



**ETUCO CONFERENCE: TRAINING, KEY  
TO A STRONGER EUROPEAN  
TRADE UNION MOVEMENT**

The enlargement of the European Union and the integration between the member states is growing more and more important, to countries that already part of the EU as well as to the applicant countries. At the trade union level, all the members of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) have developed initiatives in the matter of the European integration. On 10-11 January they exchanged these projects at the Conference of the European Trade Union College (ETUCO) in Brdo (Slovenia). The main theme of this Conference was trade union training within the framework of the European integration. Olga Nicolae, executive secretary in charge of Trade Action, clarified the WCL's activities with regard to Europe and Trade Action. During the debates a number of important central ideas were brought forward. First, the ETUC members believe that the European trade unions need further strengthening. This can be done by means of a thorough nation- and Europe-wide training on the EU policy, workers' rights, the social impact of the euro, industrial relations... According to the participants, also a better internal organisation and communication, the active recruitment of new members, the learning of project-based and strategic management, and language courses can be conducive to strengthening the European trade union movement. Further requirements are closer cooperation and a strong solidarity between organisations from Eastern and Western Europe.

**TELE-FLASH**

is a two-weekly information bulletin containing brief trade union messages, edited by the information department of the WCL.

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**CDT AND UGTM VISIT WCL FOR  
WORKSHOP ON MOROCCAN LABOUR  
CODE AND RIGHT TO STRIKE**

Further to the files the *Confédération Démocratique du Travail* (CDT) and the *Union Générale des Travailleurs* (UGTM) had presented to the WCL, and to the recent mission of Secretary General Willy Thys to Morocco, the organisations involved met on 13 January at the WCL's head office in Brussels. During this workshop, the WCL leaders assessed with their Moroccan colleagues the new Strike Bill and the Bill amending the Labour Code. Though the International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines the right to strike as a basic workers' right, the Bill contains criteria that make strikes in Morocco almost impossible. The new Labour Code had to improve the situation of the workers, but it is obviously aimed at a flexibilisation of the working conditions. This increases the insecurity of the workforce and causes poverty to grow. The WCL, the CDT

and the UGTM therefore decided to request the ILO to study both bills.

**WCL SUPPORTS TEACHING STAFF  
FROM CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

Early in September 2002, the teaching staff from the Central African Republic resumed work after their nine-month salary arrears had been paid. According to reports from the interfederal organisation of teaching staff IFEC, however, the problems of the teachers have by no means been solved. The authorities keep putting parents and teachers under pressure to go on with the lessons despite the poor working circumstances. Moreover, unlawfully recruited staff replaces striking teachers, trade union activists receive veiled threats, and several ILO conventions are violated. According to the WCL, this state of affairs harms irrevocably the modern and efficient educational system in the Central African Republic. The quality of education indeed depends on a healthy working environment in the first place. By letter dd 10 December 2002 to President Ange Félix Patassé, Secretary General Willy Thys called on the authorities to seek a solution to these problems through a dialogue with the workers' organisations and the IFEC.

**DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN BELARUS  
FIGHTS REPRESSION**

The Congress of Free Democratic Trade Unions (CFDTU), a young group of democratic organisations in Belarus, is going through a difficult time. Early in January, the state-owned Trade Union Federation, led by President Lukashenko, imposed a new lease, by which the rent for the CFDTU buildings will be ten times higher. This makes it very difficult for the movement to subsist... the umpteenth demonstration of the fact that the democratic movement is denied the right to exist in Belarus. Deputy Secretary General Jaap Wielen, who paid a solidarity visit to Belarus in November 2002, has pointed out that the WCL continues to lend full support to the free and democratic movement and its struggle for freedom of speech in Belarus.

**SHOP AND COMMERCIAL STAFF IN  
BRAZIL DEMANDS SUNDAY REST**

By recent letter to Lula da Silva, who has just taken up his first term of office as President of Brazil, Juana Maria Chireno Maritza, President of FETRALCOS (the federation of Latin American workers in the commercial and services sector), referred to the actions her Federation has conducted for years in favour of free Sundays for the shop and commercial staff in Latin America.

«We continue our struggle with the local authorities to obtain Sunday rest without unfavourable consequences for the workers and their families», she wrote. As Lula is a former trade union leader, who in the 1970s led the big metalworkers' federations of Sao Paulo in their protest against the military dictatorship in his country, FETRALCOS hopes that he will take measures in favour of the workers to reduce the gap between poor and rich in Brazil. Anyway, the WCL believes that the election of Lula has heartened all the democratic organisations in Brazil, among which the *Central Autonoma de Trabajadores* (CAT).

### **COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT FOR WORKERS AT COCA-COLA BOTTLING COMPANY IN GUATEMALA**

October 2002: through its member organisation CGTG (*Central General de Trabajadores de Guatemala*) and the Latin American Commission for the Rights and Freedoms of the Workers and Peoples (CLADEHLT), the WCL was informed of abuses at the Coca-Cola bottling company Embocen in Guatemala.

Despite talks between the workers' organisation STECSA and Embocen on a collective agreement, the management managed to formulate a draft text in which the workers' rights and several ILO conventions are ignored. A strike call was harshly quelled, and strong pressure was exerted on the shop stewards. The WCL urged President Alfonso Portillo Cabrera in writing to do something about this unbearable situation. Some two months later some headway was made at last: on 18 December the managers of Embocen and STECSA signed a collective agreement that takes account of the workers' needs and rights. It goes without saying that the WCL is pleased with this development; it will keep a close eye on the situation in Guatemala, together with the CGTG, STECSA and all the other democratic organisations.

### **CNUS SETS PRIORITIES FOR COMING WORKING YEAR**

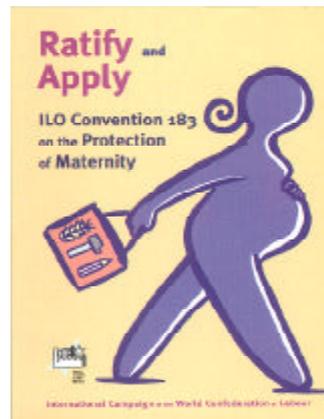
The *Consejo Nacional de Unidad Sindical* (CNUS) – a group of four workers' organisations in the Dominican Republic, among which the WCL affiliate CASC – has taken stock of the economic and social evolution in 2002. It found that not the strong economic growth, but the deterioration of the working circumstances caused the rise in imports, the depreciation of the peso, the drop in wages... By the end of 2003 the rate of unemployment will probably up to 16.6%, causing poverty to grow. To this has to be added the

huge debt (particularly to the United States) weighing on the country.

The major challenges facing the CNUS are therefore: to strengthen the unity and cooperation between the four trade unions, to further organise and protect the public service workers, to raise the minimum wages in the private sector, to expand Trade Action, to ensure that the Social Security Act is observed, and to give impetuses to the social dialogue in the struggle against poverty.

### **RECTIFICATION – RATIFICATION OF THE MATERNITY PROTECTION CONVENTION (NO. 183)**

We would like to apologise for a mistake that slipped in the previous number of Teleflash. We wrote «*The WCL Women and Work Department continues calling upon all national trade unions to take up their responsibilities and ratify Convention 183 as soon as possible*». However, it is not up to the trade unions to ratify to Convention on maternity protection; this is, of course, the responsibility of the national authorities. Yet, the WCL continues to call on all the workers' organisations to keep pointing out the importance of having Convention 183 confirmed. Again our apologies for this lapse.



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#### **Schedule of activities**

- 30 January -01 February 2003: SBSI / Trade Action seminar, Jakarta – Indonesia
- 7 February: Visit to the presidium of Solidarnosc, Warsaw – Poland
- 10-14 February: DOAWTU Executive Committee, Kinshasa – Dem. Rep. Congo