

## DOMINGO PEREZ ADDRESS TO THE UNISON LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE IN MANCHESTER, 20<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2011

Guest speaker Domingo Perez, general secretary of the Nicaraguan public service union, Union Nacional de Empleados, gave a rousing speech on the role of trade unions in combating right wing “lies”, and stressed the importance of international solidarity.

Photo: Marcus Rose/  
Workers' Photos



Domingo Perez pictured receiving a standing ovation after addressing the UNISON Local Government conference in Manchester. Credit: UNISON National Newsletter, July 2011.

“Good morning brothers and sisters, delegates of this important conference of UNISON local government trade unionists.

Today I feel privileged, very honoured to be able to address you in this delegate’s conference, where you will be defining the strategies of UNISON in the British trade union’s movement, within which you have a key role to play in this beautiful country of yours.

These are hard times for humanity, for the working class, and for our unions. This is because politically we are now in a unipolar world. A world in which the logic of the economic empires is the only one that seems to prevail. And when I talk about empires and imperialism I am talking about the United States of America, and also about the European Union.

Imperialism operates and imposes its logic to the world through neoliberal governments and through right wing coalitions such as the one that is in power here in your country, who act like puppets of the economic system. Imperialist forces also operated in my country, Nicaragua, throughout the three right wing and neoliberal governments that ruled the country between 1990 and 2006.

These dominant political structures exert their power in society and against the people when the economic policies that are implemented exclude the majority of population, and are based in neoliberal, globalising measures such as the slashing of public sector budgets in the name of efficiency, savings and macroeconomic stability.



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In this way, and without any real consideration for the working class, much needed social project and public services are being left to disappear here in Great Britain. This will bring as a result the deterioration of vital areas of public interest such as health and education, which are fundamental for wellbeing and for people to lead a decent and meaningful life.

What we are witnessing here is an assault to millions of public sector workers, a pension systems reforms, typically implemented under neoliberal economic models with the excuse to prevent 'bankruptcy', but whose bankruptcy? It is precisely these neoliberal governments that have used and allowed the bankers to use your public money almost as their personal 'petty cash fund'. And this is something not just happening here. This is happening everywhere, throughout the world.

This is why today, more than ever, Workers must remain UNITED, as it was proclaimed in the Social Forum in the Region of Sao Paulo in Nicaragua this May. Our motto there was **THE UNITY AMONGST WORKERS MAKES US INVINCIBLE**. This is our strategy and they know it, that workers are now UNITED and taking the lead to abolish these capitalist economic structures that marginalise and exclude the majority of people.

History has demonstrated that this system does not work that it has to be brought down, so that workers and their unions are able to build Societies **with** Social Justice

It is also very important to acknowledge here, in this platform of local government workers, the importance for Nicaragua of the support and solidarity received from the British Trade unions' movement. This solidarity dates back from the times of NALGO, and has continued until the consolidation of what is UNISON today.

This longstanding relationship of solidarity was invaluable in the 80's, on the times of the Sandinista popular revolution, when we were attacked by the arrogant supremacy of the United States. And is also invaluable now. We believe this relationship needs to develop and become stronger, it needs to be determined and supportive of the left wing government in Nicaragua, because this government is really responding to the interests of the majority of the population, in spite of what the right wing circles say. Those circles that also come to visit you, my friends, but that come only to tell you lies.

I am very pleased to be able to take this opportunity to thank our sisters and brothers from UNISON for the economic support of 20 thousands pounds that you have recently approved for the set up of a law service for our union members in UNE who work in the public sector at the local level in Nicaragua.

When the idea for the Legal Office first took shape it was under a right wing government and the trade unions were literally struggling for survival. Now that there is a government in power which is more supportive of trade unions things have of course improved.

Nevertheless the trade unions are at pains to point out that they are independent of the government and their first priority is always to defend members' rights.

Furthermore the government is in a weak position and cannot necessarily make the legislative changes it would wish to see, and some parts of the country are still governed by right wing administrations, for instance Granada, where UNE members were sacked from their jobs in the face of hard won legislation that should have protected them.

The trade unions may be in better health than previously, but the battle for workers' rights is far from over. Nicaragua is still a very poor country where resources are scarce and trade unions are reliant on subscriptions from members who struggle continually to make ends meet.



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However we must recognise the role of trade unions, particularly UNE, in driving forward progressive change within society. By offering the services of a legal office it is estimated that our union will be invigorated with the dynamism that it needs to allow us to expand our work and to reach effectively a larger numbers of workers.

I also want to acknowledge the brothers and sisters from the Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign, who are here with us in this event, because they have been working tirelessly, and shoulder to shoulder with the British trade union movement to bring their solidarity to the poor in Nicaragua. More than 16 twinning agreements have been signed between regional unions and a number of municipalities in my country. And this is the kind of work that the NSC has been facilitating with our sister union UNISON.

And to conclude, brothers and sisters, I want to reinstate my comradely and revolutionary Greetings on behalf of all the membership from the National Union of public sector employees (UNE) which I represent as the General Secretary. Thousands of workers from the water and energy sector at the local government level are represented in our union, and they have asked me to bring you a message of support to your struggle here. This is the task comrades, to build together and with true internationalism a world society anchored in the basic principle of social justice”.

**FOR THE MEMBERS OF UNISON**

**FOR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKERS IN THE UK**

**FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNISON AND UNE NICARAGUA**

**FOR THE CUBAN PEOPLE**

**FOR THE FIVE BROTHERS DETAINED FOR THE YANKEE EMPIRE**

**Thank you very much**

**MORE INFORMATION:**

- Watch Domingo Perez being interviewed by HispanTV in London right after signing a collaboration agreement between UNISON and UNE for the set up of a law service for union members in UNE: <http://youtu.be/MXBzzSaLvB0>
- Read Domingo Perez interview by The Prisma, Britain’s Multicultural Newspaper: <http://www.theprisma.co.uk/2011/06/26/talking-with-domingo-perez-nicaraguan-trade-union-leader/>

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- Or download our membership form at <http://www.nscag.org/downloads/nscag-membership-form.pdf> and send it back to us to:

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If you wish to affiliate your National Union please contact us at: [nscag@nicaraguasc.org](mailto:nscag@nicaraguasc.org)

## About Domingo

Domingo Francisco Pérez is an experienced Nicaraguan trade unionist and the General Secretary of UNE - The Public Sector Workers' union in Nicaragua (equivalent to UNISON in the UK). He has worked in many different trades, from artisan shoemaking to accountancy and administration. He is also a lawyer but above all he has been a loyal militant of the National Liberation Sandinista Front (FSLN) throughout his entire political life.



He started at UNE in 1980, when he joined the union as a bank worker. In 1983 he was given the responsibility of union branch accountant at the National Bank. In 1984 he took the role of administrator of UNE at the national level. After more than ten years, in 1995 he took on the role of the Union's finances officer at the National Executive Committee, until 1999 when he was elected General Secretary. His role also involves sitting as a member of the National Directory of the National Front of Workers (FNT), which is the Nicaraguan equivalent of the TUC. At the FNT he currently acts as Departmental Secretary.

## About UNE

**UNE** – The National Union of Employees. The Public Sector Workers' union.



*"No to more job cuts, yes to quality services with better salaries"* Photo: Domingo Perez, UNE General Secretary

Its membership has drastically decreased since 1990 in part because of the privatisation of previously publicly owned services and in part because of attacks on unions carried out by successive right wing governments since 1990.

However affiliations have been on the increase in recent years due to successes in organising workers in the newly privatised industries; e.g. banking and transport, in areas where unions have disappeared, e.g. the fishing industry; and in areas that have never been organised, e.g. domestic workers. As a result UNE continues to grow and now represents over 25,000 workers.

**For more information visit: [www.nscag.org](http://www.nscag.org)**

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