

Watching Venezuela, Watching Democracy

Written by

Saturday, 02 December 2006 09:59 - Last Updated Saturday, 02 December 2006 09:59

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Victoria Peace Coalition - Join us at 7 pm, 2994 Douglas Street (BCGEU Hall) in Victoria as we await the returns of the Venezuelan presidential election. We will contact our five election observers from Victoria as well as local representatives from Venezuela to give us a feel of the situation and the expected outcome of this election.

www.vicpeace.ca

Venezuela Elections - Sunday, December 3

Susan Clarke

Victoria Peace Coalition
Nov 30, 2006

Venezuela Elections - Sunday, December 3

The evening will feature live music, dancing, as well as snacks. The film "The Bolivarian Revolution: Enter the Oil Workers" will be shown. Venezuela is the world's 5th largest oil exporter, yet 80% of its population lives in poverty. In 1998 President Hugo Ch?vez was elected to use the oil revenue to tackle poverty. In April 2002 a coup against him was defeated by the millions who took to the streets. A few months later the ?lite and the CIA paralyzed Venezuela?s oil company PDVSA to bring Ch?vez down. Oil workers took over and worked round the clock to recover production.

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In this documentary Jos? Bodas, Lu?s Felix Mar?n, Jes?s Montilla and Tania Su?rez tell how they saved PDVSA and how they are organizing to "put the oil industry at the service of humanity."

Sponsored by Victoria in Solidarity with Venezuela Contact info: 885 2210

Most polls give the current MVR government a comfortable 15-35% lead over the pro-Bush regime candidate Manuel osales. As many have noted, the international mainstream media as

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well as the Venezuelan press have really stepped up their anti-Chavez rhetoric over the past few weeks and it will only get worse in the days leading up to the election. There is also the fear that the opposition along with their friends in the media are planning a massive destabilisation campaign in the days after the election.

We will all be watching very closely with what happens during the election. Here is a good article on it.

[http://www.vicuk.org/index.php?option=com_content
&task=view&id=152&Itemid=30](http://www.vicuk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=152&Itemid=30)

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Susan Clarke

Hi everyone, this is a reminder about Victoria's event on Sunday December 3 regarding Venezuela's presidential elections that are taking place on this day. With the mainstream corporate media really stepping up its aggression against the gains of the Venezuelan people over the past 8 years it is important for us to challenge this distortion and support Venezuela's path towards social justice. Many polls show that Chavez is leading by 15-35% yet the media tells us that this is because Chavez is a populist anti-American. This condescending view of the Venezuelan people must be challenged in order for us to understand why the Chavez government is so popular in Venezuela.

We will all be watching very closely with what happens during the election. Following the announcement of the event is an article about Venezuela voting for its future. Hope to see a big turnout this Sunday for a very big day for the social Revolution taking place in Venezuela and throughout Latin America.

Venezuela Elections

Join us as we await the returns of the Venezuelan presidential election. We will contact our five election observers from Victoria as well as local representatives from Venezuela to give us a feel of the situation and the expected outcome of this election.

The evening will feature live music from Tequila Mockingbird.

As well, the film "The Bolivarian Revolution: Enter the Oil Workers" will be shown. Venezuela is the world's 5th largest oil exporter, yet 80% of its population lives in poverty. In 1998 President Hugo Chavez was elected to use the oil revenue to tackle poverty. In April 2002 a coup against him was defeated by the millions who took to the streets. A few months later the elite and the CIA paralyzed Venezuela's oil company PDVSA to bring Chavez down. Oil workers took over and worked round the clock to recover production.

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7pm

Sunday December 3

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Venezuela votes for its future

By Gordon Hutchison, Secretary, Venezuela Information Centre
(Tribune, 1 December)

As we approach Venezuela's Presidential election on 3 December, polls suggest that incumbent Hugo Chavez has a commanding lead. With the exception of a few isolated and discredited surveys associated with the opposition, Chavez is polling between 51-61%, with a double figure lead over his nearest rival Manuel Rosales - levels of support which are consistent with 'Chavista' electoral victories in recent years.

Worryingly, much of the media coverage in this country has repeated many of the falsehoods concerning the situation in Venezuela, propagated by the US-backed opposition to the Chavez government. A key focus of this has been to challenge President Chavez's democratic credentials, and to attempt to cast doubt upon the legitimacy of December's election if, as the polls would indicate, he were to win again.

In fact, President Chavez and his supporters have won 10 national elections since 1998, including a recall referendum initiated by the opposition two years ago. These have been certified as free and fair by international observers, including the European Union, the Organisation of America States and the US-based Carter Centre. These bodies will also monitor the fairness of December's vote and the validity is further strengthened by the guarantee to opposition parties of electoral observers at all counts across the country.

Hardly any of the media coverage has commented on Rosales' own lack of respect for democracy. During the April 2002 military coup which temporarily ousted President Chavez, Rosales signed a decree initiated by 'dictator for a day' Pedro Carmona reversing Venezuela's democratically endorsed constitution and dissolving the elected National Assembly.

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Similarly ignored has been the threat Rosales poses to redistributive measures instigated by the Chavez government which have seen UNESCO declare the country illiteracy free, millions of people given free healthcare for the first time, the World Bank recognise the achievements made in reducing poverty, and women's position in society transformed.

Whilst Rosales claims he would maintain these programmes, he was recently caught on camera calling Chavez's most ardent supporters 'drawn mainly from the very poorest' 'parasites that live off the government and are subsidised by the state.'

With a Chavez victory likely, there are ongoing fears in oil-rich Venezuela of further US intervention to bring about 'regime change.' The US refused to condemn the 2002 coup and is seen by many in Venezuela as heavily implicated. Calls earlier this year from Condoleezza Rice for an 'international united front' against Chavez and George Bush's labelling of Chavez as 'a threat undermining democracy' have added to Venezuelan's concerns.

These hostile remarks are backed up with US funding to Venezuelan opposition groups, which currently stands at \$26 million since 2002, with the US refusing to say which ones it is funding. The presence of a US military base in Curacao off Venezuela's coast and the large US military presence in neighbouring Colombia are stoking further fears.

If President Chavez is re-elected he has promised the social transformation taking place will continue, meaning that for many Venezuela will remain a key example of alternatives to failed neo-liberal policies.

With the hostile stance of the US government unlikely to change, our job in Britain is to ensure our government doesn't go along with US attempts to undermine this combination of democracy and social progress which is transforming Venezuelan society.

http://www.vicuk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=157&Itemid=30