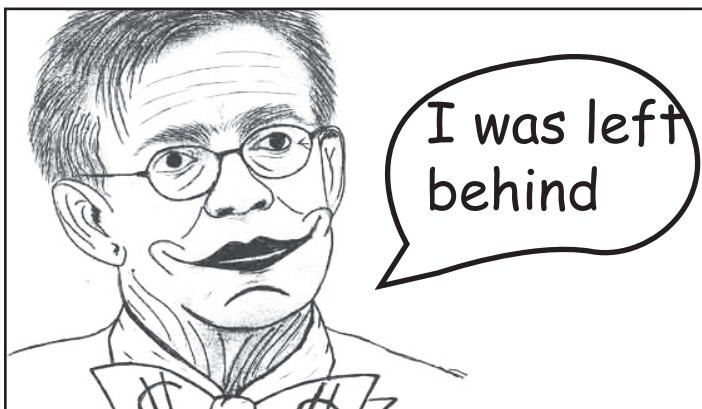
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Union Labor Education Secretary

November, 2008

Aragunde never again

Teachers in Puerto Rico are overjoyed. Aragunde is about to leave and will never return because the anti-union governor Anibal Acevedo Vila was defeated in the general election. Both, Aragunde and Acevedo Vila, were decertified by the Puertorrican people.

We do not have the slightest hint of doubt that the administrative chaos, the anti-worker agenda and the corruption in the Department of Education



were among the issues that contributed to the defeat of the incumbent political party. During the last two year the FMPR had been asking governor Anibal Acevedo Vila to oust the Secretary of Education, Rafael Aragunde, and to bring a new Secretary that could straighten the course of the Department of Education. Obviously, the governor ignored our petition. Even worse, he supported his anti-worker agenda.

Teachers will not forget the arrogance, impunity and the arbitrary abusive practices of Rafael Aragunde and his administrative clique. We will not forgive the arbitrary suspension of teachers, particularly the brave brothers in Utuado, or the elimination of acquired rights. Neither will we forget the open and

growing corruption that benefited his partners and allies, nor the blatant violation of laws and bylaws. We will keep in mind that the imposition of the computerized grading system and the biometric time keeping attendance were brought just to pay millions of dollars to private companies. It is impossible to forget that Aragunde never pretended to negotiate with the FMPR in good faith but plotted a conspiracy to decertify our Union. My goodness! It is forbidden to forget.

Aragunde acted as the governor's landlord in order to destroy our union and privatize public education. Thanks to the teachers strike and its aggressive struggle they failed on their objective. At the end of October we strongly defeated his boss union (SPM affiliated to the teachers association). On November the 4th the people voted overwhelmingly to turn over the government through a total and definite defeat. Despite the damage caused to public education and the abuse committed against all workers, these two common criminals are leaving office without anything done and rejected almost unanimously by teachers and the people. The History waste basket has a very special place reserved for both of them.

Do you remember when governor Acevedo said: "what strike?" Now it's time for us to say: "What governor?" while Federación de Maestros turns out to be the only means of defense for the teachers, the binomial Aragunde-Anibal are preparing their suitcases shamefully.

Picture yourself upon that disgusting past, new coming governor Luis Fortuño. Get ready to listen to everybody which will help you do things right by not committing the same mistakes as your predecessor. Federación de Maestros keeps up with its struggle in defense of our rights and towards a high quality education for our students. No doubt about it .



We are proud of the result of this election and we have renewed strength to continue our struggle towards excellence in public education and aiming towards exclusive representation

“¿Which union is the only choice on the ballot, steal votes and still manages to loose ?

The SPM-ASOMA-SEIU bosses union.”

The teachers of Puerto Rico, once more, delivered a lesson in respect, trouncing the SPM/ASOMA Bosses Union and their cronies, the dues-hungry Service Employees International Union (SEIU), in the tainted referendum organized by the Commission of Labor Relations and the government-boss. Even though the numbers speak for themselves--**18,125** NO votes, **14,675** YES votes—they do not adequately reflect the significance of the victory of the Teachers Federation of Puerto Rico (FMPR) and the Puerto Rican teachers, under the most adverse conditions. The government-boss in collusion with the Association of Teachers of Puerto Rico (ASOMA—the association consisting historically of principals, directors and administrators), through the Commission of Labor Relations, designed and organized the



Mock burial of the SPM-ASOMA-SEIU representing its defeat on October the 29th

“Self-respect and pride triumphed over a campaign of lies”

referendum in order to assure the victory of the ASOMA/SEIU Affiliate: SPM. Every maneuver possible was implemented to ensure SPM would run without any competitors Election logistics were designed to accommodate the needs of SPM/ASOMA, choosing voting centers (schools) where they had support SPM colluded with the Appellate Court and the Colonial Supreme Court to skew the interpretation of Law 45 in such a manner that would exclude FMPR from the ballot. FMPR was denied observer status during the election and access to the voting lists, leaving the entire process in the hands of the SPM and the Commission of Labor Relations

Thus, the same entities that decertified FMPR also controlled the vote, a transparent conflict of interest.

Recognizing that FMPR could not be defeated in a fair election, the bourgeois state utilized all of its resources to destroy the union. Such measures, fascistic in nature, reflected the government’s desperation as well as its utter lack of respect and animosity towards the working class of Puerto Rico. Thus, the victory of the NO vote indicates a resounding defeat of the anti-worker and corrupt government of Anibal Acevedo Vilá, as well as his hand-picked union. In an unprecedented example of trade union dignity, thousands of teachers refused to be seduced by SEIU’s disgraceful efforts to buy their votes with trinkets and lunch coolers--an indication of their own personal growth and political sophistication. Self-respect and pride triumphed over a campaign of lies in which SPM/SEIU spent millions of dollars on false propaganda in newspapers, radio and television and in the hiring of over 500 functionaries for

the campaign. In effect, the triumph of the NO vote signifies a decisive and stinging defeat to the strategic holy alliance among business unions, employer unions and growth-at-all-costs unions within SEIU/Change to Win and the AFL-CIO. SEIU, under the leadership of Dennis Hickey, Roberto Pagán and Juan Eliza, made a

“The NO vote also reflects that teachers identify FMPR as their instrument of struggle”

poor business deal: they threw away \$20 million invested in the SPM campaign and in payments to Governor Acevedo Vila--who actually handed them exclusive representation of the teachers on a silver platter. Teachers in Puerto Rico confirmed, as they did previously with the AFT, that they reject any kind of tutelage as manifested by the behaviors inherent in colonial trade unionism. The NO vote also reflects that teachers identify FMPR as their instrument of struggle—a role it has played for over 42 years. As there was no money for an expensive campaign, our union ran on its track record of years of militancy in defense of teachers and students, its democratic and inclusive structure and its coherent analysis. School delegates, activists and supporters were able to organize on FMPR’s history of refusing to sell out or give up. The spirit of FMPR is deeply imbedded in the hearts and minds of teachers who believe in struggle. Therefore, the triumph of the NO vote is also a victory of classist, democratic and combative trade unionism.

Educational workers identify with the fabric of FMPR’s democratic organization, commitment of solidarity and its leaders who, without privilege, earning the same salaries as their members,

represent their interests with strength and pride. As opposed to Aida Diaz (president of both ASOMA and SPM, its offspring), FMPR leadership has credibility amongst teachers and throughout the island. The NO vote succeeded in silencing the paid news analysts and commentators who forecasted the death of FMPR. What are these pro-government commentators and analysts saying now? It is important to note the extraordinary efforts of FMPR’s entire organization. The voluntary work of thousands of teachers, local union leadership, union functionaries and executive committee members was a key element in the FMPR triumph. Our exhilarating victory and related experiences will serve to enhance the forces necessary to continue and develop our campaigns. The net effect of this vote is to confirm the effectiveness of FMPR’s strategy--including the teachers’ strike--to effectively represent and defend teachers, to stop privatization and to obtain



Stewards and teachers discuss strategies during the Summer Union Workshops in San Juan.

respect. The FMPR is a bonafide organization with over 11,000 members who pay union dues voluntarily. The defeat of SPM opens a new level of struggle to regain exclusive representation. We are armed to the teeth with the support of our teachers which would indicate that sooner, rather than later, the FMPR will achieve this objective.

THERE IS NO SUCCESS WITHOUT STRUGGLE, NO STRUGGLE WITHOUT SACRIFICE!



IRREGULAR ACTIONS THAT AFFECTED THE ELECTION RESULTS AGAINST FMPR

- Before the start of the voting process the total number of teachers with the right to vote was 36,000; when the process ended this number grew to 40,363. Where did those 4,000 additional voters come from?
- The FMPR had no observers in the voting centers. SPM, the boss and the Commission of Labor Relations maintained complete control.
- In many district the Commission functionaries left the voting polls, leaving the SPM observers alone with the ballots to do as they pleased.
- The SPM coordinators came and went from the voting polls at will.
- The SPM "observers" verified the lists, handed out the ballots and were able to arbitrarily and capriciously reject voters—for example, those without identification.
- The ballots were not initialed, enabling their substitution or reproduction without detection.
- In past union elections, voters were tinged with ink on their index finger upon entering the voting center; this did not occur this time. Anyone would have gone to vote in various districts on the same day.
- Most SPM voters were allowed to vote without ID while FMPR voters where denied.
- Amongst the functionaries of the Commission of Labor Relations were the lawyers who presented the case for the decertification of the FMPR and who denied the FMPR the right to observe the NO vote. This obvious conflict of interest created a compelling

incentive for these forces to ignore any voting irregularities.

- In the area of San Juan and Carolina, the voting was suspended on Wednesday, October 9th due to the possible arrival of a hurricane. Neither the Commission nor the Department of Education announced that voting would resume the following Monday, disenfranchising over 1,200 teachers.

It is likely that the NO vote won with an 8,000 vote margin, as even conservative estimates indicate that between 3,500 and 4,000 votes were stolen, particularly due to the emptying of lists in many voting centers.

COMISIÓN DE RELACIONES DEL TRABAJO DEL SERVICIO PÚBLICO CÓMPUTOS DE LOS RESULTADOS DE LA ELECCIÓN	
Patrono :	<u>Departamento de Educación</u>
Caso Núm.:	<u>PR-06-007</u> Fecha del Cómputo Electoral: <u>23 de octubre de 2008</u>
El agente de la Comisión que suscribe, certifica que los resultados de los cómputos de los votos emitidos en la elección celebrada en el caso de epígrafe son los siguientes:	
1. Número aproximado de votantes elegibles.....	<u>40,363</u>
2. Número de votos depositados en blanco o votos nulos	<u>354</u>
3. Votos a favor de <u>SINDICATO PUERTORRIQUEÑO DE MAESTROS</u>	<u>14,075</u>
4. Votos a favor de <u>***N/A**</u>	<u>—</u>
5. Votos a favor de <u>*** N/A ****</u>	<u>—</u>
6. Votos en contra de la(s) organización(es) obrera(s) participante(s).....	<u>18,123</u>
7. Total de votos contados (Suma de 3, 4, 5 y 6).....	<u>33,150</u>
8. Número de votos recusados	<u>666</u>
9. Total de votos contados más los votos recusados (Suma de 7 y 8)	<u>33,818</u>
10. Los votos recusados <u>(no son)</u> (son) suficientes en número para afectar los resultados de la elección.	
11. Una mayoría de los empleados que participaron en la elección escogieron estar representados para propósitos de negociación colectiva por:	
CERTIFICACIÓN: Que los que suscriben actuaron como observadores autorizados en el conteo y los cómputos de las papeletas arriba indicado, que en el conteo y los cómputos se hicieron de una manera exacta, que se protegió la secrecividad de los votos y que los resultados fueron como se indican. Reconocemos haber recibido copia de esta hoja de Cómputos de Papeletas.	
Por: <u>DEPARTAMENTO DE EDUCACIÓN</u> Patrono	Por: <u>SINDICATO PUERTORRIQUEÑO DE MAESTROS</u> Organización Obrera / Parte
<u>Vladimir Román Rosario</u> (Nombre y apellidos en letra de molde)	<u>Jeanette Cruz Bonilla</u> (Nombre y apellidos en letra de molde)