

CENTRAL AMERICAN UNIONS IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION*

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Abstract: Globalization has exacerbated the impact of three Northern-driven forces on Central American unions. Transnational firms have restructured or enhanced their levels of subcontracting. Governments, while weakening labor-code implementation, have launched extensive privatization schemes. And international supporters of unions have espoused new priorities and rechanneled funding. Although all three trends have caused major difficulties for unions, this article assesses whether or not their traditional spirit of "social-movement unionism" has been undermined. Based on extensive interviews and primary and secondary data, the study documents union resilience in the banana and maquila sectors despite problematic corporate behavior and market conditions. Stung by state privatizations, unions that fragmented following the Central American Peace Accords have partially regrouped to resist public-health takeovers and labor-code harmonization. Facing losses in Northern funding, unions have painfully adapted to fresh organizing strategies and sensitivity to women's issues, which they found to be fundamental to successful collaboration with corporate campaigns, trade pressure, and NGOs. Despite losses, unions have tapped a broader solidarity in their struggle against the demons of globalization.

Globalization exhibits both an upside and a downside. The upside is the rapid and technologically efficient worldwide coordination of productive operations. The downside includes fragmentation of the labor market, dismantling of worker and environmental protections, and erosion of trade unions. Some scholars are now predicting that elite-driven global forces will end the labor movement as we have known it. This study, primarily of Guatemala and El Salvador, will examine labor responses to three Northern-driven impulses that affect union viability: corporations that create evasive structures; neoliberal states that surrender controls; and international labor-related organizations that emphasize unilateral strategies. Each factor creates fresh difficulties for Central American unionists.¹ Their reactions will

*I thank the anonymous *LARR* reviewers and Managing Editor Sharon Kellum for their extensive and constructive recommendations and Mark Anner of the Cornell School of Labor Studies for his helpful suggestions. This article was written prior to the tragedy that befell New York and Washington on 11 September 2001.

1. *Northern* refers to industrial societies in the Northern Hemisphere such as the United

shed light on trade unionism in developing countries in an era of globalization. Are class loyalties fragmented beyond recognition? Are unions adopting a model of business unionism, or will they coalesce under the banner of “social-movement unionism”?

THE CONTEXT

Three institutional elements of globalization have transformed worker rights and union viability. Corporate strategies have emphasized flexibility, restructuring, and subcontracting, often to the detriment of union agreements and worker cohesion. National governments that once tolerated and sometimes courted labor have opted for wholesale privatizing of state enterprises, dismantling militant public-sector unions in the process. To counter these trends, a third force has arisen as international unions have rediscovered the value of rank-and-file organizing. As labor leaders in the Northern Hemisphere have reallocated their funding to unions in the Southern Hemisphere, however, they have sent mixed signals about organizing methods and campaign strategies.

The first globalization force involves the rapid world coordination of productive operations in ways that may benefit consumers but often violate Article 22 of the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 22 affirms the right of association, with the corollary that the opportunity to join a union stands as an essential component of democratic societies. Scholars and policy makers worldwide have endorsed this principle (Plant 1994). They consider the right to organize and bargain as the most vital of all union rights because it places the determination of worker dignity, adequate wages, and working conditions at its most effective location: the local level. The absence of unions also jeopardizes other core rights, the prohibitions against child labor, slave labor, and discrimination (Compa and Diamond 1996).

Various Latin American researchers have analyzed how both corporate and state-related global forces have affected union rights in Mexico and South America (Alvarez et al. 1998; Cook 1999; ORIT 1989). Fewer have addressed how these two forces currently impinge on worker rights won over the past century in Central America. By the 1960s, every country in the isthmus save El Salvador had ratified the pertinent conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Frundt 1998, 81), and Central American unions were the major force protecting worker interests—until the regional wars intervened.

Analysts have explained the subsequent role of economic factors and international investment in the region (Bulmer-Thomas 1987; Torres-Rivas

States, the European Union, and Japan. *Southern* encompasses developing societies in the Southern Hemisphere.

1993; Vilas 1995; von Huegen 1999; and Weeks 1985). The loss of tourism and export revenue in the late 1980s helped convince local business owners to seek a peaceful resolution to the raging military conflicts. Yet local elites were reticent to modernize (R. Spalding 1994; Torres-Rivas 1993). In the 1990s, however, the free-trade agenda of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) minimized distinctions between *comprador* elites tied to a traditional authoritarian military and an emerging business class with global connections. The latter proved more amenable to export competitiveness as it welcomed foreign investors from Asia as well as North America. Social scientists have outlined how the global neoliberal project has impacted national politics (Booth 1998; Dunkerley 1994; Goodman et al. 1990; Jonas 2000; Juhn 1998; Middlebrook 1998; Torres-Rivas 1993; Torres-Rivas and Aguilera 1998; Trudeau 1993; and Walker and Armony 1999). In the nomenclature of William Robinson, the international elite constructed “democratization” in Central America as part of its social-control agenda, replacing coercive politics with co-optive politics or “polyarchy” (Robinson 1996, 2000). Few observers, however, have elaborated on what this policy shift has meant for trade unionism.

Militant Central American unions had long advocated a negotiated solution to the regional war. Yet as peace arrived, they suffered extensively, while those who eschewed involvement in national politics garnered more success (Armstrong et al. 1987; Fuentes Aragón 1998, 2000; Gaspar 1993; May 2001; Morales Modonesi and De León 1995). Although U.S. government advisors encouraged elite reintegration of former combatants, the functionaries made no provision for aiding the transition of union federations that had any ties to guerrilla armies. By the end of the twentieth century, the major independent and leftist labor federations in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua had lost members. The Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala (UNSI TRAGUA) and the Federación Sindical de Trabajadores de Alimentación (FESTRAS) had undergone significant changes of leaders and membership. Other major confederations, such as the Confederación Unidad de Sindicatos de Guatemala (CUSG) and the Central General de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CGTG), also suffered declining numbers.² The Central Sandinista de Trabajadores (CST) lost many affiliates (Stahler-Sholk 1996), as did the Unión Nacional de Trabajadores Salvadoreños (UNTS), which was virtually replaced by the Confederación Unitaria de Trabajadores Salvadoreños (CUTS).³ The Federación de Asociaciones y Sindicatos Independientes de El Salvador (FEASIES) struggled to maintain the required number of affiliated unions, and the centrist Unión Nacional Obrero-Campesina (UNOC) vanished.

2. Confirmed by interviews conducted by the author with leaders of all major confederations in 2001.

3. CUTS was largely a union organization, while the UNTS included many other groups.

At the same time, total Guatemalan union membership grew between 1993 and 2001 from 74,000 to almost 100,000. Registered unions more than doubled to nearly 500. The explanation lies in the fact that growth occurred in “enterprise unions” and independent unions unaffiliated with any national labor organization, not in “industrial unions.”⁴ Salvadoran union membership grew from about 56,000 to 117,000 between 1993 and 1999, with 137 unions but few that were industrial.⁵ A third of Salvador’s unions remained unaffiliated, in what the Centro de Estudios del Trabajo (CENTRA) characterized as an “atomization” of the labor movement (Aguilar 1999). After considering unions in postwar El Salvador, Tracy Fitzsimmons and Mark Anner concluded that business-oriented “bread-and-butter unions” (like those in construction) were the ones most likely to endure (1999). According to Anner, “The unions of the Left contributed to ending the war but paid a high price, and many thousands were killed. Conservative unionists avoided national politics. As a result, they did not lose members, but they also did not contribute at all to the ending.”⁶

What implications do emerging corporate strategies, declining state power, and shifting international support have for class analysis in the region? As these global forces challenge working-class unity, can “social-movement unionism” in postwar Central America survive?⁷

CORPORATE EXPANSION AND RESTRUCTURING

In the 1980s, socioeconomic trends challenged Central American unions. High levels of national debt led to reductions in industrial and public-sector employment, while real wages fell precipitously (ILO 1995). Even strong labor organizations in key sectors like food processing, banking, health, and construction suffered from low wages and few contracts.

Despite fresh economic growth in the 1990s, underemployment persisted due to downsizing in the traditional formal economy and the “modernization” of agriculture. Large numbers of urban or semi-urban workers shifted into “the informal sector,” which accounted for more than half of all

4. Ministerio de Trabajo, *Boletín de Estadísticas*, nos. 5, 13, tt. 15–16. Independent unions, “which constitute the bulk of the increase, have no connection to companies. Individuals create them for legal benefits,” according to José Girón, Director General de Trabajo, Guatemala. Author’s interview, 19 July 2001, Guatemala City. An “industrial union” can encompass locals from various locations and companies. During this period, competing Solidarista associations grew from 370 to more than 450.

5. Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social, *Estadísticas de Trabajo, 2000* (San Salvador: Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social, 2001). Surprisingly, nearly a third of El Salvador’s unions are in the “informal” sector when broadly conceived (Aguilar 1999).

6. Interview with Mark Anner, 18 Apr. 1997, Guadalajara, Mexico.

7. Social-movement unionism is distinguished from business unionism, which is limited to economic concerns (Form 1990).

employment and was much less subject to union organization (Portes et al. 1989; Posas 1998; Pérez Sáinz 1996, 1998; Tardanico and Menjívar 1997). Even when formal-sector companies retained workers, they often selected those in nonunionized subdivisions (Vilas 1999).

Nevertheless, political stabilization inched forward in the 1990s, and investment accelerated, especially in agriculture and the maquila sector. The banana and apparel industries provide a glimpse of how new investors sought increased flexibility in assigning work tasks, setting pay and benefits, hiring and laying off workers, and restricting union activity as well as how the workers responded.⁸

Bananas

Following their long and sordid history in Central America, the world's three largest banana companies added a new chapter of anti-union action in the 1980s and 1990s. As the U.S.-based firms Chiquita (United Fruit), Dole, and Fresh Del Monte Produce expanded operations in anticipation of market growth in China and Eastern Europe, they took precautions to evade militant labor. They relocated operations, set up *solidarista* associations to replace unions, and contracted with "independent producers" to administer much of their land (Emaús 1998). Some actions helped precipitate a banana trade glut. To protect traditional markets, the companies encouraged U.S. objections to the emerging system of European Union (EU) preferences for bananas from former colonies.⁹

To counter the anti-labor impact of restructuring, Central American workers formed the Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Sindicatos Bananeros (COLSIBA) in the early 1990s. COLSIBA mobilized support for member unions at Chiquita and Del Monte such as the Sindicato de Trabajadores Bananeros de Izabal (SITRABI).¹⁰

In 1998 SITRABI, the region's oldest banana union, faced down a new subcontracting ploy by a Fresh Del Monte affiliate, the Compañía de Desarrollo Bananero de Guatemala Limitada (BANDEGUA). Following Hurricane Mitch, a glut of bananas from low-wage Ecuador dampened company desires to rebuild in Central America. Union leaders believed they had negotiated a satisfactory transition.¹¹ But in September 1999, BANDEGUA subleased three more major plantations in the Bobo district and ter-

8. Also see <www.usleap.org>.

9. The European Union (EU) justified its favorable treatment of Windward Island banana imports as sensitivity to smallholder, labor, and environmental concerns, but the United States asserted that most preferences benefited EU trading firms (see also note 18).

10. Dole is the least unionized major U.S. banana company. In the 1990s, it increased holdings in Ecuador and adopted an independent position on trade (Perillo and Trejos 2000).

11. Interview with Marel Martínez, secretary of SITRABI, 18 Aug. 1999, Morelos, Guatemala.

minated more than 900 SITRABI workers. When the union threatened a legal work stoppage, leaders encountered a squad of 200 armed thugs who demanded that they resign or be killed (U.S. LEAP 1999b). After an intense international campaign, Del Monte finally capitulated. In a major victory, SITRABI, assisted by the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF), won a single contract for 648 workers who desired reemployment. But they had to accept a 70 percent cut in health benefits, a 30 percent reduction in wages, and losses in education and housing.¹² When the company threatened similar givebacks at other plantations, SITRABI again invoked international pressure (U.S. LEAP 2000c). Marel Martínez and other leaders also confronted their attackers in an open trial. The court sentenced twenty-two of the attackers—a first for Guatemala, although it imposed light fines in place of prison terms. Marel, now in exile, attributed even this outcome to the international presence. Del Monte workers also resisted other company strategies. In Costa Rica, the union gained an accord to allow organizing against the prevalent solidarista associations.¹³

Union gains with Chiquita were even more significant, especially given the company's bloody history (Dosal 1993; Fallas 1975). In Costa Rica in the mid-1980s, Chiquita led the industry in replacing unions with solidarista associations (Flores 1993; Bermúdez 1998). In Guatemala and Honduras, the company adopted subleasing arrangements similar to those of Del Monte. For example, after thirteen Chiquita contractors formed the *Compañía Bananeros Independientes de Guatemala* (COBIGUA), the parent firm abdicated direct responsibility for labor relations. When union leaders won a court judgment in 1998, COBIGUA managers manipulated Guatemala's byzantine legal structures to have them arrested as they left the courtroom (Perillo 1998). In Costa Rica, Chiquita and other companies rotated illegal Nicaraguan immigrants from one plantation to another for ninety-day periods to avoid salary and benefits requirements (Emaús 1998).¹⁴ Chiquita and Dole also set up nonunion banana operations on the southern coast of Guatemala and Costa Rica, where working conditions resembled those in Ecuador (Perillo and Trejos 2000).¹⁵

Chiquita banana unions were not easily dissuaded, however. In Honduras, unions revived their militancy.¹⁶ On lands formerly owned by Chi-

12. In Costa Rica, Del Monte and Dole fired thousands and then rehired them at lower pay and benefits. All three firms cut contracts with independent producers.

13. See *Acuerdo marco entre corporación de desarrollo bananero de Costa Rica S.A. BANDECO–Del Monte y El Sindicato de Trabajadores de Plantaciones Agrícolas (SITRAP)*, Feb. 1998, Siquierres, C.R. Also, author's interview with Ramón Barrantes Casante, secretary general of the Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícola y Hacienda (SITAGH) in Costa Rica, 6 Aug. 1999, San José.

14. Interview with Barrantes.

15. Interview with Gilbert Bermúdez Umaña, secretary of COLSIBA, 5 Aug. 1999, San José, C.R.

16. Interview with Justo Pastor Reyes, leader of Coordinador de Sindicatos Bananeros de Honduras (COSIBAH), 20 Aug. 1999, Lima.

quita, laid-off workers demanded wages and health protections proportionate to unionized workers (Coor 1999, 39–40). When a Chiquita subcontractor shut down operations in Guatemala, UNSITRAGUA gained a settlement.¹⁷

COLSIBA then moved to demand a worker rights agreement for all Chiquita operations. The time was propitious. Independent Ecuadorian producers had captured a larger share of lucrative EU banana exports by exploiting workers and the environment (U.S. LEAP 2000b).¹⁸ This trend hit Chiquita—the company most heavily invested in Central America—the hardest. Via U.S. officials, Chiquita won favorable rulings from the World Trade Organization (WTO) disputing EU import rules. In hopes of sympathetic consumer support, it also implemented independent certification programs that tested its environmental practices (Chiquita 2001).¹⁹ Throughout 2000–2001, the wounded banana giant discussed with COLSIBA how to stem the tide of nonunion bananas (U.S. LEAP 2000a). In June 2001, six weeks after the company had gained a limited settlement from the WTO that preserved its former EU export allocations,²⁰ COLSIBA reached an unprecedented labor accord that also applied to Chiquita subcontractors.²¹

Other agricultural unions have likewise developed counter-strategies to agribusiness manipulations. In 1994 Guatemalan coffee workers reached a key agreement with the Asociación Nacional de Café (ANACAFE).²² But ANACAFE's refusal to honor pay commitments subsequently led workers at many fincas to unionize. When employees at the finca María de Lourdes

17. The Chiquita contractor at the Alabama and Arizona plantations used the hurricane as an excuse to terminate unionized workers. After eighteen months of occupation, Chiquita finally agreed to accept gradually 110 workers elsewhere, with return rights for the additional workers (U.S. LEAP 2000a).

18. The banana conflict began in 1993 when the EU adopted the policy on banana imports that favored its former colonies (see note 9). After the United States appealed to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the EU proposed a banana-importing regimen that phased out quotas for specific Latin American countries in favor of a policy of "first come, first served." Shippers who had guaranteed markets east of the EU stood to benefit because they could unload their surplus bananas. Chiquita and Central American shippers, however, would lose substantial banana sales. They convinced the WTO that the first-come system favored former EU-based companies.

19. Jeff Zalla, Corporate Responsibility Officer, Chiquita Brands, presentation to the SAI Annual Conference, New York, 7 Dec. 2000.

20. In an agreement brokered by the George W. Bush administration, Chiquita gained a licensing system based on "historical operators," which would cease functioning by 2006 (Perillo and Trejos 2000; Gelski 2000; Frundt 2001). See also Anthony DePalma, "Chiquita Sues Europeans, Citing Banana-Quota Losses," *The New York Times*, 26 Jan. 2001, p. C5.

21. On 14 June 2001, Chiquita promised that its independent suppliers as well as the company would respect basic ILO Conventions on worker rights, health, and environmental protections. Going beyond monitoring, the agreement created a six-month review process that included participation by COLSIBA and the IUF. See also U.S. LEAP (2001); <www.chiquita.com>; and <www.iuf.com>.

22. ANACAFE committed to raising wages by 30 percent. Yet this step also depended on an

near Quetzaltenango received only half the minimum wage, they joined with others to form a regional labor organization backed by the Pastoral de la Tierra of the Catholic Archdiocese (Laslett 2001). ANACAFE spurned findings that half of Guatemala's coffee workers were not being paid the legal minimum and 60 percent were denied required benefits.²³ Undeterred, the U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project (U.S. LEAP) asked ANACAFE for "help in working with Starbucks" to implement a pilot monitoring project at several suppliers (U.S. LEAP 2000c). Unfortunately, these efforts were retarded by the precipitous drop in world coffee prices in 2001.

Expansion of the Apparel Sector

A major opportunity for union activity appeared in the mushrooming apparel sector, which expanded after passage of the U.S. Special Access Program. Annual Central American textile and apparel shipments to the United States jumped from 500 million dollars at the program's enactment in 1986 and to 6.5 billion by 2000.²⁴ In Guatemala between 1984 and 2000, the number of textile and apparel maquilas increased from 41 maquilas to 784 employing more than 100,000 thousand workers.²⁵ Shipments to the United States spurted from 15 million dollars to 1.5 billion, carrying such labels as Calvin Klein, Liz Claiborne, Perry Ellis, Levi Strauss, Guess, London Fog, Wrangler, and Van Heusen (M. González 1990; Petersen 1992; Ramírez 1994, 1995; USAC 1990). In El Salvador in 1999, 70,000 workers sent maquila exports to the United States worth 1.6 billion dollars, about a fifth of the Salvadoran gross domestic product and ostensibly as much as traditional exports (Aguilar 1999).²⁶ Honduras topped them all with 120,000 workers exporting more than 2 billion dollars in shipments to the United States. In Costa Rica, garments represented 31 percent of foreign trade (Gitli 1997). Nicaragua employed 40,000 workers in the apparel sector. By the century's end, more than 300,000 workers were laboring in Central America's export-assembly plants, accounting for 35 percent of all manufacturing employment. This number was expected to expand after 2000 under the newly assigned U.S. export quotas of the Caribbean Basin Initiative, but as the U.S. economic downturn in 2001 reduced demand, many factories closed.

Unions nevertheless faced severe difficulties during the expansion of the apparel sector. The industry arranged layers of subcontracts that often

increase in worker productivity, which really worked out to be a 15 percent increase at best. Author's interview with Rodolfo Robles, 9 Mar. 1995, Guatemala City.

23. COVERCO, "Independent Monitor's Report of Liz Claiborne Factory in Guatemala, #1 & #2," at <www.usleap.org> under monitoring, 2000.

24. See *U.S. Foreign Trade Highlights, 1987-2000*.

25. Carmen López de Cáceres, "El trabajo de maquila en Guatemala," Organización Internacional de Trabajo, doc. no. RLA/97/07/MNET, 2000, "VEXTEx Reports 290 Factories."

26. To calculate true value, imported components must be subtracted.

stymied efforts to unionize (Thomas 1995; Cordero 1999; Membreño and Guerrero 1994; Monzón 1992; Sevilla and Bendaña 1994). The largely female workforce lacked significant union experience, and governments favored unfettered manufacturing expansion to alleviate job losses in agriculture.

The subcontracting ploy again proved a strong barrier to unionization as the Hong Kong-based Apparel Industry Consortium allocated name-brand contracts to local factories. Competition was ferocious, and retailers placed huge demands for rapid delivery of quality-stitched merchandise at the lowest price. The layers of subcontracts also retarded wage improvements, validating Michael Piore's (1990) explanation as to why market forces encourage sweatshops. As Joaquín Arriola Palomares, coauthor of an ILO-sponsored study on maquilas, said: "The contracted small businesses have fixed margins, and it is hard for them to increase wages. They do pay minimum salaries but often do not meet obligations for extra hours, pensions or social security contributions. Their margin is only 10 to 15 percent, so they seek limits on benefits and increases in productivity" (see also Chinchilla and Hamilton 1994; Hualde and Pérez Sáinz 1994; Ross 1997).²⁷

The situation changed somewhat at the turn of the millennium when niche markets blossomed and corporate campaigns forced branded firms to review subcontractors via independent monitors. Local textile associations like Guatemala's Comisión de Vestuario y Textilos (VESTEX) promoted code and auditing systems in line with the industry's standard, Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production (WRAP). Companies responded by creating model firms that complied with international norms on working conditions. Yet these same firms often engaged in tertiary contracts with unmonitored companies that obfuscated local efforts to locate accountable administrators or to establish direct relations with the name-brand retailers.²⁸

Unions also faced an inexperienced workforce. Central American maquilas, like those elsewhere (Kamel and Hoffman 1999), sought teenage female employees who could be hired more cheaply and were "more docile, competent, quicker, dynamic, flexible and prepared to work long hours."²⁹ Officials also believed that young women were less prone to organize (ASEPROLA 1996; Green 1997; Bonanich et al. 1994; Naranjo 1999; Quinteros 2000).

27. Author's interview with Joaquín Arriola, 16 Mar. 1995, San Salvador. See also Arévalo and Arriola (1995). Thomas (1995) has argued that today's corporate investors adapt the "Japanese model" of human relations to anticipate and channel worker discontent. Despite the view that Central American firms are upgrading human capital more quickly (Buitelaar and Padilla 2000), this model is not prevalent in Central America. Gitli (1997) found that owners deny sick workers medical visits, despite deducting for social security. They also fire workers at the end of the year to avoid giving raises.

28. Author's interview with Marion Traub-Werner, STITCH organizer, 11 July 2001, Guatemala City.

29. ILO researcher Ruth Martínez, cited in "Labor Problems in Maquilas," *Central America Report*, 14 May 1998, p. 5.

Finally, maquilas enjoyed government protection. Officials were reluctant to intervene even in massive firings. In El Salvador, "the maquila sector went after unions in a big way," according to Mark Anner, representative of the Norwegian Labor Federation at the time. "To gain 300 unionized workers would mean 1000 firings with triple that number waiting for work. Only 5 of 200 factories have unions, and these are largely symbolic. Not one has achieved the 51 percent of membership required to negotiate a contract."³⁰ Salvadoran workers gave similar assessments.³¹ In a survey, three out of four maquila workers complained of a lack of organizational rights (UCA 1996). Giovanni Fuentes of FEASIES said, "During the last three years, we have supported thirteen efforts at union organizing." While the government stood by, "each one of them has been completely destroyed."³²

A recent UN report chastised Guatemala's lack of negotiated contracts and the inadequacy of legal minimum wages (MINUGUA 2001; Jiménez and Fernández 2001).³³ Maquila managers circulate blacklists of suspected activists to inhibit unions (Lievens 1997). As Irene Barrientos of UNSITRAGUA explained, "Many workers are afraid to organize because they are afraid of losing their jobs."³⁴ After a Korean firm dismissed eight women in 1998, the Korean ambassador rebuffed UNSITRAGUA's recommendations for respecting working conditions.³⁵

Despite influential subcontractors, women's inexperience, and government complicity, however, Central American unions have attempted to organize at a large number of maquilas with occasional success. A primary challenge has been to create an organizing model appropriate to regional culture, gender, and legal systems. According to Rodolfo Robles of FESTRAS, "Some confederations have taken a 'social-work' approach. They responded to individual needs but risked becoming overextended and unfocused, diluting resources on whatever came along first."³⁶ Other unions searched for community-based strategies that met the needs of young maquila workers (Forster 1996). Several leaders adopted culturally oriented approaches by "organizing youth committees for fiestas and sports because they are concerned about their boyfriends, etc." Other leaders sought neighborhood support for a specific action, as did the textile workers at Lunafil

30. Author's interview with Mark Anner, 1 July 1996, San Salvador.

31. See NLC (1998, 1999) and testimony on <www.nlcnet.org>.

32. Giovanni Fuentes, "Testimony," 20 Sept. 1999, regarding a Kathie Lee sweatshop in El Salvador. See <www.nlcnet.org>.

33. See also <www.minugua.guate.net.derechos humanos>.

34. "May 1: Little for Organized Labor to Celebrate," *Central America Report*, 5 May 2000, p. 8. Author's interview with Irene Barrientos, Director of International Relations, UNSITRAGUA, 11 July 2001, Guatemala City.

35. "Korean Maquilas Accused of Labor Rights Violations," *Central America Report*, 11 Sept. 1998, p. 7.

36. Author's interview with Rodolfo Robles, former secretary general of FESTRAS, 9 Mar. 1995, Guatemala City.

until that company closed (Reed and Brandow 1996, 127–40). A representative from the Support Team International for Textileras (STITCH) emphasized that the kind of community can make a vast difference, especially “when workers have lived there for a while, but it is much harder in the dispersed dog-eat-dog existence surrounding many current maquilas.”³⁷

Union Women

A related challenge is how Central American unions adjusted to the concerns of maquila women. The head of FEASIES insisted that despite the history of machismo, “We must address gender inequalities fundamentally.”³⁸ Federations strove to incorporate criticisms reported by Karin Lievens: that “the majority of women are not interested in joining” and “unions do not take into account the double workday that they have to carry out” (Lievens 1997, 7). For Isabel Bonilla of GRUFEPFAM, “Unions often forget that wage increases are not the primary issue for women. Rather, they are concerned about getting day care, receiving permission to go to the IGGS [the Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social], covering their health costs, and educating their children.”³⁹ Rosa Escobar, head of Guatemala’s *Mujeres en Solidaridad*, added, “Unions can’t just create a Secretary for Women’s Issues. Unions must make alliances with all groups that promote women’s rights . . . , otherwise women aren’t motivated to join.”⁴⁰

Yet despite their lack of traditional union experience, women workers in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua have quickly demonstrated collective skills. In Guatemala, Mónica Felipe Alvarez headed a carefully orchestrated contract drive at a plant owned by the world’s largest shirtmaker, Phillips Van Heusen (PVH): “The company used to fire workers without any cause” or refuse “to pay the workers their full salaries.” The union tried to counteract these practices, but PVH managers bribed or fired the leaders. Mónica Alvarez decided to call workers “together every Friday to plan our strategy and to identify leaders from each of the [plant’s] sections” (Traub-Werner and Yanz 2000, 15–16). Eventually, the workers won a contract. In Honduras, Yesenia Bonilla and Reina Ramos pursued a similar approach at the Kimi apparel factory to stop what Yesenia Bonilla called “so much abuse”: “After we got our legal status in 1996 . . . , thanks to God, we have won a lot of things for the workers”

37. Author’s interview with Marion Traub-Werner, 11 July 2001, Guatemala City.

38. Author’s interview with Roger Gutiérrez, secretary general of FEASIES, 17 Mar. 1995, San Salvador.

39. Author’s interview with Isabel Bonilla, director of GRUFEPFAM, 17 July 2001, Guatemala City.

40. Author’s interview with Rosa Escobar, director of *Mujeres en Solidaridad*, 17 July 2001, Guatemala City.

(Traub-Werner and Yanz 2000, 21). Reina Ramos underscored, "I feel good because I know that we are struggling not just for the individuals involved, but for the collective. We all receive low salaries and our families are all poor. We've all supported one another" (Traub-Werner and Yanz 2000, 27).

After operating for less than two years longer, both PVH and Kimi closed.⁴¹ Workers then organized a union at Cardiz, a PVH supplier owned by the labor-section coordinator of Guatemala's Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras (CACIF). One month later, Cardiz shut its doors still owing considerable back pay and severance to its workers.⁴²

Former maquila worker Marie Mejía still did not give up. Becoming an organizer for the International Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) and FESTRAS, she worked closely with women from the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) to organize at Choy and Shin, which ran two plants that contracted with Liz Claiborne. The workers elected Gloria Córdoba as their union leader, her greatest aspiration being "the realization of dignified treatment."⁴³ In Honduras the women's struggle at Kimi inspired others at You Yang enough to negotiate their own contract.⁴⁴ Salvadoran women organized seven maquila unions. In part because of their experience with the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores (CST), Nicaraguan women gained eight maquila unions in the late 1990s (Zeledón 1997), although they subsequently faced increasing difficulties and many disappeared.

Union responses to corporate reorganization in bananas and maquilas illustrate class contentions elsewhere. The battle for any labor beachhead borders on "a fight to the death." Thus the prospects for significant unionization in Central America remain bleak. Where unions maintain a foothold, they often surrender flexibility in work rules and pay scales in exchange for job assurances and respect for the bargaining process. Even so, their choices are hardly guided by vintage business unionism. Unions still kindle the fire of a much broader social agenda.

41. For a fuller account of the PVH drive, see Armbruster (1999).

42. There is irony here. Arias, in economic difficulty, postponed social security payments. Facing a PVH contract withdrawal, he "asked the union for help." Author's interview with Carlos Arias Maselli, coordinator of the Comisión Laboral of CACIF, 12 July 2001. The union viewed the matter differently, according to Carlos Mancilla, secretary general of the CUSG, 16 July 2001, Guatemala City. Arias resigned as CACIF's labor coordinator but returned.

43. Author's interviews with Gloria Córdoba, secretary general of the Sindicato de Cima-Textilos, 14 and 21 July 2001, Guatemala City.

44. As of November 2001, wages remained a sticking point but jobs were secure (U.S. LEAP 2001). See also *ITGLWF Bulletin*, 3 Nov. 2001.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATE AND TRADE UNIONS

While not as potentially aligned with labor as in South America, Central American states have buffered domestic industries and workers from unbridled international competition, despite their reputation as “banana republics.”⁴⁵ Although the unionized population rarely surpassed 10 percent of the workforce (except in revolutionary Guatemala and Nicaragua),⁴⁶ labor won wage increases, benefits, and certain job protections for all workers. In the United States, these matters are usually contractual issues that are arbitrated by nonstate officials when disputes arise. In both Central and South America, in contrast, they have been handled through government commissions and courts, thereby rendering state-union relations much more significant. During much of the twentieth century, Central American unions regarded the state as the crucial instrument for establishing price controls, setting minimum salary guidelines, enforcing rules on worker retention, and assuring a modicum of benefits and pensions.

Recent global pressures have transformed this arrangement: international monetary agreements have eroded the state’s ability to set benefit requirements and to implement wage and price controls. At the same time, world financial institutions have increasingly forced states to privatize many services and lay off thousands. As elsewhere, Central American governments have weakened protective employment legislation and have faced pressure to standardize or “harmonize downward” their labor codes. Unions have wrestled with each of these trends.

Labor’s Response to the State’s Decline as Labor Negotiator

Free trade has forced smaller national governments to sacrifice autonomy and power, as seen in their capitulation to IMF demands for privatization and U.S. deregulation requirements in telecommunications.⁴⁷ Such North American pressure is hardly new, but in the absence of cold war dy-

45. Unlike their Southern cousins, during much of the twentieth century, Central American unions avoided strong alliances with the state or with political parties (Gadio 1987). Exceptions occurred in Panama and Nicaragua and among the state workers in Costa Rica, but these alliances were shorter or less organic than those in the Southern Cone. Although certain unions held sympathies toward certain governments or parties in power, the movement within the region did not favor a social pact with the state that compromised bargaining. Likewise, despite halting efforts during the era of the Central American Common Market (Carreras n.d.), states rarely embraced the import-substitution industrialization model characteristic of Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and Chile. Nor did they become substantial labor supporters.

46. The U.S. Department of Labor series entitled *Foreign Labor Trends* lists the percentage of the workforce unionized in various countries. For earlier data, see Greenfield and Maram (1987).

47. See Mark Landler, “Communications Pact to Favor Growing Giants,” p. D-10, and

namics and under the guise of democratization, the “Washington consensus” has pursued the free-market–free-trade agenda more aggressively (Henwood 2000). Yet as national states lose power to regulate economic activity, they also surrender their ability to legislate over their own social spheres, to obtain compliance with basic trade-union rights, and to assure payment of minimally adequate wages.

These external forces have also caused Central American states to substitute investor promotion for worker protection. As a researcher for the Centro de Estudios del Trabajo (CENTRA) in El Salvador explained, “Formerly, even the business sector had sought protection from the state so that manufacturing could flourish. But now globalization places the state in a difficult spot. So the president announces we have to improve our quality to compete on an international level. Business here is trying to enhance production to reduce expenses. But rather than invest in technology, it seeks to lower labor costs. So after twenty years of state protection of obsolete industrialization with obsolete machines, it now adopts the U.S. [deregulation] model.”⁴⁸ True to form, Salvadoran President Armando Calderón Sol then proclaimed that he “would like to see the whole country turned into a free-trade zone.”⁴⁹ Subsequently, President Fernando Flores pursued a similar policy in conjunction with Plan Puebla Panamá.⁵⁰

In response, the union movement first sought to strengthen the state’s role as arbiter. In addition to founding local human rights organizations and condemning military atrocities, the union movement inaugurated broad citizen coalitions.⁵¹ By 1988 Guatemalan unions had mobilized the coalition Unidad Acción Sindical y Popular (UASP) to protest IMF adjustment requirements (Goldston 1989; Frundt 1990). Common fronts also developed in El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. After several days of mass demonstrations or a general strike, these labor-populist coalitions often obtained state agreements to retard price increases and improve minimum wages. For example, the UASP won Guatemalan government backing for higher minimum wages in 1987, 1988, and 1990.

When Central American governments reneged on these agreements, labor suffered a blow.⁵² Yet as peace efforts increased, unions

Edmund L. Andrews, “68 Nations Agree to Widen Markets in Communications,” p. A-1, both in *The New York Times*, 18 Feb. 1997.

48. Author’s interview with Gilberto Ernesto García Dueñas, researcher for the Centro de Estudios del Trabajo (CENTRA) in El Salvador, 1 July 1996, San Salvador.

49. “Labor Problems in the Maquilas,” *Central America Report*, 14 May 1998, p. 4.

50. See José Luis Sanz, “Flores: El camino es correcto,” *El Diario de Hoy*, 25 July 2001, p. 17; and “Controversial Plan Puebla Panama Approved,” *Central America Report*, 29 June 2001, pp. 1–2.

51. In 1985 the Guatemalan union movement helped organize key groups to reduce violence, including the Grupo Apoyo Mutuo and the Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala.

52. Byron Morales found permanent damage from Guatemala’s failure with the accord of 8 Mar. 1993. Author’s interview with Morales of UNSITRAGUA, 18 July 2001, Guatemala City.

became a decisive force in negotiating political and economic proposals. In some countries, they gained a voice on commissions setting the minimum wage and aided in constructing other democratic social institutions. One example was the way unions functioned vis-à-vis the Guatemalan Asamblea Civil, which brought to the table issues that both the government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) had neglected. Although Asamblea objections did not significantly alter the socioeconomic accords and amnesty, the Asamblea was credited with promoting a widely respected agreement on indigenous rights. For Byron Morales, participant from UNSITRAGUA, labor's involvement meant "a change from the union's past practice of nonparticipation in politics." Another former UNSITRAGUA leader added, "We helped consolidate the negotiating process for the accords."⁵³ In effect, such efforts signified the transformation of labor into a negotiating force of its own. For a brief period in 1996, all the major Guatemalan confederations joined the Gran Alianza Sindical to express common positions vis-à-vis the state.

Peace Accords and Union Fragmentation

Nevertheless, once peace descended in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, several forces converged to inhibit labor's search for political redefinition. Members of the business sector believed that with less state oversight, they could implement draconian labor policies. Former guerrillas, preoccupied with political visibility, overemphasized party building to the detriment of popular organizations. Unions and other civil groups devoted their attention to rebuilding particular institutional relationships. Coalitional goals grew less focused, and unions found it increasingly difficult to mobilize public outcry over protracted negotiations with the state.

For example, in 1992, after the breakdown of the Foro para la Concertación Económica y Social created to implement the Economic Accords, disillusioned Salvadoran unions had trouble mounting a coherent rebuttal. When the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) crafted its plans without broad consultation, the unions attempted to instruct congressional delegates who were former combatants on privatization and changes in trade-zone legislation. Labor even helped assure the party's victorious plurality in March 2000. But the FMLN won insufficient votes to prevent widespread reductions in state employment and remained divided on other labor issues.⁵⁴ Paramilitary splits soon deepened ruptures in the labor movement as well as in related research institutes. According to labor

53. Interview with Morales, 23 Feb. 1995, Guatemala City. Also, author's interview with Sergio Guzmán of CONIC, 19 July 2001, Guatemala City.

54. Author's interviews with Guzmán in 2001 and with Julio Coj of UNSITRAGUA, 11 July 2001, Guatemala City. Unions were dismayed that some FMLN mayors promoted

attorney Enrique Torres, former guerrillas in Guatemala let go of any hold they had on the unions as they became increasingly factionalized themselves.⁵⁵ “The URNG divisions affected us all,” acknowledged Byron Morales. Other federation leaders and observers agreed that as the Guatemalan state freed the private sector to have its way, unions abandoned a unified vision and withdrew “each into their own interests.”⁵⁶ The popular sectors became disorganized, and the UASP split into two segments.

As state power declined, Central American unions must be credited nonetheless with creating conditions for subsequent mobilization in a climate of relative civility (Gaspar 1993). They became more professional and more political in working within existing institutional “rules of the game.” Out of Guatemala’s Gran Alianza, the Unidad Guatemalteca de Trabajadores (UGT) formed to represent certain confederations. Some predicted that it would develop into a broader alliance.⁵⁷ In El Salvador in 2000, public-sector unions rallied under the new Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores de Sector Público de El Salvador (FESTRASPE).⁵⁸ CST workers in Nicaragua maintained a political role. But in all countries in the region, unions were cautionary about one issue: “Politics should not replace the immediate demands of our own workers.”⁵⁹

The Privatization of Parastatal Institutions

In the 1980s, many Central American unions shifted their organizing efforts from the countryside to the urban public sector. By the 1990s, state-sector unions numbered among the strongest advocates for trade-union solidarity and observance of the labor code. Therefore when Central American governments, influenced by neoliberal ideologies and demands by the IMF, World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) for structural adjustment, “privatized” state-sponsored activities, they targeted union-dominated institutions.⁶⁰

privatization and disregarded labor laws and contracts. Author’s interview with Oscar Bolaños, secretary general of FESTRAPES, 2001. Also author’s 2001 interviews with Gilberto Ernesto García Dueñas of CEAL and Roger Gutiérrez of FEASIES.

55. Author’s interview with labor attorney Enrique Torres, 13 July 2001, Guatemala City.

56. Author’s interviews with Morales in 2001; Ricardo Changala Equipo Laboral, MINUGUA, 26 July 2001, Guatemala City; Rodolfo Robles, former secretary general of FESTRAS, 13 July 2001, Guatemala City; and Dennis Smith, director of COVERCO, 18 July 2001, Guatemala City.

57. On 1 May 2001, the UGT—made up of the CGTG, the CUSG, FESEBS, FESTRAS, and the CTC—joined with segments of the UASP and campesinos in major marches that publicly celebrated labor’s role. Chanters demanded land distribution, an end to impunity and corruption, respect for women, and rights for neighborhood vendors.

58. Author’s interviews with José Víctor Aguilar Guillén, director of the CSTS, 23 July 2001, San Salvador; and Oscar Bolaños in 2001.

59. Author’s interview with Enrique Torres, labor attorney, 13 July 2001, Guatemala City.

60. On the World Bank’s structural adjustment strategies, see Ruthrauff and Carlson (1997).

In El Salvador, the public sector was “nailed by both privatization and job reduction. In 1996, 15,000 jobs were eliminated using the rationale of efficiency. All the agencies affected had strong unions.”⁶¹ The Comisión Ejecutiva Hidroeléctrica del Río Lemba (CEL, the national electric company) cut its workforce by half, down to 3,000. When El Salvador divided the Agencia Nacional de Telecomunicaciones (ANTEL) in 1998, it fired 72 leaders of ANTEL’s 4 unions. France Telecom took over the Compañía de Telecomunicaciones segment with an eighteen-month commitment to the other workers but subsequently implemented further layoffs (Cardona 1999).

In 1996 Guatemala also began an intense privatization, guided by the attitude that “state-supported businesses are heavy with employees who do not do very much.”⁶² “To privatize is to modernize,” trumpeted advertisements in *Crónica* and the national media, which even claimed the backing of European socialist governments (Fundación Myrna Mack 1993; R. González 1997). The neoliberal government led by President Alvaro Arzú “gained legal authority to cancel union contracts and implemented a public-sector anti-strike law to stymie protest.”⁶³ Arzú then dismantled his own ministries via a forced retirement package.⁶⁴ The agricultural ministry dropped from 17,000 to 700 workers, with its 16 unions reduced to 2. Altogether, more than 26,000 Guatemalan public-sector workers lost their jobs.⁶⁵ Guatemala also sold its state electrical companies and telecommunications system. The newly privatized INDE (Industria Nacional de Electricidad) terminated 3,000; Telecomunicaciones de Guatemala (TELGUA) laid off 2,500 workers. The World Bank’s International Finance Corporation opened a Guatemalan office to guide potential investors in privatized state-owned businesses. Other Central American countries followed similar scenarios, as they also urged legislation to prohibit public-sector strikes. By the mid-1990s, state wages often fell behind those in the private sector, as occurred in Costa Rica.

Throughout the isthmus, public-sector unions struggled to resist these

61. Author’s interview with Mark Anner, 1 July 1996, San Salvador.

62. According to one researcher from the Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES), 80 percent of the workforce at the Industria Nacional de Electricidad (INDE) held their positions due to their participation in election campaigns and were perceived as doing little work. Author’s interview with Eduardo Mazarieagos of ASIES, 27 June 1996, Guatemala City.

63. In 1992 Decree 29 had already begun privatizing road construction, retiring 5,000 state workers. Author’s interview with Danilo Aguilar García, secretary general of FENASSEP, 19 July 2001, Guatemala City.

64. Author’s interview with José Luis Chac, secretary general of STINDE, 18 July 2001, Guatemala City. The legislation also permitted companies to use the “*via directiva*” to grant individual contracts, thus appearing to violate the 1996 Socio-Economic Accord between the government and the URNG that stressed the former’s respect for the labor negotiation process. Interview with Mazarieagos in 1996.

65. Calculated from the drop in social security affiliates between 1994 and 1999, Ministerio

changes. Some sectors were much better prepared. Citing inefficiencies and corruption, union leaders urged that organizational changes, rather than major reductions in force, would accomplish public objectives more efficiently.⁶⁶ But fewer unions offered specific alternatives. Sixty percent of the workers accepted retirement, and many feared risking the opprobrium directed against strikers. Yet public and private unions mobilized jointly to protest privatization, detrimental changes in labor codes, anti-strike laws, and "reform" of civil or municipal services. In every country, forums sponsored by the ILO clarified international conventions, political strategies, and legal services for the rank and file.⁶⁷

In Guatemala public-sector unions attempted various oppositional strategies. In 2000 the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Salud Pública de Guatemala (SNTSG) gained enough affiliates in all departments to negotiate a national contract, although the new Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (FRG) government often disregarded it. Some ministry unions signed a transition agreement that maintained contract benefits for substantially reduced memberships.⁶⁸ The Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto Nacional de Electricidad (STINDE) brokered its international trade secretariat affiliation to pressure the Arzú government to protect benefits.⁶⁹ But the distribution workers in the privatized Empresa Eléctrica were unable to maintain protections.⁷⁰

El Salvador's unions (via CENTRA) offered alternate plans for privatization. CENTRA's García Dueñas explained, "We want the government to compete in these areas."⁷¹ For several years, the telecommunications unions managed to postpone privatization of their sector. While suffering extensive losses, former workers for the Asociación Salvadoreña de Trabajadores de Telecomunicaciones (ASTTEL) finally won a lengthy court battle enabling them to create a new union.⁷² In the electricity sector, where 95 percent of the workers were unionized, the affected unions proposed allo-

de Trabajo, *Boletín de Estadísticas*, no. 9, and no. 11, t. 1. Public-sector unions increased from 162 in 1994 to 401 in 1999, according to *Boletín* no. 11, t. 16.

66. Author's interview with Mario Lutini, Secretary of Conflicts, STGUATEL, 4 Aug. 1994, Guatemala City.

67. Local ILO labor attorney Thelma del Cid stressed taking advantage of the ILO tripartite process. Author's interview, 27 June 1996, Guatemala City. She is now a judge.

68. Interview with Danilo Aguilar García, secretary general of FENASSEP, 19 July 2001, Guatemala City. He also headed the union at the finance ministry that used reclassification rules to gain contract workers permanent status. Few other ministries could take advantage of such rules, he admitted.

69. While in France, Arzú was confronted by unions affiliated with the International Secretariat for Public Service (ISPS). He immediately announced that negotiations would proceed, according to my 2001 interview with José Luis Chac of STINDE.

70. Interview with Chac.

71. Interview with Gilberto Ernesto García Dueñas of CENTRA, 2 July 1996, San Salvador.

72. When ANTEL was divided and sold, the militant ASTTEL union represented 80 percent

cating power generation to the state sector and distribution to the private sector. Electrical production workers were able to negotiate an excellent retirement package that paid 280 percent and 20 percent in stock as well as contract continuations for current workers, albeit with huge reduction in numbers. Again, distribution workers had less success.⁷³ To organize a collective response, Central American electrical unions organized the Federación Sindical de los Trabajadores de Energías de Central America in mid-2001.

Salvadoran health and pension workers proposed a mixed system that allowed choice of coverage from public or private sectors.⁷⁴ The government's resistance to union proposals on health came to a head in November 1999, when more than 11,000 members of the Salvadoran social security workers' union took to the streets for four months to protest privatization of public hospitals. Other unions staged sympathy demonstrations, and organized doctors threatened to join the strike. In March 2000, three days before the national election, 60,000 Salvadorans turned out in support, forcing the government to back down. The strike signaled a "recomposition" of the country's trade-union movement.⁷⁵

Since 1996, unions in Costa Rica have also resisted privatization of telecommunications and electricity.⁷⁶ Costa Rican health workers have challenged care privatization as "culminating in institutional decentralization . . . restricting the basic health-care package . . . [and] benefiting only a small class of businesses."⁷⁷ A massive protest in April 2000 forced the Congress to seek a new approach.⁷⁸ In Honduras, a successful three-day strike in August 2000 by the Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto Hondureño de Seguridad Social, 2,500 strong, centered not on wages but on pension pro-

of the workforce but was not legally recognized. SINTTEL (Sindicato de Trabajadores de Telecomunicaciones) had only 3 or 4 percent but held legal recognition as *persona jurídica*. Management had sought a transition agreement with SINTTEL. Finally, each of the 5,400 workers received 11,470 colones.

73. Interview with Gilberto Ernesto García Dueñas, director of CEAL, 23 July 2001, San Salvador.

74. ANDES dealt with the teachers and the educational system, while SITINPEP covered the system of pensions. Other unions also participated.

75. Interview with Salvador Duarte, retired secretary of the Sindicato General de Trabajadores de la Industria del Transporte y Afines de El Salvador (SGTITAES), at the Open World Conference in Defense of Trade Union Independence and Democratic Rights, *Report no. 21* (San Francisco, Calif.: Labor Council 1188, 2000). Also, author's interview with Dr. Julio Alfredo Osegueda Baires of the Sindicato de Médicos, Enfermeras y Trabajadores del Instituto Salvadoreño de Seguro Social (SIMETRISSE), 25 Apr. 2000, Washington, D.C.

76. Author's interview with Rodrigo Aguilar Arce, leader of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Rerum Novarum (CTRN), 12 Aug. 1999, San José, C.R.

77. Olga Carrillo, secretary general of the Unión Nacional de Empleadas (UNDECA), as quoted in "Privatizing Healthcare: Who Benefits?" *Central America Report*, 3 Nov. 2000, pp. 7–8.

78. "Protests Put Privatizations on Hold," *Central America Report*, 7 Apr. 2000, pp. 1–2.

tection.⁷⁹ Unions formed a “*bloque popular*” with other organizations that combined with some business groups to win a congressional promise not to privatize the Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica. Some 30,000 members of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Honduras (CTH) occupied bridges and highways, combining their challenge to privatizations with a demand for increasing the minimum wage.⁸⁰ After talks failed in October 2000, with “no other recourse . . . to regain the workers’ negotiating power,” the CTH initiated a general strike.⁸¹

Union Struggle against Weakened Labor-Code Requirements

A third force causing state-union contention has surrounded the implementation and reform of labor laws. Labor codes arrived in Central America in the middle of the twentieth century in conjunction with liberating social movements. They survived despite subsequent backlashes that weakened enforcement. Unions invoked these codes along with corporatist traditions and (later) U.S. trade requirements to gain union recognition occasionally and retard arbitrary firings (Frundt 1998). The civil war years, however, obliterated many protections (Dunkerly 1994). The deregulatory emphasis of neoliberalizing states restricted collective bargaining and discouraged evenhanded labor inspections and court judgments. An informal business-government agreement to overlook union rights often accompanied the expansion of maquila production, as verified by the paucity of labor-code compliance in the maquila areas. When El Salvador’s labor ministry claimed 2,600 investigations annually, researcher Joaquín Arriola countered, “From our data, inspectors arrive rarely and receive bribes when they do.”⁸² A leader of FEASIES repeated, “There is a plethora of labor violations. People need jobs. Managers lack any labor consciousness, so they exploit people. The Minister of Labor does nothing to help.”⁸³ “Code implementation is practically nonexistent in El Salvador,” affirmed a former regional director of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD),

79. “Reform Efforts to Revive ‘Comatose’ Social Security,” *Central America Report*, 1 Sept. 2000, p. 3.

80. “Business and Labor Oppose Sale of Power Company,” *Central America Report*, 9 June 2000, p. 6; also “Workers Challenge Minimum Wage, Privatization,” 14 July 2000, pp. 4–5.

81. Dinora Aceituno, secretary general of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Honduras (CTH), as cited in “Salary Negotiations Stall, Workers Strike,” *Central America Report*, 6 Oct. 2000, p. 7.

82. Author’s interview with Joaquín Arriola in 1995. ILO investigators Arévalo and Arriola found no change in attitude or code compliance between their 1992 study of the Santa Barbara zone involving 120 textile producers and their 1994 study involving 208, according to Arriola’s interview in 1995. In 2000 the Salvadoran and Guatemalan labor ministries reached similar conclusions. See <www.ncl.org>.

83. Author’s interview with Roger Gutiérrez, secretary general of FEASIES, 1995.

the predecessor of ACILS. "You have a pro-business government that carries the baggage from the war. The Minister of Labor is the last man in any budget allocation."⁸⁴

In Guatemala a spokesperson for MINUGUA (Misión de Naciones Unidas en Guatemala) agreed: "The [Labor] Ministry does not have the capacity to perform efficiently."⁸⁵ The Ministry's own investigation showed that 78 percent of the companies surveyed were paying less than the minimum wage, yet the ministry could perform only sporadic enforcement. Judicial incapacity was even worse. The CGTG's Rigoberto Dueñas reported, "The courts take years to render decisions on collective conflicts."⁸⁶

Unions publicized the lack of code enforcement in any way they could. Occasionally, a company's nonpayment of social security would result in an employee's death, meriting media attention. Unions similarly took advantage of labor provisions in the U.S. General System of Preferences (GSP) that force beneficiary governments to comply with labor rights and basic ILO standards. In 2001 all major Costa Rican federations petitioned for GSP review because the courts had ruled against public-sector negotiations.⁸⁷ They also requested investigative delegations from the ILO and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The latter had just verified how Guatemalan police and military routinely patrolled factories and free-trade zones to stifle potential "trouble," such as a union-organizing drive (ICFTU 1998).

Labor-Code Reform

Although unions have emphasized implementation of labor codes, it is labor-code reform that has caught the attention of elite leaders seeking to clean up the labor-relations image of Central America. In 1994 in violation of a tripartite agreement, the Salvadoran government and the private sector imposed a labor-code reform (Davis 1995), and they convened a new "tripartite body" with largely handpicked representatives who "served to divide unions, not to improve labor rights."⁸⁸ In 2000–2001, code reform became a key issue in Guatemala when unions developed a common set of recommendations. CACIF rejected many but finally reached an agreement with the unions on nine points, implicitly accepting public-sector workers' right to strike. For the United States, however, the agreement did not comply sufficiently with ILO principles or address the lack of code implemen-

84. Author's interview with Michael Donovan of AIFLD, 15 Mar. 1995, San Salvador.

85. Interview with Ricardo Changala, MINUGUA, 2001.

86. Author's interview with Rigoberto Dueñas, 12 July 2001, Guatemala City; and with Carlos Mancilla, secretary general of the CUSG, in 2001.

87. Signed by the Asociación Nacional de Empleados Públicos y Privados (ANEPP), the Federación de Trabajadores Limonenses (FTL), the CTRN, and COSIBA, all of Costa Rica.

88. Author's interview with José Candray, director of CENTRA, 16 Mar. 1995, San Salvador.

tation with SITRABI and other cases already noted. Demanding further changes, the United States threatened GSP penalties. Preferring a multilateral approach, local union leaders had mixed feelings about the code outcome.⁸⁹ One negotiator remained sanguine: "We established something fundamental: You can't pass a code in the Congress without the unions!"⁹⁰

At another level, U.S. policy makers also urged a regional "standardization" of labor legislation as a solution.⁹¹ Central American unions replied with an evaluation of their own country codes (summarized in CTCA 1996) and warned about "downward harmonization."⁹² The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) then urged the region's labor ministers to adopt a model code that incorporated basic ILO standards. According to Martha Velásquez, "We pulled no punches. The ministers need to get ready for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)."⁹³

USAID got no argument from Juan Francisco Alfaro, former secretary general of the CUSG, who had advocated "a complete renovation of the ministries."⁹⁴ After his appointment in 2000 as labor minister under Guatemala's conservative FRG government, however, Alfaro made little headway despite hefty funding from U.S. policy makers. Between 1995 and 2000, USAID spent 5.2 million dollars on labor assistance under its Proyecto de Apoyo a la Participación de Centroamericana en el Area de Libre Comercio de las Américas (PROALCA). The program sought to strengthen regional inspection systems to comply with basic ILO standards, health and safety requirements, and statistical reporting. A related program helped labor ministries address child-labor abuses. Ever hopeful, in 2001 USAID inaugurated PROALCA II with an 8-million-dollar labor component desig-

89. Unions won elimination of individual contracts, the right of agricultural workers to strike during harvest, and higher penalties for law violations (to be paid to the labor ministry). In exchange, the Congress allowed an increase in the number of affiliates required to form an industrial union, a federation, and a confederation. Public-sector workers did not gain the right to strike (see Spohn 2002).

90. Interview with labor attorney Enrique Torres in 2001.

91. USAID sponsored an extensive study on regional harmonization of national labor codes, headed by former Costa Rican labor minister Luis Alberto Monge (Monge 1997). According to official Peter Accolla, the U.S. Labor Department "hoped the study would help Central American countries modernize and avoid pitfalls by harmonizing their legislation." Telephone interview, Feb. 1999.

92. Author's interview with Juan Francisco Alfaro, future labor minister, 29 June 1996, Guatemala City. In Guatemala, Arzú's Partido de Avanzado Nacional (PAN) put forward such a proposal, and the local ILO office produced a point-by-point analysis showing how it would devastate unions. In the context of GSP pressure, PAN withdrew the proposal, according to Thelma del Cid, interviewed in 1996.

93. Author's interview with Marta R. Velásquez, director of USAID's Oficina Regional de Comercio, 12 July 2001, Guatemala City.

94. Interview with Alfaro in 1996. The labor minister died suddenly in Feb. 2002.

nated to implement the labor provisions of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI).⁹⁵

In sum, union efforts to enforce national labor codes have attracted public attention and outside money to improve labor relations. Central American governments have strengthened certain labor-code provisions. Ministries have helped with contracts and occasionally gained union access for maquila workers.⁹⁶ Despite such attention, however, labor-code non-compliance and court bottlenecks remain the norm in most countries (Mena 1994; Frundt 1998).

In the face of corporate power, the state's decline undercut union efforts to strengthen the state as negotiator, to counter privatization creatively, and to achieve genuine code enforcement. For a time, the Central American labor movement made headway by broadening its power base through redefining labor's role in civil society. The coalitions the movement inaugurated became defensively important first to retard direct repression, then to protest the consequences of structural adjustment and privatization. Where the labor movement served as a primary voice of public opposition, unions acquired a respected if begrudged role in national social and economic policy. But just when the unions hoped to tap this newfound civil strength to protect their base, the peace accords allowed other forces to fragment labor unity, some from the unanticipated source of international supporters.

NEW CHALLENGES IN INTERNATIONAL LABOR SUPPORT

As globalization has transformed the nature of state-union relations, so it has altered traditional relationships among Central American unions and Northern unions in the United States and Europe. Prior to the mid-1980s, cold-war polarities often determined international labor linkages in the region. AIFLD and USAID offered many incentives to eschew socialist tendencies. Christian Democratic European governments promoted alliances with the Confederación Latinoamericana de Trabajadores (CLAT). In contrast, Scandinavian and German socialists backed independent unions and even affiliates of the nominally Communist Federación Sindical del Mundo (FSM). These differences stimulated a funding frenzy. By some estimates, U.S. government contributions in the 1980s and 1990s to isthmus labor organizations and related development programs totaled more than 3 billion dollars. The corrosive effect of these funds on internal union operations has been well documented (Armstrong et al. 1987; Barry and Preusch 1990;

95. Interview with M. Velásquez in 2001. PROALCA was administered largely by an NGO, the Secretaría de Integración Económica de Central America, which manages the Sistema Regional de Información Laboral. See <www.laboral.sieca.org.gt> and <www.proalca.org>. The CBI incorporated GSP labor requirements into its program.

96. The Guatemalan Labor Ministry claimed to have checked 153 contracts between 1995

Sims 1992; H. Spalding 1993, 1988a, 1988b; Weinrub and Bollinger 1987). Although European unions sent substantial monies to independent confederations as an antidote to North American subversion of bona fide trade-union activity, their external funding also inhibited autonomous local movements.

But in the 1990s, globalization and the cessation of war hostilities brought fresh appraisals of local-international labor relations, stimulating transformations in Northern funding and organizing strategies. For example, U.S. government support for labor-related programs dropped precipitously even before AIFLD was phased out in 1997. At the same time, Northern activists expanded consumer sensitivity regarding sweatshops abroad, as they protested trade agreements that neglected labor protections. These rapidly changing developments posed new challenges for Central American unions, who felt neglected following the peace accords. As their memberships declined, labor unions were quickly forced to grapple with fresh patterns of leadership and decision making. They suddenly faced substantial reallocations in Northern funding just as they were expected to create new organizing models, campaign alliances, and sophisticated proposals for trade negotiations.

Reallocated Funding

Central American trade unions have faced decreasing or redirected external financial support. When AIFLD's policy-oriented funding came to a halt, conservative unions were especially hurt. But in the mid-1990s, Europeans also reduced support, often requiring an accelerated increase in local contributions. According to a spokesperson for the Norwegian Federation, "Local unions used to have a percentage obligation for project funding, but there was no penalty for noncompliance. As foreign funds increased, their dues contribution actually declined. They would submit a budget saying they would raise 20 percent, but they never came up with more than 3 to 8 percent. So now we are saying, we will pay 90 percent (or less) if you pay 10 percent (or more), but if you are short, we will be proportionately short."⁹⁷ European and Canadian donors even redirected resources toward research groups, women's organizations, and other NGOs for worker-education programs and health assistance.

For Central American confederations, the loss of direct funding necessitated a reduction in paid staff and office activity just when the challenges of free trade and mushrooming maquilas loomed. The impact was painful for militant labor organizations like the Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores Salvadoreños (FENASTRAS) in El Salvador and UNSITRAGUA.

and 1999. See *Boletín de Estadísticas*, no. 11, t. 24. Some 42 percent of Salvadoran unions reported having a contract, according to Aguilar (1999).

97. Author's interview with Mark Anner, 1 July 1996, San Salvador.

Although tied to guerrilla factions, both federations had operated as open, vibrant organizations during the war years, even assuming functions of leftist political parties that had been forced to act clandestinely. But the peace accords encouraged groups of former combatants to create their own parties. This change generated confusion and organizational disunity among union affiliates and exacerbated their depleted resources.

The Transformation of FENASTRAS

The poignant fate of the Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores Salvadoreños illustrates how these conditions quickly brought a strong federation to its knees as international funding collapsed. The federation had played a key organizing role during the 1980s, with a membership roster of 26,000 activists. Yet by the war's end, this total had declined to 5,000 due to privatizations and internal disagreements among leaders. Opposition to a common enemy had kept disputes in check during the war, but once the FMLN forces disbanded, a major power struggle surfaced within FENASTRAS.

Moreover, *carte blanche* in foreign funding had shifted union attention away from direct affiliate support and toward the funders in an unhealthy way. Anner acknowledged that unions "spent more time seeking funding, and less time organizing; it took a lot less work to hire a smart young college graduate to write a persuasive proposal for 10,000 *colones* than to collect 10,000 from dues-paying members. By late 1993, FENASTRAS had five people full-time in their projects department and had an international newsletter department, but *no* organizing department!"⁹⁸

Once the war was over, neither donors nor political figures conceived of a program to reintegrate militant trade-union leaders. They had difficulty knowing how to behave. According to Anner, "They had been willing to live on 500 *colones* a month during the war, at a time when factory workers were making 800, but now they had families to support."⁹⁹ After a tortuous year and a half in prison, FENASTRAS leader Juan José Huevo was one who thought he now deserved better.

FENASTRAS ultimately split in two in April 1994, when its sixteen unions jostled over two candidates contending to lead the federation.¹⁰⁰ Then as peace conditions changed, Dutch, French, and Norwegian labor federations all cut their allocations.¹⁰¹ FENASTRAS leader Huevo turned

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Ibid.*

100. Nine unions with a thousand members backed Juan José Huevo; seven unions with four thousand members supported Miguel Ramírez. Instead of compromising, Huevo's forces made a clean sweep. Ramírez's followers consequently formed the Federación Sindical de Trabajadores de El Salvador (FESTRAES). Author's interview with Miguel Ramírez, secretary general of FESTRAES, 15 Mar. 1995, San Salvador.

101. Norway cut back significantly. To avoid the corrupting influence of foreign funds, the

to AIFLD for help but had little success.¹⁰² Without sufficient groundwork, the federation made a precipitous decision to organize apparel plants. When many workers were fired, Huezco finally demanded “protection money.” The federation would negotiate severance pay for fired workers, of which it would retain a healthy percentage. Some said the proposal bordered on extortion. At the least, FENASTRAS risked being charged with encouraging severance agreements.¹⁰³

FENASTRAS’s unfortunate funding approach forced the Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT) and the ICFTU to suspend the federation. By 1995, FENASTRAS was left with about 1,500 members. In reaction, Huezco organized protests and even leafletted the U.S. Embassy to prevent implementation of labor-rights provisions in the GSP trade agreement. Such actions represented a sad reversal for a trade-union leader who had testified in Washington in favor of GSP provisions several years before and a union once at the vanguard of Salvadoran workers’ struggles.

The FENASTRAS story is an especially painful example. In the post-conflict period, other strong unions and confederations also disintegrated. UNTS, the confederation to which FENASTRAS belonged, became embroiled over internal staff firings. Public protests mounted, and many union affiliates abandoned the confederation. The AIFLD-backed UNOC and its Central Democrática de Trabajadores (CTD) headed by Amanda Villatoro also fractured.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, the CST in Nicaragua divided,¹⁰⁵ and the major confederations in Costa Rica and Guatemala jealously guarded their turf, fearing losses of outside funding. Had international union supporters adequately anticipated the transitional needs of postwar unions, perhaps some of these federations would have fared better.

But unions themselves also bear responsibility, and they have risen to the occasion in fits and starts. Lacking donor clarity as to how best to fund the postwar transition, labor organizations gradually changed their dues structure to support projects that had lost international funding, like day-care centers. In Honduras women banana workers who created a school-supplies store with ILO assistance “used the earnings from the store to

Danes considered “the German model” of the labor-supported Freidrich Ebert Foundation, underwriting their own center and inviting workers to participate.

102. Interview with Michael Donovan in 1995.

103. “De profesión, sindicalista,” *Prensa Gráfica*, 15 Oct. 2000, Sección Enfoques.

104. Villatoro was labeled a traitor for testifying in Washington in support of the GSP. As UNOC disappeared, leaders attempted to reorganize through the Confederación de Trabajadores Democráticos (CTD), but this effort ran into roadblocks from the Sindicato Unido de Trabajadores de Construcción (SUTC) and others. By 1999, the CTD had about a thousand members (Aguilar 1999).

105. In January 1999, eleven former CST unions founded the Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores–José Benito Escobar (CST-JBE).

carry out seminars with rank-and-file *compañeras*.”¹⁰⁶ Unions reluctantly implemented a tiered dues system dependent on wage increases rather than on the formerly fixed dues. As members asked what the unions were doing with the funds, leaders grew more accountable. “This is a difficult time for us,” admitted the Secretary General of FESTRAS. “We need assistance for organizing, but we are also developing a self-financing program.”¹⁰⁷ In contrast, when the SNTSG won a 1 percent dues checkoff in negotiations, the FRG government in Guatemala refused to provide the money.¹⁰⁸

A limit on financial support has not diminished local requests for international affiliation. In El Salvador, for example, 60 percent of unions belong to some global entity, and 32 percent are officially tied to one of the various International Trade Secretariats (ITS) (Aguilar 1999). Unions working with the international textile trade secretariat (the ITGLWF) have adopted an international support plan with strict requirements for local contributions. The ITS pays the organizers it sends to assist, but Central American affiliates compensate their officers at the prevailing local wage. Local leaders participate in organizer training and decision making. Unions have worked to resolve conflicting directives coming from the ITS on the one hand and the relevant international union or supporting organization on the other about organizing, international corporate campaigns, and trade agreements.

Organizing

To confront the slippery transformations of global corporations described, international unions have broadened their emphasis on rank-and-file organizing. In the United States, this trend became more apparent following the AFL-CIO’s change of leadership in 1995 and the expansion of its Organizing Institute (Bronfrenbrenner and Juravitch 1998). Institute trainers urged adoption of a model that would systematically and clandestinely create a broad following among workers prior to announcing a union election. The ITGLWF and ACILS pursued this approach. As Benjamin Davis, Latin American Area Director of the Solidarity Center, explained, “the Solidarity Center works closely with international trade secretariats to confront the forces that threaten unions.”¹⁰⁹ Its organizers held leadership sessions on identifying strategic targets and planning. Plant committees developed

106. According to Guadalupe Martínez, a Honduran banana worker cited in Traub-Warner and Yanz (2000).

107. Author’s interview with David Morales, secretary general of FESTRAS, 9 July 2001, Guatemala City.

108. Author’s interview with Luis Lara, secretary general of the SNTSG, 13 July 2001, Guatemala City.

109. Remarks to the Labor Studies Section, LASA, 25 Sept. 1998, Chicago, Illinois.

quietly, knowing that when they publicly declared, management would inevitably accost them with bribes and threats.

The ILGLWF and ACILS emphasis on clandestine direct organizing proved challenging for certain Latin and U.S. unionists and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) accustomed to their own approaches (Frundt 1999, 2002). Traditionally, Latin American labor organizers had placed greater emphasis on a congruence of political forces and personal leaders (Collier and Collier 1989; Bergquist 1986). Emerging from conditions of heavy repression, Central American union leaders tended to select targets that would offer visibility and protection. Organizers would mount huge publicity campaigns in the belief that media notoriety would stave off attacks by rightist security forces. During the 1980s, this strategy, coupled with legal action (the *emplazamiento*), sometimes worked to prevent worker firings and to obtain wage increases (Frundt 1987; Goldston 1989; Levenson-Estrada 1994).¹¹⁰ Following the peace accords, however, companies adopted other mechanisms to avoid unions: they isolated those winning union affiliation, filed countercharges, split off divisions, and bribed resisters.

At first, unions refrained from promoting a clandestine “North American model” for plant organizing. They remained reticent to adopt systematic house visits and quiet enhancements of employee strength. Some thought the visit approach could “put families in danger.”¹¹¹ Jorge Homero Fuentes Aragón of Fundación Doner and COVERCO explained: “Home visits have their place, but . . . unions must be formed and defended in the factory, not elsewhere.”¹¹² Yet UNSITRAGUA, FEASIES, and other federations suffered multiple firings at various maquilas when they went public prematurely.

Differing approaches emerged while organizing the now-closed PVH Camisas Modernas plant in Guatemala (Armbruster 1999; Coats 1991, 1993, 1996; Human Rights Watch 1997; Petersen 1992). In the experience of the ITGLWF, women organizers proved more sensitive to issues of equal pay, maternity and child care, health, and sexual harassment. In 1995–1996, with the union’s assistance, trained organizers like Mónica Felipe Alvarez secretly surpassed the threshold required for contract demands. But in the fall of 1997, the intransigence of company and government officials forced organizers to solicit an international campaign for the women to gain recognition from the labor ministry and a solid contract. When PVH shut the plant eighteen months later, claiming loss of a major contract, advocates of both organizing approaches could make an argument. The clandestine

110. An *emplazamiento* was an official listing of worker grievances. When filed in the labor court, it would prevent all who signed it from being fired until the grievances were resolved. Labor organizers often used the intervening time to organize a legal union.

111. Interview with Rosa Escobar in 2000.

112. Author’s interview with Jorge Homero Fuentes Aragón of Fundación Doner and COVERCO, 26 July 2001, Guatemala City.

model gained a union that assured the workers a generous severance (U.S. LEAP 1999a). Yet the way it was done may have jeopardized workers' chances for employment elsewhere.

Organizing in Nicaragua also illustrated varying approaches. The CST-affiliated Federación Nacional de Sindicatos de la Industria Textil, Vestuario, Piel y Calzado (FNSITVPC) began the nation's first free-zone union at Fortex in 1992. It obtained legal recognition in 1996 and with strong international support, a contract after two years that inspired organizing throughout the zone (Witness for Peace 1998). Nevertheless, the government of President Arnoldo Alemán permitted extensive union firings in 2000–2001. The confederation mounted a strong counteroffensive,¹¹³ and rights were restored at Mil Colores. Yet despite expending considerable international resources, the drive ultimately failed at the large Taiwanese-owned Chentex.¹¹⁴ After losing many maquila unions, the FNSITVPC reassessed its strategies.

In considering these experiences, a number of funders have redirected resources away from unions and toward NGO support for workers' rights and health. By 2001, for example, the isthmus hosted twenty internationally funded projects on maquila issues but only one directly supporting organizing.¹¹⁵ In Guatemala, NGO assistance largely took the form of health clinics (Mujeres en Solidaridad) and educational programs in basic rights (the Asociación Grupo Feminino Pro Mejoramiento Familiar, or GRU-FEPROMEFAM). The maquila project of the Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos (CALDH) offered legal assistance, challenged licenses of those who violated labor regulations, and coordinated other NGO maquila efforts.¹¹⁶ Elsewhere, NGO support was more political. The women of the Movimiento de Mujeres Mélida Anaya Montes (MAM) in El Salvador successfully pressured for changes in free-zone laws (Cabrera 1997). MAM also verified whether employers offered individual contracts, social security, and maternity benefits. Nicaraguan women formed the Asociación de Zonas Francas to clarify regulations and ethical codes, which the Movimiento de Mujeres María Cuadra (MEC) helped monitor (MEC 2000; Lievens 1997).

Certain NGOs have been criticized for taking advantage of Northern interest in labor issues and thus siphoning funds away from direct

113. Via its U.S. support network, the confederation mounted 132 events in 104 U.S. cities by the summer of 2000. See news bulletin issued by the Campaign for Labor Rights, "Nicaragua Update," 3 June 2000.

114. Chentex promised to restore seven hundred fired workers but then backtracked. Solidarity groups in Taiwan and the United States mobilized major support, and the court ordered reinstatement of union leaders. Chentex, however, effectively ostracized those returning, who then resigned in order to organize elsewhere (U.S. LEAP 2001).

115. Interview with Jorge Homero Fuentes Aragón in 2001.

116. The CALDH convenes the Instancia Coordinadora de la Maquila, which meets monthly

union struggles (Petras 1997). A related concern is that they absorb worker energy. Ricardo Changala of MINUGUA pointed out, "A woman only has an hour or so after work. She can't devote time to both union and NGO work."¹¹⁷ While organizational and funding tensions exist, many NGO efforts on behalf of women broaden common awareness of worker rights and also reinforce organizing.¹¹⁸ In mid-1998, with a 2-million-dollar contribution from the Dutch government, the ILO inaugurated a three-year project to strengthen the position of Central American women working in maquilas. Tapping earlier ILO research that had documented abuses (Arévalo and Arriola 1995), the project combined national workshops and organizational support in the difficult task of aiding women's negotiating capacity at local, national, and regional levels.¹¹⁹ In El Salvador, the push to organize by sectors precipitated formation of several new union-assistance projects: the Coordinadora Sindical de Trabajadoras de El Salvador (CSTS) backed by ORIT and the ICTFU;¹²⁰ and the Centro de Estudios y Apoyo Laboral (CEAL), staffed by former CENTRA researchers. In addition, MAM collaborated with a FEASIES organizing campaign at Charter, a Gap contractor. In general terms, when Central American workers sought a subculture of organizing support, NGOs provided part of this support.

Such efforts were complemented by the noted new sensitivity to Central American women's organizing issues in the North. STITCH, ACILS, and the ITGLWF helped FESTRAS leaders understand how to interact with women leaders as they established unions at Choi and Shin. Delegations from STITCH visited maquila unions (Hill 1997). Other groups have arranged trips for women workers to the United States and Canada, where they have spoken about health and safety issues as well as women's sense of themselves in the face of machismo (Brooks and Tate 1999, 35).¹²¹

By the turn of the millennium, the unions in the region had gradually opted for new approaches to organizing. Byron Morales acknowledged, "The emplazamiento was a useful protection, but now the companies file

to reduce duplication and clarify actions. Representatives from government agencies and some NGOs attend regularly. Author's interview with Rosa Delia Galicia López, CALDH, 16 July 2001, Guatemala City; and with Isabel Bonilla of GRUFEPFAM in 2001. Miguel Angel Albizurez heads the separate legal-assistance project of the CALDH. Interviewed 9 July 2001, Guatemala City.

117. Interview with Ricardo Changala of MINUGUA in 2001.

118. Nevertheless, certain NGOs opt for a separate approach, questioning the capability of unions to organize sensitively and incorporate women as equal partners. See Köpke, Molina, and Quinteros (2000), Bickman Méndez and Köpke (2001), and Quinteros (2000).

119. Author's interview with Carmen López de Cáceres, coordinator of the OIT Proyecto para las Mujeres, 18 July 2001, Guatemala City.

120. See Coordinadora Sindical de Trabajadoras de El Salvador, *Visión Sindical* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 2001) (published in El Salvador).

121. See also <www.maquilasolidarity.org>.

their own court actions to countermand ours.”¹²² After experiencing a spate of affiliate closures in the mid-1990s, UNSITRAGUA declared a more reasoned approach to negotiations that downplayed rhetoric and emphasized practical goals. Gradually, instead of the dramatic protests of prior years, the unions eschewed publicity until they had obtained sufficient numerical strength not only to gain legal status but also to demand contract negotiations, a much higher legal requirement numerically. In addition, Central American women who had risen to leadership positions in many local unions and national federations implemented a broader approach to recruit members.

International Corporate Campaigns

A second Northern initiative to question corporate global dominance, the corporate campaign, has also created new challenges for Central American unionists. When activists target a name-brand company for selling sweatshop products, student and consumer awareness of the conditions of global production proliferates. Surveys indicate that more than 70 percent of Northern consumers are concerned that the products they buy are manufactured in a safe and fair working environment (Barlow and Clark 2001; Klein 2000; Ross 1997). International labor supporters have beseeched Central American unions to integrate their organizing activities into international campaigns and the enforcement of employment codes (Frundt 1996; Anner 2000). Campaign advocates also believed that company attention to code compliance would help stave off government stratagems to weaken national code provisions. Local unions have retained some reservations nonetheless.

Global solidarity directed at specific corporate targets is an honored tradition in Latin America (Compa and Diamond 1996; Frundt 1987; Rosen and McFayden 1995). When Central American union leaders have been repeatedly stonewalled in their “deliberations” with local affiliates and subcontractors, they have discovered how to leverage international campaigns to create a “boomerang effect” on local affiliates of parent firms, following a model described by Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998).¹²³ Local and international unions are mastering how to toss the boomerang to win code compliance. In 1996, when UNSITRAGUA went after “Korean maquilas” in Guatemala for not honoring the salaries set for women workers, the U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project (U.S. LEAP, formerly U.S. GLEP) contacted Korean consular officials in the United States. According to Sergio Guzmán, quickly “the Korean Ambassador announced that Korean

122. Author’s interview with Byron Morales of UNSITRAGUA, 23 Feb. 1995, Guatemala City.

123. The boomerang gets tossed when nonstate actors face impenetrable barriers set by

managers in Latin America who violated the law would be sent to jail.”¹²⁴ A former UNSITRAGUA international coordinator acknowledged that U.S. LEAP’s “advocacy of corporate and monitoring procedures for Starbucks Coffee and Phillips Van Heusen also served as a pressure mechanism for our follow-up.” He may have been anticipating the later Starbucks campaign by Global Exchange: “Citing international standards for workers’ rights, we must go after a chain of companies, not just a single plant.”¹²⁵ Nevertheless, Central American union leaders remain suspicious that international campaigns can be manipulated to exert damage control, promote corporate reputations, privatize labor codes, and interfere with local union autonomy.¹²⁶ Coordination between international and local unions can also be problematic. Another delicate issue is the manner in which “outside monitors” are brought in to verify local conditions.

Coordination issues surfaced with the widely publicized Gap agreement in El Salvador in 1995–1996. Inexperienced federation leaders did not properly inform the Gap’s contracted workers, the Sindicato de Empleadas y Trabajadores de Mandarin Internacional (SETMI), about the U.S. campaign despite their commitment to do so.¹²⁷ The Gap also left local plant managers in the dark, and the latter threatened to “close rather than give the jobs back, no matter what they signed in New York.” When the union leaders were scheduled to return to work in December 1995, they all received death threats. Most fired workers accepted severance pay. News then arrived of “the breakthrough agreement.” They were pleased but asked, “Wouldn’t it have been much better to have worked with us first?”¹²⁸

The Gap agreement also led to the first bona fide example of independent monitoring. Various human rights representatives formed the Grupo Monitor Independiente de El Salvador (GMIES), which “helped give workers their own voice within a safer atmosphere,” according to founding member Mark Anner.¹²⁹ The Gap Code posted on the Mandarin bulletin board also stated that workers would not be prevented from joining organizations of their own choosing. In Guatemala the Comisión para Verificación de los

their local governments. They utilize linkages with nonstate actors beyond their borders who can more easily influence transnational actors (states but also corporations), who in turn can pressure local states.

124. Author’s interview with Sergio Guzmán, UNSITRAGUA, 24 June 1996, Guatemala City.

125. Interview with Byron Morales in 1995.

126. These points were commonly cited by many leaders interviewed (Frundt 2001).

127. The Mandarin union was originally part of the CTS and then affiliated with the CTD. But because it received little assistance, the union subsequently became independent. Mandarin closed in 2000, but the union reconstituted itself within Charter, the new company that took the Gap contract.

128. Interview with Anner, 1 July 1996; see also Brooks and Tate (1999).

129. Interview with Anner, 14 Mar. 1995, San Salvador.

Códigos (COVERCO) played a similar role at Choy and Shin, a producer for Liz Claiborne (COVERCO 2000b).¹³⁰

The Gap campaign and similar efforts by U.S. LEAP frightened off-shore producers, who responded with various codes and monitoring systems.¹³¹ Industry favored hiring accounting firms, while critics insisted that local human rights and nongovernmental organizations be involved. Suddenly, private international certifying entities proliferated, dominated not by local NGOs like GMIES and COVERCO but by international accounting firms.¹³²

U.S. students inspired by the anti-sweatshop efforts of UNITE and the National Labor Committee (NLC) formed a delegation, United Students against Sweatshops (USAS), to visit the Doall factory in El Salvador, a producer for Liz Claiborne. They spoke to workers who had been fired just as Price Waterhouse auditors gave the plant's employee relations a clean bill of health. In retaliation, Doall terminated more workers and attempted to bribe union officials (NLC 1999). Finally, in response to an NLC and USAS-sponsored campaign, Liz Claiborne promised reinstatement of the thirty-nine workers fired for organizing and accepted transparent monitoring by GMIES.

Nevertheless, even NGO monitoring encountered difficulties. Questions arose over worker consultations and which entity was in charge of negotiations—the local union, the local federation, the monitoring team, or the international campaign coordinators.¹³³ At Mandarin in El Salvador, the GMIES report helped the 160 fired SETMI unionists win reinstatement.¹³⁴ Yet the company was able to create a company union, while SETMI had difficulty maintaining its legal status (Brooks and Tate 1999, 36). Under GMIES

130. Also author's interviews with Dennis Smith in 2001 and with Jorge Homero Fuentes Aragón in 2001.

131. These codes and systems range from the industry-controlled Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production (WRAP), after which most Central American clothing company codes are modeled, to the somewhat more open Fair Labor Association (FLA), to the labor-oriented codes of Social Accountability International (SA8000), the Fair Trade Foundation, the Clean Clothes Campaign, and the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), inspired by the U.S. student movement. In agriculture and environment, codes span the less stringent ISO 4001 to the stronger Rainforest Alliance and Ethical Trade Initiative codes.

132. Private for-profit firms such as Price Waterhouse now conduct company audits, but their reports have been widely questioned. See <www.ncl.org> and <www.maquilasolidarity.org>.

133. For discussions of difficulties between unions and monitors in Honduras and elsewhere, see Anner (2001), Compa (2001), Coats (1998, n.d.), Köpke, Molina, and Quinteros (2000), Quinteros (2000), Yanz and Jeffcott (2001), and <www.maquilasolidarity.org>. In 2001 Central American NGO monitors joined with ASEPROLA, MEC, and el Centro de Investigación para la Acción Feminina (D.R.) to create the Iniciativa Regional para la Responsabilidad Social y Trabajo Digno.

134. Carolina Quinteros, director of GMIES, as cited by *Central America Report*, 14 May 1998, p. 5.

vigilance, the union at Charter, a current Gap supplier, expected more success.¹³⁵

In the spring of 2000, students from many U.S. campuses involved in USAS gave final approval to the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), which demanded that companies pay a living wage, recognize core worker rights, disclose factory locations and conditions, and open themselves to local NGO monitoring.¹³⁶ Wary of imposing a Northern model that lacked coordination with Central American unions, USAS invited Nicaraguan labor leader Pedro Ortega and other Central American unionists to the WRC's founding convention. Ortega's presence improved coordination. As the failed Chentex campaign revealed, however, international publicity must be carefully guided by on-the-ground organization, a principle Ortega endorsed.

Still, regional leaders have molded the campaign into their own instrument. They collaborated with an array of groups to improve communication with Northern unions and to pressure brand-name companies to address specific violations, including USAS, the NLC, U.S. LEAP, the Maquila Solidarity Network, Global Exchange, the Nicaragua Solidarity Network, and CISPES (Committee in Support of the People of El Salvador). Some unions explored possible agreements in which Northern jobbers or supermarkets would buy products from unionized factories or fieldhands. But union leaders warned about one major limitation: "Codes serve a positive purpose, but workers do not know about them," as David Morales explained.¹³⁷ He urged an education program as the first step in any campaign.

Trade Agreements

The final Northern-driven initiative that has stimulated local union responses has been the demand for core labor standards in trade agreements. The first major impetus was U.S. insistence through the General System of Preferences (GSP) that tariff reductions be tied to observance of core worker rights as monitored by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) (Compa and Diamond 1996). More recently, the pressure for trade and labor conditions has focused on multilateral mechanisms. They began with the limited side agreement attached to the NAFTA accord and have increased following protests against the WTO and the FTAA. As Central American integration has inched forward, workers have promoted a third method, more familiar to European and MERCOSUR countries, a binding "social clause" developed from "cuatropartite consensus" among government, business, labor, and civil society.

During the 1990s, Central American labor leaders approached uni-

135. Author's interviews with Roger Gutiérrez, secretary general of FEASIES, 24 July 2001, San Salvador; and with Carolina Quinteros, director of GMIES, 24 July 2001, San Salvador.

136. Carrie Brunk, "The Workers Rights Consortium Steams Ahead," *USAS News*, Mar. 2000, pp. 2-3.

137. Interview with Morales in 2001.

lateral GSP rules with caution. They certainly did not want to discourage local job creation, much less be accused of bolstering U.S. protectionism. Yet they knew that local business owners cultivated such arguments to camouflage employee mistreatment. As labor leaders grew more disillusioned over lackluster government efforts to implement labor laws or address court bottlenecks, they more readily joined with Northern unions in co-filing petitions for USTR review. One bank-union leader cited these GSP mechanisms as “fundamental in convincing the Guatemalan Minimum Salary Commission to reexamine the standards every year rather than periodically as in the past.”¹³⁸ Between 1996 and 2000, however, the commission could not agree on appropriate raises, “showing that something is wrong with the negotiating system.”¹³⁹

In May 2000, President Bill Clinton signed the Trade and Development Act of 2000, which extended “NAFTA-parity” to Central American and sub-Saharan African countries. The act expanded the duty-free trade privileges available under the Caribbean Basin Initiative to encompass apparel made from U.S. materials. GSP mechanisms to guarantee workers’ rights remained, with the additional provision that the maquila sector could lose benefits if it violated worker protections.

In an unprecedented step in October 2000, the USTR bypassed its own petition process to target Central American noncompliance directly. The USTR placed Guatemala on probation, warned El Salvador, and cited Nicaragua’s refusal to implement its own free-zone labor legislation as risking the loss of trade benefits. Despite a change in U.S. administrations, in the spring of 2001, the USTR pursued hearings and a mission to verify compliance. It made changes in the Guatemalan labor code a *sine qua non* for trade approval. Nicaraguan unions studied their new abilities to take advantage of labor-rights provisions in the U.S. Trade Act. In Costa Rica, unions moved to file a 2001 GSP petition. As one noted labor analyst explained, “When GSP pressure is seen as a unilateral imposition, unions reject it. If it is seen as part of a multilateral program that includes ILO conventions and the peace accords, then they accept it.”¹⁴⁰

Because regional trade accords affect labor conditions, they have also stimulated labor coordination. In July 2000, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras signed a tariff reduction agreement with Mexico, which was followed by an overall trade agreement among Central American countries. Unions represented by the Consejo Salvadoreño de Construcción (CSC) urged

138. Author’s interview with Reynaldo González, secretary of FESEBS, 14 Feb. 1995, Guatemala City. Whether due to the 1999 GSP filing or not, the commission reaffirmed this principle in 2000.

139. Juan Francisco Alfaro, Guatemalan labor minister, as quoted in *Central America Report*, 6 Oct. 2000, p. 6; and “Minimum Wage Talks Fruitless,” *Prensa Libre*, 21 Sept. 2000.

140. Author’s interview with Miguel Angel Albizurez, director of the CALDH Labor Project, 2001.

simultaneous government incentives to assure fair competition between local and foreign contractors.¹⁴¹ To avoid the duplication of having each individual confederation pursuing its own list of demands in the mid-1990s, Central American trade unionists inaugurated a regional approach to protect the right to associate and bargain through the *Coordinador de Centro América de Trabajadores (COCENTRA)*. "Otherwise the employers try to divide us," explained organizer Luis Mérida.¹⁴² At the annual *Jornadas Sindicales 21 de Junio*, Rodolfo Robles called for negotiations on human rights and labor rights in all international agreements.¹⁴³ Unions joined with the *Iniciativa Civil para la Integración Centroamericana (ICIC)* to promote inclusive multilateral models in parallel with MERCOSUR, where labor has a designated voice in policy formulation (Verma et al. 1996). By the turn of the millennium, however, neither COCENTRA nor ICIC had become a significant participant in formulating trade policy. In an educational effort in 1998 and 1999, union activists in each Central American country held seminars sponsored by ACILS and U.S. LEAP to assess union responses to regional trade cooperation.¹⁴⁴ At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, local federations and NGOs were just starting to develop common proposals for bilateral and subregional agreements. Several regional leaders who attended counter-FTAA meetings in 2001 stressed the fundamental need for conditions and review mechanisms on workers' rights. Lacking these, they predicted a serious detrimental effect on labor rights as the 2005 target date for the FTAA approached (U.S. LEAP 2001).

CONCLUSIONS

At the turn of the millennium, Guatemalan, Salvadoran, and other Central American workers find their militancy weakened. They are floundering as they face three enormous challenges brought by globalization: corporate restructuring and subcontracting, state decline and privatization, and unreliable international support. In the years since the civil wars, their fragmentation has increased. But just when one is tempted to dismiss their relevance, they reemerge with fresh vitality, demonstrating that social-movement unionism is still alive.

Corporate restructuring and subcontracting have inhibited union

141. "Business Leaders Call for Trade Protection," *Central America Report*, 26 May 2000, p. 3.

142. Author's interview with Luis Mérida, former organizer for UNSITRAGUA, 3 Mar. 1996, Guatemala City.

143. Robles, speaking in June 1996 at a special five-day commemoration of CNT workers abducted on 21 June 1980.

144. See Resolution no. 6, "Workers and the Global Economy," adopted by the AFL-CIO convention in November 1997. It rejected "any extension of trade preferences that does not require adherence to internationally recognized core labor standards and minimum environmental standards."

organizing. Yet banana workers, maquila workers, and others persist in demanding representation. In concert with international supporters, local unions are inventing imaginative mechanisms to modify contractor employment practices. They are also reaching out to unorganized women and workers in the informal sector. Older unions struggle to protect past achievements. Newer unions occasionally win recognition. When achieving a formal contract proves especially problematic, they adopt alternate strategies.

In response to the decline in state power and privatization, unions have played a vital role in asserting broad-based national interests. In their coalitional work, they provide essential leadership for rebuilding civil society and reconstructing bona fide democratic institutions wrenched by lengthy civil wars. They also promote labor-code implementation, thus attracting international attention and funding for reforms of labor ministries. As strikes by public health workers in El Salvador and Honduras have shown, unions can resiliently protect public enterprises and offer viable alternatives to private takeovers. Such unions are poised to consolidate again in stronger federations.

Central American labor has faced uncertain assistance and insecurity in its relations with international unions, international trade secretariats, international government agencies, NGOs, and outside monitors. The regional labor sector is therefore devoting more energy to quiet systematic organizing and creating a self-reliant dues structure. Women especially have responded to organizing challenges, and a number have assumed leadership positions at local and national levels. The labor movement is also learning the nuanced skills of an international campaign that encompasses a broad constituency.

What are the implications of these findings for scholarly theories of class and organizational relations? Analysis emerges with action, as Gramsci suggested (1971). In braving these three challenges, the unions of Central America have retained the vision of social-movement unionism. Just as elites are perfecting their global command structures, workers are reaching across borders in new ways to confront "polyarchy" and achieve genuine democracy. International supporters must reevaluate the obstacles that Southern *sindicalistas* encounter in adapting to severe reductions in resources, clandestine methods of organizing, corporate campaign strategies, and trade approaches. Mistakes reinforce the difficulties experienced by unions like FENASTRAS, the Gap's SETMI, UNSITRAGUA, and the women working at PVH Camisas Modernas. Activist unions must seek guidance in collaboration with NGOs and expanding new constituencies, especially among women workers in the maquilas and unaffiliated workers in agro-exports. In parallel, international supporters must cultivate and retain confidence in vibrant local commitments to social-movement unionism. Academic theories will advance as local and international forces solidify to challenge unbridled investment, implement labor codes, forge fresh organizing structures, and promote regional-trade initiatives with a human face.

APPENDIX 1 GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ACILS	American Center for International Labor Solidarity
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations
AIFLD	American Institute for Free Labor Development
ASIES	Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (Guatemala)
ANACAFE	Asociación Nacional de Café (Guatemala)
ANDES	Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños
ANEPP	Asociación Nacional de Empleados Públicos y Privados (Costa Rica)
ANTEL	Agencia Nacional de Telecomunicaciones (El Salvador)
ASEPROLA	Asociación Servicios de Promoción Laboral (Costa Rica)
ASTTEL	Asociación Salvadoreña de Trabajadores de Telecomunicaciones
BANDEGUA	Compañía de Desarrollo Bananero de Guatemala Limitada
CACIF	Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industrias y Financieras (Guatemala)
CALDH	Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos (Guatemala)
CDT	Central Democrática de Trabajadores (El Salvador)
CEAL	Centro de Estudios y Apoyo Laboral (El Salvador)
CENTRA	Centro de Estudios del Trabajo (El Salvador)
CGTG	Central General de Trabajadores de Guatemala
CISPES	Committee in Support of the People of El Salvador
CLAT	Confederación Latinoamericana de Trabajadores
COBIGUA	Compañía Bananeros Independientes de Guatemala
COCENTRA	Coordinador de Centro América de Trabajadores
COLSIBA	Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Sindicatos Bananeros
CONIC	Coordinación Nacional Indígena y Campesina (Guatemala)
COSIBAH	Coordinador de Sindicatos Bananeros de Honduras
COVERCO	Comisión para Verificación de los Códigos (Guatemala)
CSC	Consejo Salvadoreño de Construcción
CST	Central Sandinista de Trabajadores (Nicaragua)
CST-JBE	Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores–José Benito Escobar (Nicaragua)
CSTS	Coordinadora Sindical de Trabajadoras(es) de El Salvador
CTCA	Confederación de Trabajadores de Centro América.
CTD	Confederación de Trabajadores (Democráticos)
CTH	Confederación de Trabajadores de Honduras
CTRN	Confederación de Trabajadores de Rerum Novarum (Costa Rica)
CUSG	Confederación Unidad de Sindicatos de Guatemala
CUTS	Confederación Unitaria de Trabajadores Salvadoreños
EU	European Union
FEASIES	Federación de Asociaciones y Sindicatos Independientes de El Salvador
FENASSEP	Federación Nacional de Sindicatos de Empleados Públicos (Guatemala)
FENASTRAS	Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores Salvadoreños
FESEBS	Federación Sindical de Empleados Bancarios y de Seguros de Guatemala
FESTRAS	Federación Sindical de Trabajadores de Alimentación (Guatemala)
FESTRAES	Federación Sindical de Trabajadores de El Salvador
FESTRASPE	Federación Sindical de Trabajadores de Sector Público de El Salvador
FLA	Fair Labor Association
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (El Salvador)
FNSITVPC	Federación Nacional de Sindicatos de la Industria Textil, Vestuario, Piel y Calzado (Nicaragua)
FRG	Frente Republicano Gualtemateco
FSM	Federación Sindical del Mundo
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
FTL	Federación de Trabajadores Limonenses (Costa Rica)

CENTRAL AMERICAN UNIONS

GMIES	Grupo Monitor Independiente de El Salvador
GRUFEPRMEFAM	Asociación Grupo Feminino Pro Mejoramiento Familiar (Guatemala)
GSP	General System of Preferences
GUATEL	Empresa Guatemalteca de Telecomunicaciones
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICIC	Iniciativa Civil para la Integración Centroamericana
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDIES	Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (Guatemala)
IGGS	Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INDE	Industria Nacional de Electricidad (Guatemala)
ISPS	International Secretariat for Public Service
ITGLWF	International Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers' Federation
ITS	International Trade Secretariat
IUF	International Union of Foodworkers
MAM	Movimiento de Mujeres Mérida Anaya Montes (El Salvador)
MEC	Movimiento de Mujeres Maria Cuadra (Nicaragua)
MINUGUA	Misión de Naciones Unidas en Guatemala
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NLC	National Labor Committee
OIT	Organización Internacional de Trabajo
ORIT	Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores
PAN	Partido de Avanzado Nacional (Guatemala)
PVH	Phillips Van Heusen
SETMI	Sindicato de Empleadas y Trabajadores de Mandarin Internacional
SGTITAES	Sindicato General de Trabajadores de la Industria del Transporte y Afines de El Salvador
SIMETRISSS	Sindicato de Médicos, Enfermeras y Trabajadores del Instituto Salvadoreño de Seguro Social
SINTTEL	Sindicato de Trabajadores de Telecomunicaciones (El Salvador)
SITAGH	Sindicato de Trabajadores de Agrícolas y Haciendas (Costa Rica)
SITINPEP	Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto Nacional de Pensiones de Empleados Públicos (El Salvador)
SITRABI	Sindicato de Trabajadores Bananeros de Izabal (Guatemala)
SNTSG	Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Salud de Guatemala
STINDE	Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto Nacional de Electricidad (Guatemala)
STITCH	Support Team International for Textileras
SUTC	Sindicato Unido de Trabajadores de Construcción (El Salvador)
TELGUA	Telecomunicaciones de Guatemala, S.A.
UASP	Unión Acción Sindical y Popular (Guatemala)
UGT	Unidad Guatemalteca de Trabajadores (Guatemala)
UNDECA	Unión de Empleados y Empleadas de la Caja y de la Seguridad Social (Costa Rica)
UNITE	Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees
UNOC	Unión Nacional Obrero-Campesina (El Salvador)
UNSTRAGUA	Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala
UNTS	Unión Nacional de Trabajadores Salvadoreños
URNG	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca
U.S. LEAP	U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project (formerly U.S.GLEP)
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USAS	United Students against Sweatshops
USTR	U.S. Trade Representative
VESTEX	Comisión de Vestuario y Textiles (Guatemala)
WRAP	Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production
WRC	Worker Rights Consortium
WTO	World Trade Organization

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