

Thanks to these practices and despite the difficulties resulting from the effect of high interests at stake in the Haitian social formation, we have been able to establish many unions and committees within factories, hotels, stores or small workshops, as well as associations of small craftsmen and teachers in urban zones and farmer and agricultural workers organizations in rural areas.

This work of organization also gives us the opportunity to address the young, sons and daughters of workers with whom we are in touch. We are engaged in the construction of a youth movement determined by the development of their struggles to satisfy their demands. At the same time, we address their parents and teachers. This has allowed us to build a coalition between workers' organizations, students' organizations and teachers' organizations addressing the questions of education and teaching from the viewpoint of the working class and workers in general.

Our work with youth is centered around three major axes: their concrete struggles, development of skills and instructive leisure. In the framework of some of these activities, these workers' sons and daughters are learning the first notions of data processing and electricity, reading and writing... according to their individual levels of capacity. This development walks hand in hand with the setting up of a library including school books and references and the publication of a youth newspaper, amongst others.

Batay Ouvriye, consequently, articulates workplace struggles with those generally concerning the changes necessary in workers' daily lives, against the various shapes of oppression that mark their existences.

**FORWARD THE STRUGGLE AND INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKING CLASS!  
FORWARD THE POPULAR MASSES' STRUGGLES, WITH THE WORKERS AS CENTER POST AND UNDER THE WORKING-CLASS' DIRECTION!**

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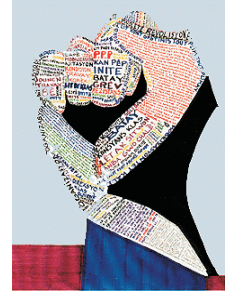
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# BATAY OUVRIYE

(WORKERS' STRUGGLE)

Batay Ouvriye is an organization regrouping labor unions, workers' associations and the popular masses in general, as well as militants. All endeavor in Haiti towards the construction of an independent labor movement, combative and democratic, and organize workers and unemployed, and all those of the popular masses for the defense of their rights. Opposed to class collaboration with the exploiters and their domination apparatus - the State -, Batay Ouvriye has steadfastly taken side with the dominated and exploited classes of this country and around the world by participating in their tasks of organization and struggle.



In the labor domain, the organization sees itself as an alternative to the traditional bureaucratic union movement, representative in Haiti of the ruling classes amongst the exploited masses. Not only do we take the initiative of developing struggles based on their demands, but we also motivate workers to fight and organize to defend their own interests.

Batay Ouvriye also establishes links between these specific struggles and the more general ones of the people. In this sense, we take part in all forms of popular democratic struggles, encouraging in this the participation of all workers.

Batay Ouvriye has engaged in struggles against large multinationals (Disney, Cointreau, Pepsi Cola...) exploiting working people around the world. In these struggles, we have been supported by various organizations in solidarity throughout the world with workers in general and those of Haitian workers in particular.

**B**atay Ouvriye representatives, in complete independence, participate in various encounters organized in protest against the violations and abuses endured by workers around the world. Recently, for example, we contributed to:

- The 15th World Trade Union Congress (WFTU) in the Havana (Dec. 2005 - observer);
- The ACILS-organized regional encounter of textile industry workers (Antigua, Guatemala, Nov. 2005);
- Réseau-Solidarité / Peuples Solidaires (France) awareness workshops, 2000-2005
- Various Social Forums (Puerto Alegre - 2002; London - 2004; Boston - 2004; Ecuador - 2004);
- The hemispheric organization of textile industry workers in export free trade zones in the Dominican Republic;
- Several meetings with the English union sector in 2004;
- Debates on organizational strategies in free trade zones in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean;
- In Guatemala, on the question of gender in the organization of workers in international subcontracting industries;
- In Belgium, at the Peoples' Tribunal against various multinational companies such as Adidas, Disney, Levi Strauss, C&A and H&M;
- In the United States, at the conference on "Independant Monitoring" incriminating Disney, Nike, Walmart, Keymart;
- And in various information tours on the struggle against Disney, Cointreau and others...

For we are aware that in the present context of world capitalist development, the struggles of Haitian workers cannot be led outside of all those being led in other countries. We have conveyed and will continue to convey our militant support to all demands in defense of union rights and the democratic rights of peoples.

In Haiti, Batay Ouvriye takes part in spreading information and training workers through talks, debates, seminars and union training workshops, the preparing and distribution of material on workers' rights, international labor conventions and appropriate struggle strategies to be able to counter exploitative local and foreign bosses.

Our talks and leaflets address:

- 1) **The right to unionize** and collectively bargain;
- 2) **Minimum wage adjustment** (while insisting on workers' rights for a salary taking into account the cost of living and the continuous devaluation of the gourde, the Haitian national currency);
- 3) **Production quotas progressive diminishment and eventual elimination** in assembly factories;



*"That country, we don't want it!"*

- 4) **Improvement of work conditions** and respect for workers' persons;
- 5) **Thwarting bosses' impunity** in the work arena and the complicity they enjoy at the Ministry of the Social Affaires or the Work Tribunal;
- 6) **Ending sexual harassment;**
- 7) **Ending generalized despotism in the work arena;**
- 8) **Ending lay-offs, illegal suspensions and all shapes of arbitrary** to which workers are subjected;
- 9) **Awareness of the need for a new labor legislation** and the absence of social security and devious practices in state institutions as the ONA (National Pension Office, for retirees);
- 10) **Necessary reforms to be held within the Social Affairs Ministry**, but also our support to civil servants in their struggle against the application of structural adjustments program imposed by international financial institutions to our country;

- 11) **Fighting police repression in the workplace** as well as that carried out by elected locals such the C.A.S.E.C.s. (against peasant organizations members) and employees of the Ministry of Social Affairs' Labor Bureau;
- 12) **Challenging economic and political measures which hinder real and sustained development** of our natural and human resources;
- 13) **The need for different policies**, capable of putting the workers' interests and those of the popular masses in the forefront.

**B**atay Ouvriye tackles all of these points by distributing leaflets, booklets and bulletins; organizing press conferences, sending press releases; distributing and pasting posters in the industrial zones and districts where workers live... We also picket factories and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor to demand their attention to these important questions. Work stoppages, strikes of all sorts, factory occupations are some of our tools of struggle in highly antagonistic struggles. Particularly important are our constant worker and community meetings in which committees develop the **platforms of struggle** the groups are then prepared to wage. The **May First Batay Ouvriye Union Federation** (ESPM-BO) emerged from this movement and was formally established in 1999, regrouping the main unions and committees involved in these battles.

Batay Ouvriye's public standpoints alarm the ruling classes. Both the heads of the export-oriented firms and the big landowners in the countryside are reacting in the same way. They are using their economic and political power to thwart the workers efforts to fight for their rights. While freedom of association, the right to work in decent conditions and to strike is legally provided to all workers, in reality few enjoy such rights whether employed in the industrial centers of the capital or the rural areas. We are in a country where the respect for the law is manifestly lacking.

So, we wage a permanent struggle, both punctual and global, for a real change in our work and living conditions as workers in several different departments, in the countryside and the cities, on problems appearing in our daily lives. In the countryside, particularly, we fight for a raise in the wage-laborers' salaries, their right to organize, the respect of women-workers' rights, especially those having family responsibilities.