

The Mexico Labour Tour of 1997 was one of the most eye-opening experiences of my life. The face-to-face encounters with oppressed workers and marginalized peoples really taught me what free trade is all about. Perhaps most importantly, I learned a great deal about working for change from the Mexican activists whose have incredible organizing strategies.

Lorraine Swift - CUPE

To understand the scale of the inequities created by economic globalization, nothing replaces direct contact with workers in other countries. Direct contact with those who struggle against this kind of oppression is also a tremendous source of inspiration and ideas for our own struggle.

Colin MacKenzie - CUPW



Zedillo/USAID/Photo: In Mexico City's main square

Participants are required to attend a 1 day orientation prior to departure. This orientation would combine analysis of the issues along with practical group and individual preparation.

This is not a sight seeing tour. Participants can expect very little time on their own although efforts will be made to include exposure to historical and cultural activities where possible.

Upon their return, participants are expected to work on educational and solidarity activities to strengthen their ties with workers from the South.

When:

Departure date is February 17, 2003. It is important that the Task Force return in time to do educational work in their unions and to prepare for the AFL Convention.

Cost:

The cost per person is \$3,000 per participant. This includes all airmfares, internationally and within Mexico, ground travel in Mexico, professional translation, food, accomodation and organizing costs of host organizations in Mexico and Canada.

We Want You!

The Task force is limited to 10 persons. A union should consider the following selection criteria when selecting participants:

- § Active in his/her own union on international solidarity issues.
- § Ability to adapt to challenges of low-budget travel and work in another language.
- § Ability to work as part of a group.
- § Willingness and ability to share experiences with others upon return.
- § Gender balance.

Registration Deadline is December 6th, 2002

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Alberta Trade Union Task Force To Mexico



February 17-28, 2003

Organized by:

AFL Federation of Labour
 Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee

 **Change for Children**

 **Labour World**

Frente autentico del Trabajo



Alberta Trade Union Task Force To Mexico

Why:

Almost 10 years ago Canadian trade unionists fought alongside social partners to resist the impending North American Free Trade Agreement. Job loss and loss of sovereignty were accurately predicted as consequences of NAFTA, not only for Canadians but for Mexicans as well.

Alberta unionists established links with our counterparts in Mexico, including the FAT (Authentic Workers' Front) and REMALC (Mexican Action Network in Opposition of Free Trade). Fact finding tours to Mexico and exchanges of activists with Mexican organizations brought us a clearer understanding of globalization and stronger opposition to it. These activities were organized by the Labour World Program in conjunction with the AFL and other progressive labour organizations.

Since that time much has happened. Maquiladora's have spread throughout the Mexican countryside, bringing insecure factory jobs and demolishing local industries. Local agriculture based on the constitutionally-guaranteed common lands called ejidos has been shoved aside by transnational agri-business on those same lands, sold to the highest bidder.

Indigenous people demonstrating against NAFTA in Mexico City.



What Can We Do Now?

It is time to renew and strengthen the building of solidarity in the Americas. The struggle against globalization must include clear analysis of the changes since NAFTA began, a look at how globalization and its neo-liberal policies are concretely spreading throughout the Americas. Our agenda of solidarity must include a renewal of the links between Alberta labour and progressive Mexican organizations.



Children climbing the fences separating the US-Mexican border.

The Task Force to Mexico:

Face to face communication is one of the most effective educational and mobilization tools that we have as unionists. When we want to organize at the shop floor level we speak to our sisters and brothers one on one. We have found that this principle applies internationally as well.

The effect of face to face exposure tours on activists is undeniable. Activists who have returned from short working tours in other countries have become the backbone of educational and organizing efforts within Alberta. Their impressions and energy are infectious to others they come in contact with. They spoke passionately and articulately at hundreds of union and community meetings. They provide informed counterpoints to the corporate propaganda of the globalization zealots. They establish working relationships with our counterparts in other countries. Much of the international solidarity work that we now come to see as a 'normal' part of union life in Alberta was built on a foundation of such tours.

We have come to have a clearer understanding that international solidarity is not an act of charity but of mutual support between those working for the same objectives. The connections between our lives and those of Mexican workers is even more obvious when we look at the thousands of Mexican workers toiling in Canada as migrant farm and packing plant labour.



Children climbing the fences separating the US-Mexican border.

What:

A 12 day working task force to Mexico. This task force would visit workplaces, meet with union and community activists. It would travel to 2 different regions of Mexico, the capital city as well as the southern regions which are poised to be affected by the latest plan for massive sweatshop factory installations which span from southern Mexico, encompassing all of Central America as far as Panama.



Traditional weaving of the indigenous women of southern Mexico.