

**WCL WELCOMES TWO NEW AFFILIATES**

During the Confederal Board session in Jakarta, on 19-24 October, the WCL welcomed



**WCL Confederal Board in Jakarta (Indonesia)**

two new affiliates. «The Confederation of South African Workers' Unions» (CONSAWU) reinforced our ranks as an ordinary member, whereas the *Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal / Forces du Changement* CNTS-FC) became an extraordinary member of the WCL. May this new cooperation yield favourable results for the workers and people in both countries!

**EUROPEAN TRADE UNION FORUM:  
EU ON THE SCALE**

After the success of the first edition in Florence (2002), the second European Social Forum (ESF) was held in Paris and Saint-Denis (France) on 12-15 November last. NGOs, trade unions and other social organisations exchanged views on neo-liberal globalisation, equal opportunities, war and peace... in brief, on a «new» Europe at the service of the human being. On the eve of the ESF, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) organised a European Trade Union Forum together with all French Trade Union Confederations, amongst whom the CFTC, an organisation affiliated to the WCL. A couple of hundreds European trade union representatives had a round-table talk about the enlargement of the EU and the development of one single social model for East and West. Bogdan Hossu, President of CSN Cartel Alfa and Vice President of the WCL for Eastern Europe, explained how difficult it was for Romania to enter the EU: the transition from a centrally planned

economy to a free market, trade and industry not being prepared for stiff competition, the strict environmental quality standards...

«*Europe therefore needs a Constitution that contains basic social rights*» said Hossu. John Monks, Secretary General of the ETUC, recognised that the enlargement was a heavy economic task for which a proper social dialogue and a strong European social and trade union movement were highly necessary. This tenor was also expressed in the address of Willy Thys, Secretary General of the WCL, during the closing ceremony. He seized this opportunity, further, to point out the importance of

preserving the European model as a power countervailing the increasingly aggressive neo-liberal policy.

**FCG AND ÖGB CONGRESSES IN AUSTRIA**

On 13 October last, the FCG – the Christian fraction of the «*Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund*» (ÖGB) and member of the WCL – staged its Congress. Jaap Wienen, Deputy Secretary General of the WCL, attended the proceedings. At this meeting, which took place on the eve of the joint ÖGB Congress, much attention was paid to the measures in the field of pensions, social security and health care the Austrian government had announced without prior consultation with the social partners. During mass protest actions and strikes, the trade unions had combined forces, but the political tug-of-war had also caused internal tensions. After having assessed this issue, the FCG Congress passed 21 resolutions. Defining the FCG's position to the WCL, Resolution 21 affirms that «*the Christian social teaching must be developed in the international trade union policy, particularly in Trade Action and in Europe*». The Congress elected Karl Klein President and elected, further, six vice presidents. His predecessor, Fritz Neugebauer, remains President of Infedop/Eurofedop (the international trade federation of civil servants in the WCL). At the 15th joint ÖGB Congress, which assembled shortly afterwards in Vienna, the President of the Republic of Austria surprised friend and foe when he rebuked openly the government

**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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policy and encouraged the trade unions to take up their responsibility.

### **SERBIAN GOVERNMENT KEEPS TURNING A DEAF EAR TO THE WORKERS' DEMANDS**

On 25 June, thousands of people took to the streets in Serbia, in protest against the total unwillingness of the government to do something about the awkward economic and social situation in the country. The trade unions – among them the «Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia» (SSSS), affiliated to the WCL – demanded together with the demonstrators a proper social dialogue and the definition of the workers' rights in collective agreements. They also demanded to be actively involved in the privatisation process. Yet, the government kept turning a deaf ear, despite the mass action and the letter of protest to the Prime Minister from the WCL. Further actions to demand the resignation of the government were bound to occur... At the end of October, the police even took violent action, without any clear reason, during a peaceful demonstration of metalworkers in Belgrade. The WCL strongly condemns this violation of the freedom of action and has called a second time on Prime Minister Zivkovic to stop the political aggression and to enter without delay upon a social dialogue on equal terms.

### **THE ILO SETS UP A FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE FOR BELARUS**

Some time ago, the WCL denounced the workers' rights violations by the government of Alexandr Lukashenko and the «administrative arrest» of trade union leader Aliaksandr Yaroshuk. Projects of the International Labour Organisation are being kept out of the Republic of Belarus, despite the fact that a Standing Representation of the ILO (ACTRAV) is active in this Republic. It has developed assistance projects on «Protection of workers' rights, development of democracy and economic reforms based on a tripartite dialogue» as well as on «Urgent support of trade unions». On 12 November, however, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection announced that the programmes could not be registered and carried out in their present shape. According to the Ministry the programmes required prior modifications, completions and the approval of the Belarusian government. This way of acting runs counter, of course, to the independence with which the ILO – as a tripartite and international organisation – must be able to cooperate with employers' and workers' organisations. Besides, as a member of the ILO the Republic of Belarus is compelled to take up its responsibility and to cooperate on the projects. At its latest meeting, the ILO Governing Body decided to set up a fact-finding committee for Belarus, so to reveal the oppression against the workers and their representatives. The WCL fully supports this decision.

### **EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS FORM BLOCK AGAINST ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT**

For the first time in the history of Romania, three trade union confederations (CNS Cartel Alfa, CSDR – both affiliated to the WCL – and BNS) and five

employers' associations have formed a block against the government. They decided to develop a joint plan of action to force the government to take up its responsibility and to resume the dialogue with the social partners. The trade unions have been excluded from the talks on the increase in prices of public-utility services. Moreover, the budgets for all the Romanian state-owned companies were fixed without any form of tripartite consultation. As a further expression of their indignation and concern over the unbearable situation, CNS Cartel Alfa, CSDR and BNS organised on 15 October last a mass demonstration in the capital Bucharest. No less than 15,000 people demanded the resignation of the government and the restoration of the social dialogue in the country.

### **NAPFE CELEBRATES 90TH ANNIVERSARY**

On 10 October NAPFE, our affiliated in the United States, celebrated its 90th anniversary. Secretary General Willy Thys attended the ceremony on behalf of the WCL. He congratulated NAPFE on its many years of struggle



*On 10 October NAPFE celebrated its 90th birthday*

against racism, inequality and injustice in the United States. The federation of postal and federal employees placed «equal employment opportunities» on the agenda of the American Federal Government. Moreover, NAPFE made a very important contribution to the official recognition of trade unions in the United States. In conclusion, Willy Thys praised the active support of NAPFE for the WCL liaison office in Washington. Happy birthday and congratulations for President James McGee!

### **SPAIN: SUBCONTRACTING, A NEW REALITY OF TRADE UNIONS**

The labour market is in itself fragmented and susceptible to changes. And the recent rise in the number of «subcontracting companies» only strengthens this fragmentation. The creation of subcontracted companies was initially intended to develop activities that were not directly linked to the aims of the contractor (the mother company). But such companies are now turning increasingly into a profitable business for managers. By letting workers at subcontracted companies do the same work as at the mother company, yet at a lower wage and in less favourable circumstances, they want to significantly rise the production without extra costs. It goes without saying that this goes to the detriment of the safety and welfare of the workers. The «Unión Sindical Obrera» (USO), our Spanish affiliate, therefore calls on the trade unions to adapt to this new economic situation: «The trade union structures and action must be adapted so that workers at subcontracted companies are treated

on an equal footing with the other staff». At the metal processing company Asturias, the strike actions of the USO have already resulted in a plan to bring the wages to the same level.

### **PAN-AFRICAN WOMEN'S COMMITTEE IS MAKING PROGRESS**



The Pan-African Women's Committee in the DOAWTU met on 14 September in Accra (Ghana) in preparation for the second Congress of our regional organisation in Africa. During this meeting the subregional coordinators of the women's action decided what positions they would like the Congress to adopt. They presented to the Congress a «Policy report for the promotion of women's rights in the trade union

movement», a plan of action and resolutions, with the end in view of highlighting the concerns of women workers. The Committee also discussed how women could take a more active part in the African trade union movement. This important effort and the close cooperation with Kattia Paredes, coordinator of the Women and Work Department in the WCL, bore fruit. The African trade union women participated actively in the debates of the Congress. As from now, further, the Executive Committee of the DOAWTU has two female members.

### **MOROCCAN WOMEN ACCLAIM ADAPTED LEGISLATION**

Recently in Morocco, the Code of Personal and Family Status, the «*Moudawana*», was thoroughly reformed, improving the position of women (and their children) in society. After many years of social pressure and campaigns, the family in Morocco is finally legally recognised as a shared responsibility of man and woman. Whereas in former days only men could apply for divorce, this now involves legal and financial conditions. Moreover, women who are ill-treated or abandoned to their fate can now divorce under legal protection. The marriageable age for girls has been raised from 15 to 18, and polygamy is only possible if extremely strict rules are observed. For the first time in history, also provisions from the international conventions to protect the rights of children have been added to the Moroccan national legislation. The reform has made it possible for children of daughters to also inherit from their grandfathers. It goes without saying that the WCL and its two Moroccan affiliates, the UGTM and the CDT) are most delighted with this cultural and economic evolution in favour of the rights of women in society.

### **DIALOGUE: BASIS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SAARC REGION**

Early in October, the «Institute for International Workers' Education» (IIWE) of the Belgian confederation ACV/CSC, which cooperates actively with the WCL, organised a five-day seminar on the importance of the social dialogue

for sustainable development and workers' rights. The seminar was realised in cooperation with the All Pakistan Trade Union Congress (APTUC), affiliated to the WCL. In Karachi trade union leaders of three organisations from the SAARC subregion (Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) – all three affiliated to the BATU/WCL – evaluated the policy of international financial institutions IMF and the World Bank. They examined the effects of the neo-liberal globalisation on the situation of the workers and discussed the strategies of these institutions in the struggle against poverty in the region. By means of lectures delivered by economists, a female ILO representative and trade union leaders, the participants were trained so that in future they would be able to respond proactively to the way of acting of the international financial institutions and work out socially inspired alternatives. In conclusion of the seminar, a number of recommendations and action strategies were adopted.

### **DECEASE OF LUIS ANDERSON**

Much to its sorrow, the WCL has learned that trade union leader Luis Anderson, Secretary General of the ORIT (ICFTU), died on 15 November of a ventricular aneurism. He lived to be 62. During his life as a trade unionist, he struggled for social justice, equality and workers' rights. Anderson's death is a great loss for the regional and international trade union movement. The WCL expresses its heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and organisation.

### ***Schedule of activities***

- 24 November - 12 December : WCL-IIWE seminar on the informal economy;  
10 December: Open Forum on the Informal Economy, Ter Nood/Overijse – Belgium;
- 8-11 December: Committee of the UN Conference on Trade and Development – theme: «Spirit of Enterprise, Promotion of Trade and Development», Geneva - Switzerland;
- 11-12 December: 111th plenary session of the TUAC, Paris - France;
- 12-13 December: Tripartite Conference of the ILO / European Foundation for The Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EFILWC) / Polish government on «the right to information in the enlarged EU», Warsaw - Poland;
- 15-17 December: Tripartite, interregional OMP meeting on the «best proceeding with regard to HIV/AIDS», Geneva – Switzerland;
- 16-21 December: WCL/ICATU Women's Seminar, Damascus – Syria;
- 19 December: Project of CNV-International on training of third world workers, Breda – the Netherlands.

**Please consult our annual schedule on:  
[www.cmt-wcl.org](http://www.cmt-wcl.org)**



# Trade Action

## RESOUNDING VICTORY OF DOCKERS!

Early this year, the European dockers and trade unions lodged a strong protest against the draft European directive on the access to ports. The main point of discussion was the introduction of «self-handling», as a result of which



not only qualified dockers, but also ships' crews would be allowed to handle cargo. The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), the international transport workers' federation of the WCL (FIOST) and the ACV/CSC trade federation for transport and communication (ACV/CSC-Transcom) struggled together to preserve the status and legal position of the dockers. They believe that the liberalisation of the sector – inspired by commercial interests – would only be detrimental to the working conditions and circumstances. WCL Secretary General Willy Thys and FIOST President Michel Bovy have sent a joint letter to the European Parliament, demanding to guarantee safety standards in the ports by deploying only qualified dockers and to avoid commercial competition in the ports. The solidarity of the workers and several trade unions has resulted in a resounding victory: on 20 November, the Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg) defeated the draft port directive!

## INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT SEMINAR IN THE MAKING

In August, a delegation of ACV/CSC-Transcom (Transport & Communication) visited the colleagues of transport workers' federations in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary in preparation for an international seminar that is scheduled to take place next year in Brussels (Belgium). This meeting will be attended by transport workers from six Western and Central and Eastern European countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Hungary and Romania. They will examine the specific features of the transport

sector, particularly the effects of stiff competition on the working conditions of the transport workers. This dialogue must enable the trade union officials and the workers to properly anticipate and respond to regional and international disputes as a result of mergers, restructuring, closures, etc. The project will be finished off with an information booklet on national and transnational situations in the sector. The publication will also survey possible trade union actions in support of the transport workers.

## WFAFW STANDS UP FOR FARMERS IN PARAGUAY

Recently in Paraguay, the police brutally expelled more than 120 families, all part of the Tembiapora community, from their landed estates. The farmers are all members of the National Rural Organisation (ONAC), which is affiliated to the «Central Nacional de Trabajadores» (CNT), a member organisation of the WCL. Tragic balance of the raid: one farmer died after having been hit by police bullets, five others got seriously injured, around one hundred farmers were beaten up, and 26 were arrested. In July of this year, a similar police action had taken place in the Itakyry district, in the region of Alto Parana. At that time five farmers were imprisoned, several others got injured, and farms and fields were burned down. The newly elected President of the WFAFW, Carlos Ancizar Rico, wrote to the Paraguayan government, calling on it to release the prisoners, to investigate the case and to indict those guilty. He also demanded to return the seized goods to the victimised families and to pay damages.

## WFBW PROTESTS AGAINST NEW AUSTRALIAN LABOUR CODE

The Australian government is preparing a new labour code that reduces the trade union rights. The code provides for a special «industrial police» who fine violations of industrial laws. The code also provides:

- further restrictions for trade unions to enter workplaces;
- the liability of trade unions for damages caused by workers and trade union representatives, along with the withdrawal of the work permit if no damages are paid within two weeks;
- the dismissal of trade union representatives who call «unprotected» strikes;
- secret ballots on strikes and cooling-off periods after two weeks of strike, etc.

In a letter of protest to the Australian Prime Minister, Sir Hon. J.W. Howard, and Senator A. Murray of the Australian Democrats, the World Federation of Building and Woodworkers' Unions (WFBW) called on the Australian government to fully respect the ILO conventions 87 and 96 on freedom of association and collective bargaining and to withdraw the new code project without delay.

### **INFEDOP PARTICIPATES IN ILO EXPERT MEETING ON «VIOLENCE AND STRESS AT WORK»**

The Code of Practice for «Violence and Stress at Work» of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is a guide for all those working on safety and health management in the services sector. It makes sure that violence and stress at work are discerned and can be brought up. On 8-15 September, INFEDOP attended in Geneva an expert meeting on this Code of Practice. During the first



plenary meeting with governments, employers and trade unions, Secretary General Bert Van Caelenberg elucidated the viewpoint of INFEDOP, which lays three accents:

- The public sector must set the example in the prevention of stress and violence at work. This is often not yet the case. Just look at the prison officers who have irregular working hours and get in many cases insufficient support from the management.
- Job insecurity is an important cause of stress. Particularly in the post and telecommunications sector restructuring is causing commotion among the workers. In the opinion of INFEDOP, the government must develop a proactive social policy in difficult economic times, along with an effective social protection.
- Though new technologies are supposed to facilitate the work, they cause insecurity and stress in many cases, particularly when their introduction is not coordinated. INFEDOP hopes that the ILO Code can be translated into concrete measures, so that stress and violence among the workers will be reduced and the service will improve.

### **NEW FORMS OF WORK, NEW CHALLENGES**

In the middle of this year, 37 trade union representatives met in Salzburg for the 24th international meeting of the «World Federation of Clerical Workers» (WFCW). Under the theme «New forms of work – new challenges for trade unions», they debated on several forms of atypical work which emerge in times of economic crisis. Self-employment, piece-work, homework, work on request, employment contracts of limited duration, temping... they often go hand in hand with low wages and poor social protection. Nevertheless, the WFCW notices that many clerical workers are not aware of this situation and are satisfied with this kind of employment. «*That is why trade unions must take a clear stand to this issue and work out may to solve the problems related to atypical work*», says the WFCW.

### **MULTINATIONAL RECOGNISES WCL FEDERATION AS AN INTERLOCUTOR!**

«Multinational and Transnational Companies» is one of the VERBA projects to strengthen the WCL Trade Action. In the first place it wants to create networks for the exchange of information between these companies and

the workers' representatives. A further aim is to define a clear trade union policy per international trade federation or multinational. Finally, project coordinator Jan Voets wants to realise jointly with the WCL codes of conduct for multinationals. In the meantime already two training seminars took place: one in May in Rio de Janeiro, the other in June in Johannesburg. The issue was also given a lot of attention at the seminar the WFBW staged in Mexico, last year in October. Thus, the germ was laid for a network around the Belgian ETEX group. The South American branch companies have even managed to develop a local ETEX network and regularly ask their Belgian colleagues for information. Also Africa has shown interest. Moreover, several NGOs have recognised the WFBW as an international interlocutor, and the Federation will contribute to the conclusion of codes of conducts within the LAFARGE group. An important accomplishment of our trade federation!

### **TRADE UNIONS IN INFORMAL ECONOMY ARE NOT ABANDONED TO THEIR FATE**

During a recent visit to Bolivia and Colombia – in the context of the WCL Trade Action's VERBA project on the informal economy – it appeared that besides trade unions also other organisations like cooperatives, «*gremiales*» (guilds), mutual-assistance associations, NGOs, etc are involved in the improvement of the working conditions of the informal-economy workers. And since the informal economy is so extensive, it may be useful for the trade unions to cooperate with these organisations so to develop a social movement. Indeed, many people who are currently working in the «formal circuit», risk landing in the «informal circuit» as a result of a deregulating market policy. The demands of the informal economy workers constitute a direct challenge for all the trade federations. Finding today a response to tomorrow's problems is not easy, of course, but necessary. It is necessary, for instance, to think about adapted trade union structures, new forms of organisation and a flexible membership and dues system. The mission to Colombia and Bolivia taught us that cooperation between local and international cooperative organisations, mutual-assistance associations, social credit establishments and trade unions can be of great value.

### **OPEN FORUM ON «INFORMAL ECONOMY»**

On 10 December, WCL Trade Action will organise in Brussels an Open Forum on the Informal Economy. Trade union representatives from Africa, Asia and Latin America will enter upon a dialogue with representatives of NGOs, social organisations and all other interested. They will debate on the working circumstances in the informal economy, its impact on the world market, the role of trade unions and other social organisations in the informal economy, etc.

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