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And the
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The WTO and the Devastating Impacts of the Sugarcane Industry in Brazil



“ The expansion of the cane industry has brought serious consequences to the country, such as violations of workers’ rights and environmental devastation.”

Brazil is the world’s largest exporter of sugar. In 2004, the country exported 15.7 million tons of the product. According to estimates by the exporters, the demand will likely grow by 3 million tons per year. The sugarcane industry was the largest growing sector of agribusiness in 2005. In comparison to the production of soy (one of the principal agricultural products exported by Brazil), which grew 1.3%, the production of derivatives of sugarcane grew 26.7% this year. This tendency of growth will most likely continue,

starting with the Brazilian government's negotiations within the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The production of alcohol should also rise.

Brazil is currently the largest producer, responsible for 45% of the world market. In 2004, Brazil exported 2.6 billions of liters of the product. The export volume may increase substantially as soon as Japan ratifies the Kyoto Protocol, which calls for the reduction of pollutant gas emissions. Japan could begin to use a mixture of 3% anhydrate alcohol in gasoline, which could represent an increase of close to 1.8 billion liters per year in Brazilian exports.

The regions of the country that, historically, have cultivated sugarcane

in large scale have been the Northeast and the state of São Paulo. More recently, the industry has expanded to the north of the state of Rio de Janeiro, to Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, north of Paraná, and the states of the Midwest.

The sugarcane industry began to gain a larger dimension in Brazil with the international crisis of the 70s, when there was a sharp drop in the petroleum market and a larger impulse in the sugarcane sector, beginning with the creation of Proálcool (Pro-Alcohol). From 1972 to 1995, the Brazilian government gave incentives to increase the area of plantations of sugarcane and to the structuring of the sugar-alcohol complex, with large

subsidies and different forms of incentives. The Institute of Sugar and Alcohol, for example, was responsible for all the commercialization and export of the product. It subsidized businesses, gave incentives to the "modernization" of the sector, rationed out fertile lands, means of transport, energy, infrastructure, investments, etc.

"The sugarcane complex expanded under the protection of the State. Agrarian property had a central role in this process, which was linked to the official policies of access to credit and to the

benefits of State subvention", affirms researcher Bruno Ribeiro.

The expansion of the sugarcane industry has brought serious consequences, such as violations of workers' rights and environmental devastation. The agricultural model based on monoculture for export contradicts the proposals to guarantee food sovereignty and agrarian reform. The expansion of this crop in agricultural frontier areas generates violence against indigenous peoples and small farmers.

The WTO and the Expansion of Sugarcane Monoculture



“ Since its creation in 1995, the principal role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been to expand its regulatory.”

The monoculture of sugarcane is expanding due to the government's proposal to negotiate market access within the World Trade Organization (WTO). The main goal of this policy is to generate commercial advantages for the agricultural sector based on export-oriented monocultures. One of the principal sectors interested in this process is the sugarcane industry, known historically for promoting the concentration of lands, the violation of workers' rights and environmental devastation.

Since its creation in 1995, the principal role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been to expand its regulatory power. The increasing growth of this sector could make agrarian reform impossible in many regions of the country.

Since its creation in 1995, the principal role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been to expand its regulatory power in 147 countries, which means the ability to exercise large influence over the daily lives of millions of people.

Despite spreading a "free market" ideology, the WTO has a complex structure of rules used in defense of the large corporations. The reach of the agreements contained in the WTO goes much farther than just themes

related to international trade.

Because of this, it is fundamental for social movements to monitor the current stage of negotiations in preparation for the 6th WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, in December of 2005. One of the principal proposals of the agro-exporting countries of the South (like Brazil) is to negotiate commercial benefits for the agribusiness sector in exchange for the opening of our markets to strategic sectors such as services and industrial products.

Brazil is the world's largest producer of sugar, due to the low cost of production and the large government incentives.

The European Union is the world's second largest exporter of the product

and uses beets as raw material. Within the WTO, Brazil has questioned the subsidies of the European Union towards its producers, but Brazil also offers large subsidies to its sugarcane industry.

The priority of the Brazilian government within the WTO has been to negotiate access to markets for its large rural producers. This policy goes against the proposals defended by social movements for the strengthening of the internal market, and food sovereignty. One of the main problems today in rural Brazil is the agricultural model oriented mainly towards the external market.

“Our governments need to support and promote peasant-based agriculture,

because the quality of life of wide sectors of the population, the territorial and environmental equilibrium, and their capacity to define their priorities and commercial strategies depend on it”, e a Via Campesina member.

The increase in exports does not mean better conditions of life in the countryside. With the implementation of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), Mexico tripled its agricultural exports and, at the same time, three million farmworkers were ruined. Currently, Mexican corn production is controlled by large corporations. In Asia, rice exports are dominated by Cargill, which, together with General Foods and Nestlé, controls close to 70% of the international food market.

The destruction of the local rural economy promoted by “free market” policies has generated a new form of protest, as in the case of Korean farmer Lee Kyung Hae, who took his own life during a march against the WTO in Cancun (Mexico) in September of 2003. As opposed to the contrary of the image of desperation or imbalance spread through the conservative media, the gesture of Lee represents a conscious sacrifice

against the oppression of thousands of farmworkers.

Since the creation of the WTO, close to 600 deaths of this kind have been registered every year in India. Farmworkers prefer to die than to see their lands confiscated for not covering the costs of production, principally in times of drought. For this reason, the principal slogan of the protests in Cancun was “the WTO kills farmers”.

Agricultural Model Based on Monoculture and Large Estates



“Historically, this sector was based on the exploitation of large territorial the areas, devastation of natural resources, and slave labor.”

The sugarcane monoculture was installed in Brazil during the period of Portuguese colonization. The first colonizers arrived in 1532. At that time, the production was concentrated in the coastal areas of Pernambuco and Bahia. Between 1532 and 1822, the profit generated by the commerce of Brazilian sugar represented twice the profit that was generated by gold, and five times all the other products together (wood, coffee, cotton, etc.). Historically, this sector was

based on the exploitation of large territorial areas, the devastation of natural resources, and slave labor.

Currently, one of the principal pillars of economic policies in Brazil continues to be an agricultural model based on monoculture for export. Despite the propaganda of the agribusiness sector as a symbol of “development”, this model has generated serious social and economic problems. Some of the main consequences of these policies are environmental degradation, land concentration, and unemployment among rural workers. According to Ariovaldo Umbelino, professor at the University of São Paulo, 87.3% of the total jobs generated in the Brazilian countryside are in

the small units of production, 10.2% are in medium-sized, and only 2.5% are in the large units. Furthermore, his study demonstrates that the small and medium-sized rural properties are responsible for the major part of food production.

Despite these facts, the government has prioritized an agricultural policy that favors large businesses. In 2004, 10 transnational corporations received approximately US\$2 billion from public banks. This value is larger than all of the credit given to small farmers through PRONAF (National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture). In total, the government disposed of US\$ 16,6 billion in credit for large landowners.

The New Proálcool (Pro- alcohol)



“ The Sugar Barons: Their business is not in sugar or alcohol, but in the appropriation of resources through programs, incentives and opportunities offered by the government. The northeast producers are sustained thanks to the political power that they maintain.”

Currently, a proposal to restructure Proálcool is being discussed. The turnover of the sugarcane industry is almost US\$9 billion, but it receives different forms of incentives.

The BNDES (National Bank for Economic and Social Development) is the principal financial agent of the new Proálcool, with the goal of investing US\$ 3.1 billion between 2004 and 2006, through the National Program of Bioenergy. The sector also receives support from the Ministry of Agriculture and from the Japanese Bank of International Cooperation. It is also stimulated by a

bilateral agreement between Brazil and Germany for the subsidized production of 100,000 alcohol-run vehicles, with the objective of collaborating so that Germany meets its commitment with the Kyoto Protocol.

Despite heavy governmental support, the sugarmills have huge debts. According to the Pastoral Land Commission in Pernambuco, the major sugarmills have a US\$3.5 billion dollar debt. At the same time, the sugarcane region of Pernambuco, where the sugarcane monoculture predominates, faces denunciations of child labor, assassinations of rural workers, and poor management of public resources. This situation has continued ever since the period of colonization,

when the power of the "Sugar Barons" predominated.

According to researcher Bruno Ribeiro, the State sustains the Sugar Barons. "Their business is not in sugar or alcohol, but in the appropriation of resources through programs, incentives, and opportunities offered by the government. The producers in the Northeast are sustained thanks to the political power that they maintain".

Despite this heavy governmental support, many sugarmills went bankrupt in Pernambuco. In the past 20 years, the number of factories diminished from 43 to 22. However, the area controlled by these Mills remains the same and, therefore, there is a larger concentration of land and wealth. In this

period, it is estimated that close to 150,000 workers in the sugarcane zone lost their jobs and that another 40,000 families were forced to leave the region.

The alternative then is to migrate in search for employment, or to struggle for agrarian reform.

In the state of São Paulo, the richest region of the country, the sugarcane industry is founded on the over-exploitation of workers, including slave labor.

Brazil has one of the lowest costs of sugar production in the world because the workforce is being exploited. In the state of São Paulo, the cost of production is US\$165 per ton. In the European Union countries, this cost is US\$700 per ton. "The

sugarcane sector is very competitive on the international market thanks to its low costs of production, which are associated with the low salaries paid to workers", explains professor Francisco Alves, professor at the Federal University of São Carlos.

The sector maintains large agricultural monopolies. Less than 20% of the sugarcane planted on 5 million acres come from small or medium-sized properties. In the region of Ribeirão Preto (SP), the entire land base is concentrated in the hands of eight families. In recent years, the tendency is that the smaller sugarmills are forced to close. Between 2000 and 2004, 20 sugarmills were negotiated in Brazil, the majority in São Paulo.

During the last few years, there has been a growing foreign participation in the sector, and an increase in the economic power of large companies. Some of the main foreign corporations that control the sector are the French companies Louis Dreyfus, which acquired the mills Cresciunial (in São Paulo)

and Luciânia (in Minas Gerais); and Béghin-Say, which acquired the mills Guaraní and Cruz Alta in São Paulo. The company Cosan also associated itself with the group Béghin-Say and Trading Secden (French-Brazilian Sugar and Alcohol S.A.), and acquired five mills.

Agro-Export Model versus Agrarian Reform



“The monopoly of land generates poverty, job loss, social exclusion, so as to maintain the power of rural oligarchies.”

As a consequence of an enormous land concentration, the history of Brazil has been marked by systematic violations of human rights. Land monopoly generates poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. The objective is to maintain the power of rural oligarchies that seek to perpetuate the colonial structure of the country.

Brasil has one of the two highest levels of concentration of agricultural land in the world, where approximately close to 70,000 properties,

representing barely 1.7% of a total 4,238.4 million rural properties, are occupying 43.8% of the total area registered by INCRA (National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform).

The current agricultural policy founded on monoculture for export is blocking the implementation of land reform. According to the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), the number of families that were settled by the land reform program during 2003 and 2004 was "insignificant". Data from INCRA indicate that the government will not meet its goal of settling 115,000 families in 2005. In 2004, the government said it settled 81,000 families. In 2003, the government only settled 36,800 families,

according to official data.

The incapacity of the government to carry out agrarian reform stimulates rural violence. Between 1985 and 2004, the CPT registered 1.388 assassinations of rural workers, lawyers, technicians, union and religious leaders linked to the struggle for land. Of these 1.388 killings, only 121 were brought to trial. Among those who ordered the murders, only 14 were tried, and seven were punished.

Among the 96 killers who were tried, 58 were punished.

On the other hand, between 1985 and 2004, 7,131 rural workers were sent to jail for their political activities linked to the struggle for land reform.

With the beginning of the Lula government in 2003, the number of assassinations of rural workers grew 69.8% in relation to 2002, with a total of 73 murders. The number of forceful removals also showed a record in 2003, affecting 35,297 families, involving close to 176,485 people, which represents an increase of 263.2% in relation to the data from 2002. In 2004, the CPT registered an increase of 10.8% in the number of imprisoned activists, with 421 rural workers in jail; and 5.5% more families evicted, which counts as the highest number of forceful removals in the last 20 years.

Migration, Slave Work and Violations of Workers' Rights

The expansion of the sugarcane sector has generated greater exploitation (called "flexibility") of the workforce. Principally in São Paulo, the greater part of sugarcane cultivation is done by migratory workers from the Northeast and from the Valley of Jequinhonha in Minas Gerais. The Pastoral of Migrants estimates that close to 200,000 workers migrate to São Paulo during the harvest period of sugarcane, orange, and coffee. In the São Paulo sugarcane industry, the number of migrants per

“The denunciations of slave work have increased in recent years.”

harvest is estimated at 40,000.

For thousands of workers this "temporary" situation becomes permanent because of the lack of alternative employment in their regions of origin. They begin a vicious circle. "The work here is the toughest that exists, but it's the only work we have," states a migrant worker from Pernambuco. Even saying they wouldn't ever want to return to harvesting sugarcane, many workers end up submitting themselves indefinitely to this situation of extreme exploitation.

Unemployment caused by an agricultural model based on monoculture and large estates increases the number of workers who

submit themselves to working in areas far from their place of origin, in precarious conditions. The denunciations of slave work have increased in recent years.

The Ministry of Work identified yesterday in Conchal/SP at least 300 rural sugar cutters living in 'subhuman' conditions. (Folha de São Paulo, Newspaper, July 24, 2004)

These workers often begin their activities in debt. They have these debts because they need to pay for transportation (usually clandestine, called "excursions") that costs on average R\$200.00 per worker migrating from the Northeast to São Paulo. The migrant workers are seduced by "cats" or "coyotes" who are usually

the owners of the buses that make the journey.

The Federal Police (FP) of Piracicaba is going to investigate the existence of organized crime in the contracting of migrants for sugarcane cutting in the region. Based on a dossier elaborated by the Migrant Pastoral, the FP has already chosen agents to investigate the connection of various areas with the trafficking of migrants.

Those investigated in the inquiry of supposed slavery of a group of 60 workers in Quipapá, 150 kilometers from Recife (PE), could be indicted for the crime of creating a criminal gang.

(JPiracicaba Newspaper, May 27, 2004).

In the sugar cane regions, so-called

“dormitory-cities” have increased. In these places migrant workers live in tenement houses, or in barracks. Despite their precarious situation, the costs of rent and food for these sugar cane workers are much above the average paid by the local population.

On June 16, 2004, inspectors of the Ministry of Work found various irregularities in the accommodations of sugar cutters who came from Amarante (Piauí State) to work in Ituverava (São Paulo State). The workers said that the contractor is deducting water, electricity, and rent from their salaries and that they never ended up receiving no money. The contractor is also

obliging them to buy food and hygiene products in his supermarket. The investigators could attest that the company withheld salaries and deducted rent, transport, and meals from the workers. Source:www.eptv.com.br

Both the sugarmill lodgings as well as the "residences" are huts or makeshift shacks, overcrowded, without ventilation or minimal hygienic conditions.

Sugarcane workers brought from Piauí were found in a degrading situation in Ituverava: They didn't receive any wages, but coupons to shop at the supermarket of José Ruivo, the contractor who brought them. According to the

public promoter, the case could be filed as a condition analogous to slavery, the penalty of which is imprisonment for 2 to 5 years. (Folha de São Paulo, Newspaper June 17, 2004)

The incorporation of new technologies into the sugarcane sector increased the exploitation of workers.

The harvesting machines work in flat, continuous areas, but they cause a greater compacting of the soil thus damaging the growth of seedlings.

Mechanization generates more exploitation of workers because it creates new demands such as cutting sugar cane close to the ground (in order to take greater advantage of the concentration of sucrose) and a better trimmed

sugar cane stalk. This increases the labor of the workers and the time they spend working. With the mechanization of the sector, the work of cutting the cane was transferred to the workers in more difficult conditions, where the terrain is not flat, the crops are planted irregularly, and the cane is of poorer quality.

The mechanized cutting of sugar cane became a reference for the quantity cut by each worker per day, which increased from 6 tons in the 80's, to 10 tons in the 90's. Today, the workers have to cut between 12 and 15 tons per day, principally in regions where the rhythm of the machines became a reference for productivity. Not meeting this goal often means that the workers

will be fired or placed on a list that circulates among various companies, which means that they cannot return to work on the next harvest.

Because of this norm, only a small number of women are working in sugarcane cutting.

For the ones who still do this work, the situation is even worse because their daily workload is doubled. In addition to cutting sugarcane, they have to do most of the domestic work, as well as take care of their children.

This means a much larger effort for women who, even with all the difficulties, are faced with brutal labor tasks. Some sugarmills also demand that the women should be sterilized, so they cannot have children.

The majority of workers don't have any control over how much sugarcane they cut.

Many denunciations point towards the manipulation and fraud of these numbers by the sugarmills, who pay less than the workers have the right to earn. The Union of Rural Workers of Dobrada (São Paulo), for example, denounced cases in which workers received the equivalent of 10 cut tons per day, when the quantity of sugarcane they cut was actually 19 tons.

In the state of São Paulo, the workers receive R\$2.60 *reais* (or one dollar) per ton of cut cane. The minimum wage is US\$185 per month. When a worker reaches an average of 10 tons per day, he/she

could earn US\$360 per month. But the cost of accommodations and food is close to US\$180 per month.

The "failure" caused by losing work over not meeting the goal of cutting 10 to 12 tons per day, has made many workers "escape" or "disappear", migrating once again (mostly towards the Center-West region) or searching for temporary work in the outskirts of urban centers. This process creates a category of "itinerant" workers.

The system of free time within the Mills is "5 for 1", or rather, the workers have one day off for every five days of work. This means that on each free day only a relatively small group

“ The sugarmill lodgings are huts or makeshift shacks, overcrowded, without ventilation or minimal hygienic conditions.”

of workers can meet, which makes social and family relationships, as well as political organization more difficult. The majority of free days are not on the weekends, when the workers would have greater possibilities of exercising these activities. This system excludes the demand that sugarmills pay overtime for work done at weekends.

In Pernambuco, the workers earn on average two minimum wages (approximately US\$ 270) per month, if they reach the goal of 9 tons of cut sugarcane per day. However they also denounce fraud in weighing the load of sugarcane, as well as mistreatment and lack of job security. “When there’s a job, the harvest lasts three to four months. The rest of the time we spend hungry. I’m 55 years old and nobody wants to hire me because they think I’m ‘scrap iron’. I can’t retire because I haven’t completed 35 years of service”, says worker José Santos, who today awaits the expropriation process to be settled on lands of the Aliança Sugar Mill, bankrupt since 1996.

Health Problems and Workers' Deaths



Between 2004 and 2005, the Migrants' Pastoral of São Paulo registered 13 deaths of sugarcane workers, from excess of work and lack of an adequate diet. These deaths occurred after the workers fainted during the cutting of sugarcane. According to the doctor from the company, the

workers didn't need aid because they were "lazy". So, they didn't receive adequate treatment when their health problems began.

"Besides the deaths occurring in the cane fields, there are those that go unregistered, and that happen across a certain amount of time. Illnesses and diseases like cancer, provoked by the use of pesticides, as well as respiratory illnesses, allergies, spinal column problems, linked to the almost entire impossibility of being treated due to the lack of resources to purchase medicines lead to

the death of many workers, whose devastated health impedes them from continuing in the work market”, explains Maria Aparecida de Moraes, professor at the University of São Paulo State.

The repetitive movements of cane cutting cause tendinitis and spinal column problems, loosening of the digits and spasms, provoked by the excessive loss of potassium. Frequent spasms followed by dizziness, headache and vomiting are called “birola”.

Many workers use medicines (like injections called “amarelinhas”) and drugs (like crack and

marijuana) to alleviate the pain and stimulate their performance. In cutting 10 tons of cane per day, it’s estimated that each worker needs to give 10,000 blows with the machete.

The wounds and mutilations caused by cane cutting, principally on the legs and the hands, are also frequent. Because of this, a company rarely notifies these work accidents and there is practically no control on the part of governmental organizations. Many sick or mutilated workers, despite being unable to work, do not qualify as disabled.

Environmental Destruction



“The sugarcane Monoculture industry is the principal cause of pollution and environmental devastation of fauna and flora.”

Many studies demonstrate that the practice of extensive monoculture promotes environmental devastation. The production of sugarcane is destructive, since it promotes the burning of the soil, a high level of chemical product usage, as well as pollution and chemical garbage from the processing plants of alcohol and sugar.

An international report of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), from November 2004, alerts that the sugarcane monoculture industry is the principal cause of pollution and environmental devastation of fauna and flora.

Sugarcane plantations cover more than half the territory of seven countries, and between 10% and 50% of the territory of 15 countries. Great extensions of fertile lands were already degraded as a result of the sugar cane monoculture. The burning and the processing of cane pollute the soil, the air, and sources of potable water. Furthermore, this production uses a large quantity of herbicides and pesticides. Data from the World Health Organization show that close to 25 million people per year who have presented cases of acute poisoning per year, resulting from contact with these chemical products.

In Brazil, the use of herbicides and agrototoxic

on sugarcane fields includes "Roundup" from Monsanto corporation. This practice affects the workers, who many times do not use adequate protection while using these products. In Pernambuco, many areas of sugarcane planting have a declivity of close to 45%, which causes the poisons to flow off and extend even further. The waste residues of sugar cane are constantly deposited in rivers, causing the death of fish, crustaceans, and vegetation, as well as the pollution of the riverbanks and subterranean water reserves. The processing of sugarcane in the sugarmills pollutes the air through the burning of garbage.

Between June and August of 2005, a state of

alert was declared in the sugarcane regions of São Paulo because of fauna and flora." (between 13% and 15%). According to the National Institute of Space Research (INPE), 287 burning areas were identified during this period, which represents an increase of 47.94% in relation to the same period in 2004. Technicians from INPE defend a "moratorium on burning", beginning in 2006.

Even with all of its environmental problems, the sugarcane monoculture of sugarcane is being negotiated as a way of generating "clean" energy.

A new subproduct of this "production chain" is the carbon credit. After the Kyoto Protocol was signed in 1997, and reinforced at the Rio + 10 Conference in

2002 in South Africa, the "carbon market" was created, used by richer (e.g. European Union) countries that need to reduce their emission of pollutant gases by 5.2% by 2010. For this reason the Mechanism of Clean Development (MDL) was created, establishing that each ton of carbon gas that is no longer emitted or is absorbed from the atmosphere could be sold in the world market. The German government, for example, proposes negotiating US\$45 million of carbon credit, by replacing gasoline by alcohol. This would represent an increase in Brazilian exports of 430 million liters of alcohol per year.

Despite being considered a "clean" form of energy,

the production of sugarcane destroys the environment and affects the health of the population. Burning sugarcane facilitates the harvest, but it also destroys a large part of the microorganisms in the soil, pollutes the air and causes respiratory diseases. A large part of the cutting of sugarcane in Brazil is done without any environmental control. In Pernambuco, for example, only 5% of the Atlantic Forest remains in the sugarcane region.

Workers' Organizations and the Struggle for Land



“ Violence used to expel homesteaders from their lands, to remove registered workers and substitute them with temporary workers. ”

In the 1980s, the workers of the sugarcane sector held large mobilizations that resulted in improvements of work conditions. From the beginning of the 90s, many of these rights have been violated. The deepening of the neoliberal economic model, the weakness of labor organizations, and the higher concentration of wealth contributed to the violation of these rights.

A report of the Federation of Agricultural Workers of the State of Pernambuco (FETAPE),

titled "Sugar with a Taste of Blood", demonstrates the diverse forms of violence caused by the sugarcane monoculture. Violence is used to expel homesteaders from their lands, to demote registered workers and substitute them with temporary workers, and to combat the organization of unions.

On the other hand, the struggle for agrarian reform has brought onto the scene the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), principally in the Northeast, where landless people are occupying lots of abandoned sugarmills.

The CPT estimates that there are almost 30,000 families living in temporary camps in Pernambuco, struggling for their own land. The fact that the government is not implementing agrarian reform has generated serious conflicts. From 1995 to 2004, the CPT registered 26 assassinations of rural workers, 43 cases of torture, 429 cases of physical aggression, and 261 cases of arbitrary arrests of landless workers, in a total of 1217 land conflicts in the state of Pernambuco. Data from INCRA reveal that only 10,000 families were settled in the last 23 years in Pernambuco.

No Agreement at the WTO Ministerial Meeting!



“ 10 Years
is Enough!
Stop
WTO
neoliberal
agenda in
Hong Kong!” ”

When it was created in 1995, the WTO was promoted as an institution that would bring growth and, reduce global poverty and inequalities. In its 10 years of existence, the WTO has contributed to generate the opposite effects. The agreements within the WTO only serve the interests of transnational corporations.

Behind the image of a democratic institution, there are hidden mechanisms that turn pressure and coercion into a common method used by developed countries against the countries of the South, to advance the corporate agenda. Methods such as the so

called “green room” or Five Interested Parties reaffirm that the WTO is a totally undemocratic institution.

Within the WTO, our basic rights like access to water, energy, healthcare, education, land, biodiversity, and food sovereignty are being negotiated to benefit large corporations.

Social movements all over the world need to increase their education and mobilization work against the WTO, and stop its project to control global markets. We must increase the pressure over the governments that are negotiating agreements that violate people’s basic rights.

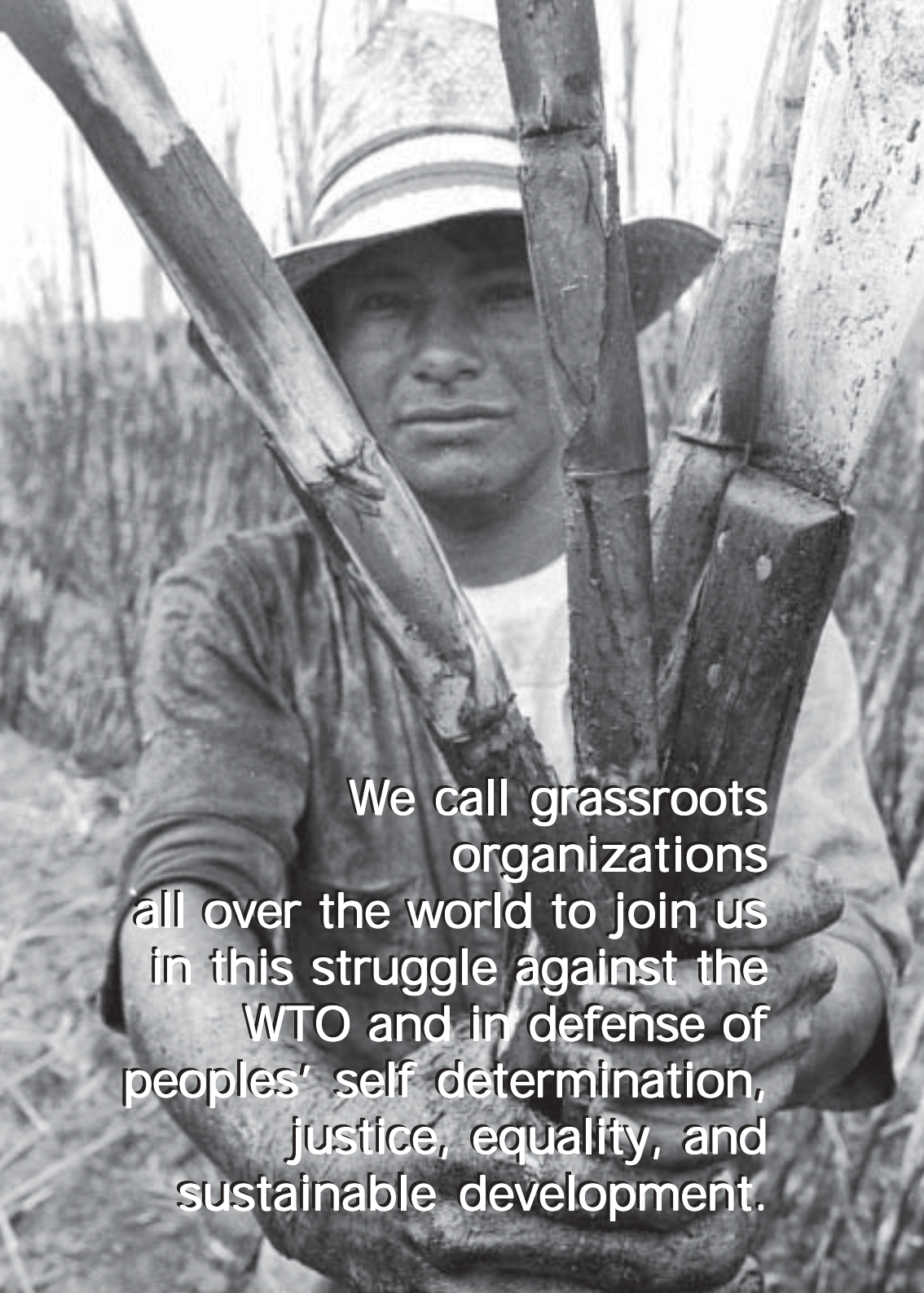
It’s necessary to stop WTO negotiations, in the name of peoples’ sovereignty. We need to defend the right of our countries to define their

own economic and social policies. The struggle to derail the WTO is nowadays one of the pillars of unity and action of social movements worldwide. Together in this struggle, we have won several victories, such as the mobilizations in Seattle and Cancun, which are examples of our strength. We need to do the same in the sixth WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong.

We call grassroots organizations all over the world to join us in this struggle against the WTO and in defense of peoples’ self determination, justice, equality, and sustainable development.

No agreement in Hong Kong! Derail the WTO!

— Statement by the Continental Campaign against the WTO and the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas)



We call grassroots organizations all over the world to join us in this struggle against the WTO and in defense of peoples' self determination, justice, equality, and sustainable development.