LASC

Chaski

The Latin America Solidarity Centre Newsletter

Issue 2
July 2008

Welcome to the summer edition of *Chaski*. It seems like a long time now since Latin America Week 08, which this year called for the removal of water from the EU-CAN (Community of Andean Nations) Association Agreement.

It was good to see new and familiar faces at the different events during the week. It was even better to see some of you getting involved in the campaign afterwards. We hope that together we can build opposition to an agreement that is facing growing resistance from the people in the Andean countries. You can read more about the campaign and about LAW in this issue.

Post-Latin-America-Week LASC is busy as ever. The centre is fast approaching the end of its three-year strategic period. It is time for evaluating our work and planning for the next three years. As members, you were invited to participate in the process at a session last June. Thanks for taking the time to think about LASC and to give your feedback and ideas. The process should determine what issues we are going to work on, who we are going to work with and how we are going to work. So it is a crucial time to have your voice heard.

We would like to take the opportunity to say goodbye and thanks to Carolina Smeriglio, who has been doing excellent work as an intern in LASC for the last 6 months. We still do not know who will be taking over as Events Officer, but they surely have a lot to live up to!

Please remember that Chaski is open to contributions from LASC members, whether you would like to recommend a book or a film, write an article about a Latin American issue or about your experience of that continent… Chaski is a newsletter for members and by members.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

LASC

LASC Mission Statement

LASC's mission is to expose and challenge the current economic, social and cultural injustices in Latin America and Ireland, through public awareness raising, education, information exchanges and campaigns in solidarity with the people of Latin America who resist oppression and struggle to create a fair and inclusive society.

Campaign Update,

by José Antonio Gutierrez, LASC Research Officer

"We have rejected the EU-CAN Association Agreement, because it is exactly the same as the Free Trade Agreement with the US we already rejected. The Cooperation and Political Dialogue pillars are nothing but a cosmetic façade for a Trade pillar which intends to control our markets. We are concerned that -with this agreement- a new phase of colonisation of our people will begin"

Paulina Muñoz (Ecuador Decide)

Since September 2007, the EU has been negotiating a so called 'Association Agreement' with the CAN / Andean Community of Nations- Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Despite an insistence that it deals equally with 'Trade, Political Dialogue and Cooperation', EU Trade Commissioner, Peter Mandelson recently admitted that the core aspect of the agreement is in fact Free Trade.

LASC believes this agreement poses a real and serious threat to local sovereignty and control over the region's natural resources and as part of a EU-CAN network against it has invited activists to Ireland to debate and discuss the major concerns relating to it. LASC has lobbied actively against the agreement from Brussels to Leinster House, has brought the issue to public attention through the media and various publications and materials.

A difficult scenario lies ahead for the negotiators. Ecuador and Bolivia have rejected the Free Trade agenda and proposed an alternative framework for trade discussion- which the EU strongly opposes and civil society organisations in all four countries also oppose it. CAN itself faces an uncertain future, with internal political turmoil affecting most of the region. One of the key obstacles in the negotiations is the "Directive Return", which proposes the detention of illegal immigrants for up to 18 months. Should it be ratified, this directive is likely to affect hundreds of thousands, if not millions of CAN citizens living and working illegally in Europe. Peru has called for an extraordinary meeting of the Organisation of American States while Ecuador's President Correa has stated that he will not participate in negotiations if this directive is included. In the last round of negotiations in April, the EU agreed to postpone discussion on migration until the next round of negotiations which was due to take place in Brussels in July.

In a last minute announcement by the EU in July, it was announced that the Brussels round of negotiations is to be postponed until further notice. This is quite likely a response to moves by Latin American leaders to "rock the boat" on immigration policies and trade issues. While this proves the difficulties facing the negotiations, it also proves we now have an opportunity to assert pressure and influence the terms of this unfair agreement before the next round takes place. When the negotiations finally do take place, LASC -along with its' EU-CAN network partners- will be taking the message to the streets: No to the EU CAN trade agreements.

For more information on this campaign and it get involved, contact LASC

Drummers from the Brazilian group DendecomPimenta spice up proceedings at the Latin America Week Conference in Smithfield Plaza. (Photo by Pawel Szewczyk).

*What is a *'Chaski'*? Or rather, who were they? They were the messengers of the Incas, trained runners that brought news to the far corners of the empire.