

Peru Unions Mobilized Against Neoliberal Reforms



Lima, April 09 (teleSUR-RHC) Thousands of labor union members joined two marches in Lima on Wednesday to protest measures that benefit private entities instead of workers.

The first march started at 9 a.m. and was called by striking workers from PetroPeru, the state-run oil company. They are criticizing the government's refusal to invest in the oil fields in the province of *Talara*, where research have shown 25 million barrels worth of crude reserves lie beneath the surface.

A plan by the government to have a minority stake of 25 percent was overturned, leaving the whole area to private corporation *Graña & Montero*. Experts argue that the investment is sound and the government has little to risk from such venture. Protesters argue that Peru will lose \$300 million due to the decision to not participate in the oil drilling. They also claim the strike will last 24 hours, but if there are no solutions they will launch the strike again and indefinitely.

After their march, state oil workers in Lima also joined the second protest, which started at 1 p.m. This additional demonstration aimed to put an end to two laws, which favor short term profits for large businesses cutting workers' rights. Protesters marched from the Ministry of Employment to the National Confederation of Private Business Institutions.

They explained they targeted this large business association because they believe it sets the economic agenda of the government against their interests. Their march rallied all major unions in the call for the repeal of Supreme Decree 013 and to shelve Congressional legislative project 4008. Supreme Decree 013 was enacted on Nov. 22, 2014. It authorizes a business to fire 10 percent of its workers at once if it reports losses for three consecutive months or estimates future losses due to not cutting labor costs.

The organized employees at the march claim they fear the measure will also be used to fire those who are members of unions and are standing up against any kind of abuse at work.

The other law, Legislative Project 4008 was written by the Ministry of Economics and Finance, MEF, and sent to Congress. This measure, as well as the Supreme Decree 013, reduces worker benefits.

With law 4008, businesses would be able to account for 20 percent of payments to workers as bonuses instead of salaries. That would mean this 20 percent is not included for calculating benefits such as healthcare and pensions, saving businesses money but taking it away from workers.

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