

CUT* supports strike by Drummond's workers
(*Colombia's United Workers Federation)

Three thousand workers of the coal mine situated in the municipalities of La Loma and Puerto de Ciénaga, located in the Colombian departments of Cesar and Magdalena respectively, began a work-stoppage at 5:50 PM on Wednesday, July 16, 2008. This is the second largest coal mine in Colombia and is run by the U.S.-based Drummond mining company. Drummond has also been granted a lease to extract natural gas deposits discovered in the same area and to operate the 55,000-acre El Descanso mine, in the municipalities of Becerril and Codazzi, considered the largest coal mine in the world.

Workers represented by /Sintramienergética /went on strike after exhausting all avenues required by established Colombian legal labor procedures. The 2,100 members of the union supported the work stoppage through a vote that took place on July 6 and 8, 2008, which also authorized the union's bargaining committee to continue negotiations until such time as the law requires before a labor strike can begin. No agreement having been reached, the action began on July 16. The Drummond multinational refuses to negotiate workers demands over stability of employment, compliance with regulations concerning industrial safety and worker health, the situation of up to 2,000 workers hired through different types of subcontracting, the handling of disciplinary procedures, an increase in wages and benefits, and improvement in the corporation's social investment in the surrounding communities.

Drummond exported 1.1 billion dollars worth of coal in 2007, at prices that over the last three years have gone from 30 to 100 dollars per ton of coal, while costs of production do not exceed 20 dollars, and royalty payments amount to a miniscule 10%. Colombia gets stuck with the negative impacts of the operation such as environmental degradation, deterioration of roads, ports, and surrounding communities, and work-related injuries and illnesses affecting hundreds of workers, while the Drummond multinational obtains super profits.

We call upon the union movement to express its solidarity with this just struggle, and to bring the workers' plight to the attention of the Colombian government, international organizations, and global union and social movements. Let us join arms in support of the coal workers' dignified and patriotic action.

Tarsicio Mora Godoy
Arrieta
President
Secretary General

Domingo Tovar

Gustavo Rubén Triana Suárez
Second Vice-President