Abstract

Labor relations framed within the process of making the right to work more flexible has suffered changes on an international level over the last decades. The internal Venezuelan situation has undergone this process, fundamentally in its political and legislative structure where notable changes have occurred in essential social postulates over the last three decades. Along this line of thought, the system of work relations has been redesigned in such a way as to question whether or not the reforms postulated instead of aligning themselves with pertinent institutional labor institutions in the western world, are perhaps returning to highly rigid protectionist tendencies that were present at the beginning of the labor rights movement. In Venezuela, in timid but efficient steps, between the years 1995-1998, it was possible to bring to the discussion table all the social actors in order to produce agreements of great social significance: social security and wage and salary policy. These were the first steps that promoted dialogue and understanding as means for channeling labor relations, leaving behind state interventionism and unilateral and imperative labor decisions on the part of the state. In this sense the system of labor relations evolved into a more participatory and democratic system. However, this line of action was interrupted by the installment of the present democratic government that initiated legislative action to elaborate a new constitution that was finally approved on December 15th, 1999. In the new constitution the previous scheme was maintained, in that social rights such as work day, minimum salary, social benefits, labor union association and the right to strike, and benefits referring to public health, social security and pensions were all guaranteed. However the new constitution is silent with respect to fundamental aspects which govern labor relations: the workers right to information as to business stability, the right to professional training as part of employment development policy in companies, a salary based on productivity, and social dialogue as a conducive channel for state economic and social strategies with the participation of other social actors. It is difficult to say if we are advancing or regressing. However, we seem to be returning to the type of political regime that protects rights without first evaluating costs, regulatory measures, and non-reflexive super-positioning of the all-powerful will of the state over the individual will and autonomy of the other actors. This is not consonant with dominant tendencies on the international scene.

Keywords

Labor relations, social rights, work conditions, labor reform.