

## Times of Insurrection

Gustavo Duch

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**D**ear Shareholders. Thank you for attending this extraordinary meeting which, as chairman of the company, I have convened within the scope of my powers. As you will understand, due to the urgency of the meeting and its exceptional nature, the subject matter I wish to raise is grave. So please listen to my presentation in detail. I will not take up much of your time.

After almost 150 years of history, a great deal of determination and perseverance, we can say without any doubt that we have been the world's leading dairy company for more than 20 years. Today, we have production facilities on five continents, our products can be found in every shop, and we employ hundreds of thousands of people. Our slogan says, 'we serve quality protein to the whole world'. As you know, with the acquisitions and takeovers of the last five years, with no competition around us, we can now say that we are 'the company' in the industry. Now, however, I believe it is time to consider some measures to be taken, which I will enumerate below:

First, you will agree with me that the climate crisis that the planet is suffering and the citizens' awareness in this regard forces all large companies to show a stronger commitment to environmental values. Therefore, we have created some sustainable and organic product lines, focused a large part of our advertising on the sustainability story, and financed campaigns for properly recycling packaging, but these are insufficient measures. Has the time come to agree that 100% of the milk we collect from our suppliers' farms and 100% of the products we transform must come from 100% organic systems? In my opinion, yes, but I am not going to take this decision.



Three cows looking around curiously. Photo: Sue Winston

Around the elegant oval table of fine tropical wood, there were relieved sighs from some of the board members and shareholders.

*"You will also agree with me that by using our position of strength in the sector, we are strangling the farms that supply us with milk and, little by little, society knows that we are paying them at prices that are many times lower than what it costs them to produce each litre of milk. It is true that incorporating faces of producers on packaging has helped to generate a sense of complicity with the livestock sector, but should we be anticipating a possible law and make public an agreement to pay for a litre of milk twice the cost to producers? It would be the right thing to do but... I'm not going to make this decision either".*

The attendees' discomfort was becoming more noticeable; worried glances were exchanged between them. What has stung the president? What does he want to tell us?

*"Today, food poverty has spread to all the major cities of the world, precisely where our products have always found the most buyers. For many people, the economic crisis and rising food prices make it impossible to guarantee a healthy and sufficient diet. This is a reality known to all. And it is true that we have a small part of our budget to make donations of milk to food banks, and that once a year we organise marathons to collect products for these families, ... We cannot do anything less than prove our social responsibility with this type of solidarity actions. But are we doing enough? I am thinking about whether we should resolutely review our profit margins, as well as the dividends to be distributed and propose similar remuneration for all the workers in the company, whatever their rank and responsibility. If our objective were non-profit, simply remunerative for those we work for, we could adjust consumer prices a lot. But, distinguished directors and shareholders, this is not my decision either".*

And as the chairman said these last words with a half-smile on his face, most thought it was all a rhetorical, even mocking exercise, typical of someone who knows he is in charge of a company of such size and power. *"Now he will announce a further step in our growth by entering the meat sector,"* whispered the vice-president to the colleague sitting to his right.

Rising to his feet, the president announced:

*"Let the record show: One. From an ecological and social justice point of view, the only measure that can be taken in the context of a multinational like ours is its total closure. I rule the legal liquidation of our company. Two. After many years of presiding over this multinational, I apologise for having consciously ignored all the damage done to planet Earth, its inhabitants and those yet to come".*

But the most astonishing thing about this decision was that at the same moment, something similar was happening on many other boards of directors of oil, food and energy multinationals... As if they were automatons, different chairmen repeated the same speeches and signed the dissolution of their respective companies in accordance with the regulations.

Did those anarchist groups studying the art of hypnotisation have anything to do with all this? Or those hacker collectives who rummaged through the personal files of the great fortunes while introducing indecipherable codes to loot current accounts? Or is it that every hardware store on the planet reported an incredible demand for useful and sufficient tools to unleash total sabotage against the installations of the multinationals? Or were they infected



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### *True Democracy and Capitalism*

by the same terror that the public administrations felt in the face of the absolute insurrection of the citizenry with their actions of disobedience?

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❖ **About Jus Semper:** The Jus Semper Global Alliance aims to contribute to achieving a sustainable ethos of social justice in the world, where all communities live in truly democratic environments that provide full enjoyment of human rights and sustainable living standards in accordance with human dignity. To accomplish this, it contributes to the liberalisation of the democratic institutions of society that have been captured by the owners of the market. With that purpose, it is devoted to research and analysis to provoke the awareness and critical thinking to generate ideas for a transformative vision to materialise the truly democratic and sustainable paradigm of People and Planet and NOT of the market.

❖ **About the author: Gustavo Duch** has a degree in veterinary medicine. Coordinator of 'Food sovereignty, biodiversity and cultures'. He collaborates with peasant movements.



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❖ **Tags:** capitalism, corporate social responsibility, climate change, ecology, food poverty, sustainability, living wages, social justice.

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