

World Confederation of labour

Teleflash 185 – 1-15 July 2004

America meeting: social aspect centre of debate

On 23-25 June last, Washington was the venue of the America meeting, which was held in the presence of Willy Thys, Secretary General of WCL, and Eduardo Garcia, Secretary General of CLAT. The purpose was to analyse the situation in North and in South America and to ensure a better trade union coordination between the affiliates of the World Confederation of Labour. The following trade unions participated in the debate: WCL, CLAT, CDT (Mexico), CPT (Puerto Rico), CLAC and CSD (Canada) and NAPFE (United States). In their final declaration the participants pronounce themselves in favour of international trade processes that create a framework for honest and multilateral trade and give impetuses to growth and sustainable economic development in the continent. As far as the talks on the standard-setting legal framework for trade are concerned, the participants plead for the compulsory inclusion, in all the integration agreements, of the core labour conventions promoted and approved by ILO. WCL deems it essential that ILO is strengthened and gets the same respect as the other international organisations. As regards the foreign debt, the participants advocate the cancellation of the foreign debt of the poorest countries and the financial reengineering of the debt of the other countries in such a way that the costs amount to 20% of the public budget at most. In conclusion, they expressed themselves in favour of more democracy and social justice and for stronger democratic processes. They oppose each form of private violence or state terrorism. *“We feel that conflict resolution should be part of multilateral framework of appropriate organisations such as the United Nations (...).”* The complete text of the final declaration has been placed on our website: www.cmt-wcl.org.

“European Constitution in many respects vaguer”, says ACV-CSC

ACV-CSC, our Belgian affiliate, formulated a clear stand to the draft European Constitution, which the European Council approved last June. First, says ACV-CSC, the matter of the social Europe was placed in the background by the debate on the distribution of the government power. ACV-CSC deplores the preservation of unanimity in the tax and social fields. That way the status quo is maintained, and the European social model put in jeopardy. The supranational trade union rights are not recognised in the final text, whereas the free movement to work and supply services is embedded in the Treaty! Despite the fact that many points point to a step backward, a number of acquired rights such as the right of initiative and the recognition of full employment as aim of the Union. Together with ETUC, ACV-CSC will see to it that the decisions go in the direction of the values that are anchored in the Constitution and in which it recognises itself: solidarity, non-discrimination, democracy, equality... For more information please go to: www.acv-csc.be.

Complaints:

Guatemala: Release of 29 of the 33 arbitrarily imprisoned truck drivers

On 25 February 2004 were arrested 33 trade unionists, among whom Victoriano Zacarías Mindez, Wilson Carreto, Miguel Ángel Ochoa, the respective Executive Secretary of CGTG, Secretary General of the union of car drivers and allied workers of Guatemala, and leader of the truck drivers' union. Because of all these facts and following the arbitrary detention of Rigoberto Dueñas, Deputy Secretary General of CGTG, in prison for one year on groundless charges of corruption at the Guatemalan social security institute, WCL launched a worldwide campaign to obtain the release of these workers and trade union leaders. By the way, the recent International Labour Conference had a debate on Guatemala. On 3 July, 29 of the 33 truck drivers, among them the three trade union leaders, were released. "WCL is grateful for the tokens of solidarity from the trade union movement worldwide. The freedom of our brothers trade unionists is conditional, so the procedure will have to be followed attentively", said Willy Thys, Secretary General of WCL, who will travel before long to this country to follow up on this file and the one of Rigoberto Dueñas.

President of CSC Congo in danger

The *Confédération Syndicale du Congo* (CSC), our Congolese affiliate, has informed us of particularly alarming facts. An armed gang penetrated into the house of its National President, Symphorien Dunia Mutimanwa Lubula, and attempted to murder him. This serious violation occurred a few hours after the President of CSC had made a statement on the country's political situation and the national budget. He had denounced the restrictions on the freedom of speech in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Like WCL, CSC pleads for respect for life, freedom of association and freedom of speech. In a letter to the authorities of the country, WCL Secretary General Willy Thys demands that all-out efforts be made to identify the authors of the attempted murder. "*It is also important that measures are taken to promote freedom of association and the social dialogue in the region,*" the Secretary General of WCL concluded.

Attack on hospital in Argentina

CCAS – Consejo Coordinador Argentino Sindical (Argentinean Trade Union Coordination Council) – has informed WCL on attacks the hospital "ciudad de la vida". According to first reports, the attacks were perpetrated by a political group called "Polo Obrero". According to the reports, a lot of people got injured when part of the building was destroyed and toxic gases escaped. WCL demands the authorities of the country to find and punish the perpetrators of the attack.

WCL received by WTO

Early in June, an important WCL delegation, led by Secretary General Willy Thys and composed of the political secretariat and of leaders of the regional organisations (BATU, DOAWTU and CLAT), was received at the head office of the World Trade Organisation – WTO. During the meeting, both delegations did not exchange so many ideas; WTO presented in particular a number of themes such as the Doha agenda regarding development, agriculture and intellectual property. The WTO leaders are pessimistic about the Doha agenda. The talks have landed in a blind alley. The deadline of 1 January 2005 to reach an agreement seems to be

unfeasible. Nevertheless, the meeting was for WCL an opportunity to reiterate its position that everything must be done to give the current globalisation a human face and to make the observance of the international labour standards a prerequisite for trade agreements.

International Labour Conference

Like every year, the International Labour Conference was held in Geneva in the month of June (this year on 3-17 June). Of course, the social dimension of globalisation was the centre of the debates. Over 3,000 representatives of governments, employers and workers assembled in committees and meetings that were held in the halls of ILO and the *Palais des Nations*. WCL took a very active part in the various committees.

Migrant workers: the Conference approved a new plan of action that offers migrant workers protection on the basis of the international labour standards, of the national labour codes and of the applicable social laws. The plan provides a multilateral non-binding framework that includes, among other things, bilateral and multilateral agreements between the host countries and the countries of origin. Human resources: the Conference adopted a recommendation on human resources development in substitution for Recommendation 150, adopted in 1975. The new recommendation recognises human resources development as an essential element to stimulate lifelong learning. Fishery: around 35 million people are working in fishery. The first part of the discussion was concluded in a positive manner. The purpose of the discussion is to develop new international legal instruments altering the existing ILO standards. Application of Standards Committee: Luc Cortebeeck, ACV-CSC President and WCL Vice President for Western Europe, was elected spokesman for the Workers' Group. The Committee treated 25 cases or countries and had a special session on Myanmar. The discussions were about freedom of association, forced labour, discrimination at work, labour inspectorate...

For more information we refer to: www.ilo.org

Schedule of activities

12-16 July: TA/ Capacity Building: press and publicity training, Jakarta – Indonesia;
13-16 July: CLAT: Executive Committee + Policy Committee, Caracas – Venezuela;
19-23 July: FMANU: seminar on the UN Human Rights Commission, Geneva – Switzerland;
26-30 July: TA/ Capacity Building: press and publicity training, Dhaka – Bangladesh;
09-13 August: WCT: regional Latin American seminar, Montevideo - Uruguay;
12-15 August: CENPROS: national meeting of women workers, Valle de Bravo – Mexico.

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The world of Trade Action

Mission of FLATIC Secretary General to Ecuador

On 26 and 27 April, Carlos Gaitán, Secretary General of the *van de Federaci3n Latinoamericana de Trabajadores de las Industrias y de la Construcci3n* (FLATIC), undertook a mission to Quito, Ecuador. He took part in a meeting with leaders of the *Federaci3n Nacional de Trabajadores Cementeros del Chimborazo* (FENATRACC). President V3ctor Machado, Treasurer Nelson C3rdenas and the Secretary in charge of trade union training Ren3 Jim3nez D3az also participated in this meeting. Also Mar3a Eugenia Mena, second Vice President of CEDOC and hostess of the meeting, was present. President V3ctor Machado and Ren3 Jim3nez explained that FENATRACC consists of the Association of Clerical Workers and the Works Council of Workers of Empresa Cemento Chimborazo C.A., which employs 150 workers and for which 80 further workers are working under a subcontract. According to V3ctor Machado, there was also a representation of workers of the Empresa GUAPAN from the province of Azogues, a company that is now owned by German employers and employs 300 workers. In Ecuador there are also two cement factories whose workers are not yet affiliated to the federation: the Selva Alegre company, with over 300 workers, and the Cementos Nacional company. Both companies have the same owners, of Spanish origin. The leaders decided to establish closer cooperation relations and were invited to take part in the WCL Programme to Strengthen Trade Action.

Eurofedop visited EU President Ireland

On 28 May, at the invitation of the Irish EU President, Dublin was the venue of a meeting between the European trade unions and the troika of directors general in charge of the public administrations in the EU. Eurofedop was represented by Gabriel Keaveny (Ireland), Paul Koeslag (the Netherlands), Willy Gloss (Austria) and Bert Van Caelenberg (Belgium). During the meeting, experts explained the result of the discussion the 25 directors general had had just before. They went into matters such as innovative public services, e-government, better regulations and enlargement of the EU. Eurofedop stressed the ethics in the public services of the member states, the enlargement of the EU and the pension systems.

Informal economy

At the end of May, several trade unionists were in Belgium at the invitation of *Wereldsolidariteit* and ACV-CSC to give shape and a voice to the campaign 2004 of *Wereldsolidariteit*. With the slogan "Working worldwide on security", *Wereldsolidariteit* wants to reveal and denounce in its campaign 2004 the dark sides of the informal economy and its causes, fight the advancing informalisation together with its partner organisations in the third world and pursue more rights and social protection for the workers and women workers worldwide. In several provinces and regional confederations the visitors got acquainted with many trade unions and visited a lot of initiatives related to the informal and social economy in Belgium. During a working visit, WCL presented its VERBA informal economy programme,

seizing the opportunity to strengthen its international network of contact persons in the informal economy. Through this network information on the informal economy is collected and exchanged. This exchange of experiences remains enriching for the organisations concerned, both in North and in South.

Miners of Shougang Hierro Peru on strike

On 1 June, 934 workers of the Chinese multinational Shougang Hierro Perú went on strike for an indefinite period of time. They want to defend their freedom of collective bargaining and find a solution for their platform of demands 2004-2005. The decision of the workers was inspired by the way the company had bargained in the past three months. According to the workers the multinational does not recognise the freedom of collective bargaining and has pursued an unacceptable wage policy. In the past seven years, it granted lump sums by way of wage increase, the wage base was very rarely increased by a ridiculously low amount. As the wages are further frozen, there came a large gap between the average wage in mining and that in their company. Moreover, the production, sales and profits of Shougang have risen in recent years. Besides the implementation of their platform of demands for 2004-2005, the workers want to obtain through this strike a decent and reasonable wage increase, better working and living circumstances, and respect for the investments that were agreed with the Peruvian authorities within the framework of the privatisation (replacement of obsolete materials and machinery, decrease in and prevention of occupational diseases and of industrial accidents, which are fatal in some cases).

WFBW Congress stresses importance of grassroots trade unionism

At the end of May, around sixty delegates from 28 countries assembled in Bulgaria for the Congress of the World Federation of Building and Woodworkers' Unions (WFBW). The Congress confirmed the lines of force of WFBW with regard to social dialogue, multinationals and the informal sector. These lines of force start from the so-called grassroots trade unionism. In this kind of unionism the worker in the company is the centre, whether in a multinational or in a local company, or in the informal economy. As far as the informal sector is concerned, the WFBW affiliates undertook to give this specific group of workers space within their own structures. As for the multinationals, each affiliate committed itself to strengthening its presence in them. Social dialogue is considered the best instrument to arrive at a higher quality of work, to a better existence and better development opportunities, and to a greater social integration and more participation in companies and groups. Special attention will also be paid to codes of conduct or skeleton agreements. According to the resolution that was passed on a new world organisation for wood, building and allied sectors, the Congress empowered the World Board of WFBW to continue the negotiations with the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW) on the creation of a new world organisation. The Congress made the following conditions: recognition of pluralism, preservation of the identity of each organisation and the continuation of the lines of force contained in the plan of action for 2004-2008. Furthermore, the world and continental boards must provide mandates for a representative of the WFBW organisations, taking into account the reality in each continent. The structure of the new organisation will have to be kept possibly simply so that it remains affordable, and a Brussels-based secretariat will have to remain available for the WFBW affiliates in order to ensure the current

services. In conclusion, the Congress elected unanimously the new WFBW World Board with Jacky Jackers (Belgium) as President and Bert van der Spek (the Netherlands) as Secretary General. World Board members are Didier Afanda (Cameroon), Bismo Sanyoto (Indonesia), Richard Dragosits (Austria), Raymund Glock (France), Pedro Machado (Paraguay) en Sonja Vukanovic (Serbia).

Agricultural workers organised second Congress

On 15-19 June, trade union representatives from sixteen countries assembled for the second Congress of the "Latin American Federation of Workers in Agriculture and Cattle-Breeding" (FELTRA). The delegates discussed among other things the plan of action of FELTRA and adopted a "manifesto of the Latin American agricultural workers", in which they took a stand on the main problems facing the workers in this sector. In the plan of action they put a strong emphasis on the strengthening of agrarian trade unionism in Latin America. The plan also includes the struggle against free trade treaties and the protection of natural and biological products against genetically manipulated organisms (GMOs). FELTRA will keep taking action to achieve that the men and women who till the land also become its owners and that trade union leaders can attend the necessary training sessions and courses, so that they can face the problems that occur in the agrarian sector. A new Executive Committee was composed: Marcial Reyes Caballero (Honduras) was elected Secretary General, and José Gomez Cerda (Dominican Republic) and Carlos Ancizar Rico (Colombia) were elected deputy secretaries general.