

Press Release

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Proutist Universal Concludes its Second Cooperative Training Tour in Venezuela, and Announces Plan to Open Prout Research Institute - Venezuela

Caracas - Proutist Universal concluded a two-week tour in Venezuela that was sponsored by PDVSA, the national oil company. This is the second time that PDVSA has contracted Proutist Universal to support Endogenous Development by giving public conferences and training on cooperatives.

Proutist Universal is a global educational and activist organization which promotes a practical socio-economic alternative to global capitalism that is called Progressive Utilization Theory or "Prout". Prout is described as "progressive socialism" by its founder, Indian philosopher Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921-1990).

The training and conferences were conducted by four representatives of Proutist Universal: Dada Maheshvarananda, an activist, writer, and monk based in the global headquarters of Proutist Universal in Copenhagen, Denmark, and author of *After Capitalism: Prout's Vision for a New World*, which has been published in five languages including Spanish; Steve Phillips, an expert in cooperative administration, with 21 years of experience in forming and managing large food and herbal cooperatives in Colorado and Iowa, United States; Clark Forden, the Executive Director of Proutist Universal in the United States; and Aaron Friedman, who has a concentration in Latin American Studies at Cornell University in New York.

The Department of Automation and Telecommunication Technology of PDVSA organized three large public conferences that were titled, "Endogenous Development and Socialism of the XXI Century: the Community Challenge" and "After Capitalism: a Vision for a New World of Solidarity." These were held in the PDVSA auditoriums located at Caracas, Puerto la Cruz and Maracaibo and were video-recorded by PDVSA.

In addition the Proutist Universal representatives gave lectures to Vice Minister Raul Pacheco of the Ministry of Planning and Development and his staff, and to Superintendent Carlos Molina of SUNACOOOP and his staff. Lectures and intensive cooperative training were also given to co-op workers in Guatire. In total more than 1,000 people attended trainings and lectures.

The themes of the conferences included economic democracy, defining economic progress as increasing purchasing power for everyone, cardinal human values to combat corruption and dishonesty, ideal leadership, ecological protection and the need for self-reliance in food and medicines.

Mr. Phillips observed, “Wherever we went we encountered a warm and enthusiastic reception. It is beautiful to see such a strong cooperative movement that is supported at all levels: government, community and individuals.”

During the tour, Proutist Universal announced their plan to open the Prout Research Institute – Venezuela (PRI-V) and started consulting with the Fundacion Parque Zoobotanico El Ingenio. The Foundation recently obtained funding from the Venezuelan Government and the City of Guatire to create a zoological and botanical park on 200 hectares of land outside of Guatire, state of Miranda, one hour east of Caracas. PRI-V has been invited by the Foundation to serve the project’s cooperatives with skills training, mentoring and evaluation.

The Foundation President, Mr. Leopoldo Cook, stated, “We understand the Socialism of the XXI Century to be social justice for all, solidarity and love, with mutual respect between people during this historical transition of the last years of capitalism. Our foundation is committed to this project in the hope that this nucleus of endogenous development will be a model in this effort. The visit of Proutist Universal’s representatives at our invitation, thanks to the support of our new PDVSA, contributed much to this effort.”

Mr. Forden, during the Community Conference in Maracaibo, said, “The whole world is watching Venezuela. More co-ops are starting here than anywhere in the world, 60,000 of all types since the year 2001. We are here to share the principles and strategies of Prout’s economic model. With Proutists from Venezuela, other Latin American countries, Africa, Asia and the rest of the world, we hope to assist the Bolivarian Revolution to eliminate poverty and achieve a high quality of life for everyone, particularly by strengthening cooperatives.”

PRI-V will offer training, consulting, research and evaluation to cooperatives, governmental agencies and non-government community service organizations in Venezuela. Its training programs include: leadership skills development; personal character development; and, cooperatives from A-Z, including starting, managing, decision making, financial controls, local and national federations.

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