



Elections in Brazil and the challenges of Brazilian workers

Sixth world economy and largest country in Latin America, with a GDP of US\$ 2.3 trillion and a population of 203 million people, Brazil elected, in October, the fourth left-wing federal government in a row, an unprecedented event in Brazilian history.

The re-election of President Dilma Rousseff will continue the popular and democratic project that in the last 12 years has put in place an economic and social development policy, with income distribution, which has claimed more than 40 million Brazilians out of poverty. This policy has also fostered gains in the national minimum wage which had 72% of real increase and economic gains for the vast majority of workers. It has generated more than 20 million jobs (bringing unemployment to a historical low of 4.7%) and has implemented a number of major programs of social inclusion in education, health and housing.

It was the fiercest and most difficult electoral dispute since 2002, when the Workers' Party (PT)

came to power with Lula (Luis Inacio Lula da Silva): 51.64% in the second round against 48.36% of the conservative Aécio Neves (PSDB).

This victory has a key and strategic importance because it takes place in an extremely difficult context in which the conservative and neo-liberal forces, led by the financial markets have been on the political offensive around the world and took a huge effort to wipe the left off the power in Brazil, which included the most incredible open engagement of the mainstream media ever, including foreign means of communication.

The right-wing campaign sought to mobilize a deep feeling of class hatred, racism, homophobia and all kinds of prejudice against the left, the socially excluded citizens and other minorities – just like what makes the Tea Party in the United States and the extreme right in Europe.

This extreme radicalization, never seen in a presidential election since the re-democratization of Brazil, nevertheless, allowed the Brazilian society to identify more clearly the two projects that were in dispute: on the one hand, the continuity of social development policies to generate employment and income distribution, or, on the other hand, the coming back of neoliberal policies of fiscal adjustment, privatization and minimum state policies, unemployment and attacks to workers' rights.

To tackle the risk of a huge step backwards, left forces and the center-left got together, and led by the union movement and the social movements, took the streets and brought about one of the largest mass mobilization events of recent times, which included the decisive participation of youth.

Impacts on Latin America

With the re-election of Dilma Rousseff and the victory of Tabaré Vazquez of "Frente Ampla" in November, in Uruguay, the left and the center-left consolidated a decade and a half of political hegemony in a strategic portion of South America, which also includes Cristina Kirchner in Argentina, Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Michele Bachelet in Chile and Evo Morales in Bolivia.

The rise of these leftist forces broke with the neoliberal model that has dominated the continent in the 1990s, leading these governments to implement development policies that took tens of millions of people out of poverty (only in Brazil, it meant more than 40 million). These new forces favored workers' struggles and real gains in wages, contributing to an improvement in income distribution that has never

taken place before in the region.

This picture has strengthened Mercosur (Common South American Market that includes Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Venezuela) and the creation of the South American Union of Nations (UNASUR), a 12-nation bloc that aims to strengthen trade, cultural, political and social relations, as an alternative to US imperialism, and seeks a sovereign insertion in world geopolitics.

The international recognition achieved by Brazil during these democratic and popular governments led by PT also made the country one of the protagonists in the creation of the BRICs, the bloc that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, which has just created a new Development Bank, an alternative for developing countries to the World Bank and the IMF.



Keep mobilization to advance

The conservative and neoliberal forces, despite the defeat at the polls, keep the attacks in line with the mainstream media, to impose their agenda. And it has been gathering ammunition to try to defeat the new elected government.

It is clear for the trade union movement that we must keep mobilization to prevent setbacks and to keep advancing the achievements of workers and social inclusion.

The union federations and the progressive forces put on their agenda the struggle for the necessary reforms for deepening democracy in Brazil, which are urgent and paramount: the political reform and the democratization of the media.

About 500 representative organizations across the country are campaigning for an exclusive constitutional elected body to approve a political reform, which aims,

in first place, to put an end to private/business financing of election campaigns.

Similarly, the trade union movement and dozens of other organizations gathered in the National Forum for Democratization of Communication (FNDC) are campaigning to regulate the articles of the 1988 Constitution that prevents monopoly or oligopoly of the mass media and guarantees plurality and diversity of ideas and opinions in the media.

