

September 20th, 2005

TO: ALL LOCAL UNION PRESIDENTS

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Re: Hands off Venezuela campaign

Recently Pat Robertson, an influential republican evangelical leader in the United States and key supporter of President Bush, called for the assassination of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

This comes in the wake of several attempts to destabilize Venezuela and one aborted coup attempt against the democratically-elected socialist leader. Many Venezuelans have suggested that the American government is behind these events. This is a view supported by the rising tide of criticism of Chavez by the Bush government, and the increasingly hysterical verbal attacks on Chavez by people like Robertson. One American program that has enraged Venezuelans is the funding of opposition parties by a front group for U.S. Congress, the National Endowment for Democracy.

Chavez has incited the animosity of the Bush government with his new oil subsidy program for poorer Latin American and Caribbean nations like Cuba and Jamaica, and his increasingly loud criticisms of the Bush government. For example, he has dismissed Washington's push for free trade in the western hemisphere as self-serving and not in the best interests of poor nations.

Chavez has solidified his support (70%) – which is based in the poorest sectors of society – by spending billions of dollars in state oil revenues on education, land reform and health care for the poor.

International support for Chavez has been steadily growing among labour and social/economic justice organizations. Now, an international support network, called: *Hands Off Venezuela*, has been organized to oppose continued American intervention and to make sure the labour movement and labour leaders around the world have accurate information about what is really happening in Venezuela.

Please consider endorsing and supporting this campaign. It has the support of the Executive Council of the Alberta Federation of Labour.

Yours in Solidarity,



Gil McGowan
President

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