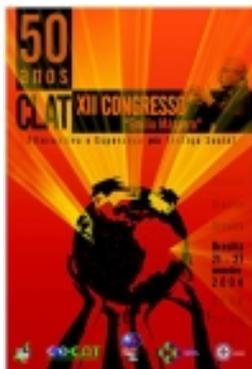


CLAT CELEBRATES ITS 50 YEARS ON THE OCCASION OF ITS XII CONGRESS

This is an important year for the Latin American Workers' Confederation, CLAT, one of WCL's regional bodies. Not only is it celebrating its fifty years of existence, but in addition, it is celebrating its XII Congress from 21-27 November. The general aim of the Congress is to reposition, restructure

and revive CLAT starting from its national organisations, its Latin American sector-based federations as well as its supra-national sub-regional bodies. As a matter of fact, it is important for it to strengthen itself to place it in a better position to defend Latin American and Caribbean workers, to respond to their problems, demands and aspirations. The challenge is enormous when one considers the diversity of the labour world in Latin America: agricultural and industrial workers, private or public sector employees, educationists, workers of the informal economy etc... It is important for CLAT, just like WCL, to adapt itself to the new situation. Under the impact of globalisation, society has gone through many upheavals this last decade. It seems obvious then, that trade unionism is adapting and strengthening itself in the face of this new situation. This time, the Congress will be held at Brasilia in Brazil. It will bring together more than 800 delegates from all the Latin American countries and almost 100 representatives from organisations in Africa, Europe, Asia, United States and Canada. WCL will of course be present. We will certainly inform you about the progress of the Congress preparation in our next edition. For more information contact: www.clat.org

TRADE UNIONS OPPOSED TO EXTENDING WORKING HOURS

The debate on working hours in Europe is far from over. Belgian, Dutch, German and Luxembourg trade unions affiliated to ETUC, under the name of "Doorn Group", have since 1997 tried to coordinate collective negotiations beyond borders. In this way, they avoid being set up against one another "by some governments or by employers who would use competition at the level of working conditions and wages". During a meeting held in Berlin in October, they published a joint declaration in which they categorically opposed plans of employers and some governments aimed at extending working hours. They supported the criticism of the

European Trade Union Confederation, ETUC, against proposals of the European Commission to change the directive on working hours. According to employers, extending working hours (unpaid!) will give a new impetus to the labour market. False, replied the trade unions. "An extension of working hours without financial compensation means higher quantity of goods and services without a corresponding increased purchasing power. Longer working hours would give available work to a fewer people. There would therefore still be more unemployment. Longer working hours would also increase the work load on workers concerned and would be injurious to their quality of life". On its part, the World Confederation of Labour supports ETUC's position (see Teleflash 188). The latter believes that the current proposals are at variance and contrary to the obligations of the European Commission, namely, improvement in living and working conditions and maintaining this improvement. For more information contact: www.etuc.org

WCL DEMANDS DEMOCRATISATION OF IMF AND WORLD BANK GOVERNANCE PROCEDURES

During meetings of the trade union movement and international financial institutions that were held in early October at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington, the World

© IMF Photo



Willy Thys (right) and IMF Managing Director Rodrigo de Rato

Confederation of Labour launched an appeal for the democratisation of procedures within these institutions. The international trade union requested among other things, that the economic problem linked to debt be resolved in accordance with a socially just and ecologically sustainable development model. WCL demanded the cancellation of the foreign debt of the poorest countries and 50% reduction of the debt amount of other countries. In addition, the Confederation proposed that the debt be replaced with the

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development of funds reserved for the payment of social debt in terms of public investments to enable the re-launch of real development of the countries. Furthermore, WCL advocates for greater representation of developing countries in decision-making of international financial institutions. This is just a summary of proposals that emanated from the Washington meeting. *For the full text, visit www.cmt-wcl.org*

CGTD BECOMES CGT

Confederación general de trabajadores democraticos, CGTD, our affiliated organisation in Colombia organised its 8th Congress from 26 September – 2 October this year. A series of decisions and actions were taken during this important meeting on various themes such as foreign debt, the new development model, social security, social agrarian



reform, employment and everything that affects workers and the population in Colombia. The Colombian organisation has assured us that these outcomes will be published very soon. The Congress in any case, provided the occasion to strongly condemn the new pensions reform, which is against workers' interests. The name of the organisation was changed during the Congress. Today one speaks of *Confederación general del trabajo*, CGT. The adjective "democratic" has been dropped since it is obvious that workers organisations are democratic. We note that at the Executive Committee level, Julio Roberto Gómez is Secretary General, and William Millán, Omar Clavijo Osorio and Percy Oyola Palomá have been all elected to the position of Deputy Secretary General. We wish them good luck for this new era that has dawned.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST KILLED IN COLOMBIA

Professor Alfredo Correa de Andreis, an ardent human rights activist, and his personal escort Edward Ocho Martinez were killed at Baranquilla last 17 September by several shots from two unidentified assassins. It should be noted that in June this year, Alfredo Correa was falsely accused of being part of the "Armed Forces Revolutionary Block of the Caribbean". He was therefore detained, and then released for lack of evidence and thanks to national and international pressure. Professor Correa was known and judged to be an excellent sociologist and agronomist, especially by non-governmental, social and human rights organisations in Colombia. In a letter to the authorities of the country, Willy Thys requested the implementation of recommendations made by the United Nations Special Representative on Human Rights activists in his report on Colombia. An immediate and impartial investigation must be conducted in order to find and appropriately condemn the perpetrators of this act. It is im-

portant for the good of democracy that measures be taken to guarantee the protection of its activists so that they can continue to carry out their important mission.

TOWARDS A BETTER INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS!

In some countries 30% of migrants are affected by the job discrimination phenomenon. The International Labour Office, ILO with the support of the European Union has launched a new programme "Promoting equality in diversity: integration in Europe" since the beginning of October to deal firmly with this phenomenon. This project aims at assisting migrant workers in Europe to be integrated into the societies in which they work. It will be co-ordinated by the ILO tripartite partners, namely workers, employers and governments. ILO figures speak volumes – out of 175 million migrants worldwide, 56 million are in Europe. Among this, 25.7 million are economically active, that is 4% of the active population. "In European countries where ILO has already conducted studies on the subject, rates of 35% discrimination against migrants are very common", explains Patrick Taran from the ILO Migrant Programme and Coordinator of the project. For many host countries, immigration has a negative impact on unemployment, wages and social security. In order to counter this accepted notion, the ILO project, will support the commitment of communities, which through European Union member countries, are fighting discrimination against immigrants and facilitate their integration through effective practices against discrimination, by identifying the factors of integration, developing evaluation tools and using social partners. Besides, we also acknowledge that WCL through its Equality Department has for a long time taken into account the importance of the migration issue. *For more information about the ILO project contact: www.ilo.org/migrant*



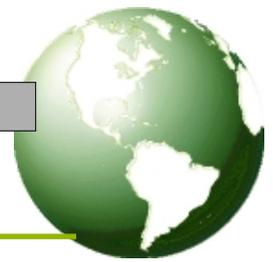
Schedule of activities

October

- 28-30: CNS Cartel Alfa (Romania) – 6th National Congress (Bucharest);
- 29-30: CLAC (Canada) – 2004's National Convention (London / Ontario).

November

- 31/10 - 06/11: WFCW – Congress + seminar (Indonesia);
- 12-14: LCGB (Luxemburg) – 57th National Congress (Strassen - Luxemburg);
- 15-18: ILO – Governing Body (Geneva);
- 19-21: International Council of the World Social Forum – Seminar on the United Nations (Padua /Italy)
- 21-27: Congress CLAT (Brazil);
- 26-27: ELA (Spanish Basque Country) – 11th Congress (Bilbao).



MULTINATIONAL ETEX IN DIALOGUE WITH TRADE UNIONS

On 8 - 10 September, twenty shop stewards of ETEX branches from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Uruguay met in Santiago de Chile on the initiative of



WCL, WFBW (World Federation of Building and Woodworkers' Unions), FLATIC (*Federación Latinoamericana de Trabajadores de las Industrias y la Construcción*) and ACV Bouw & Industry (Belgium). The secretary of the European works council (Jos Maerevoet), WCL's 'Multinationals' coordinator (Jan Voets) and the Secretary General of FLATIC (Carlos Gaitán) were present. They discussed the activities of WCL and the challenges to Trade Action, then went into the 'Reality and trade union prospects in Chile'. The participants also examined the conventions and guidelines of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) regarding safety and health on the shopfloor, stressing the main risks run by the workers of the ETEX group. In conclusion, they debated on the active contribution workers can make to their company's safety policy, and on the way to develop a global plan in this regard. Carlos Gaitán: "In order to deal with the problems facing workers in multinationals, we have to try to create a network that ensures a good flow of information on current affairs".

Against the background of these debates, the participants looked at the efforts of ETEX to support worldwide consultations between the workers of the group. The presentation of the company's Social Charter went to show, further, that the multinational attends to matters that are directly related to the situation of the workers. So, the WCL network for workers in multinationals has immediately taken concrete shape and become active.

For more information please visit our website: www.cmt-wcl.org

BELGIAN RAIL LIBERALISED

The Belgian government recently decided to carry out the European directives on the liberalisation of the railway sector. This so-called



"MOVE Plan" will bring about quite some changes at the *Nationale Maatschappij der Belgische Spoorwegen* (NMBS – Belgian Rail). First, there is the changed organisational structure. As from 1 January 2005, three new legal entities should be active: the Holding NMBS or what is now NMBS as a whole, the company Infrabel that will administer the infrastructure, and the New NMBS, a company that will become the actual transport company. The Holding would remain the employer of the entire group and guarantee the unity of status of the staff. Several matters are still unclear, however, and require further negotiations.

The Belgian State also pledged to take over the historical debt of NMBS through the Fund for Railway Infrastructure. At least, if the State budget allows this. It is now already almost certain, for example, the NMBS will have to pay the interest on its historical debt. ACV-CSC Transcom – the ACV-CSC trade federation for the transport and communication sectors – demands that the Belgian government honours the commitment to take over the company's complete historical debt. Moreover the federation demands negotiations on the convention that regulates career breaks in the three NMBS entities. The trade federation also insists on negotiations, before January 2005, on all the new management contracts and on the State guaranteeing the pensions of the workers. Transcom President Michel Bovy has predicted a hot autumn!

7TH CONGRESS OF THE TEACHERS' FEDERATION FLATEC IN PANAMA



Trade union representatives of eighteen countries from Latin America/Caribbean and leaders of WCL, CLAT, WCT (World Confederation of Teachers), the teachers' federation in USO (Spain) and the *Christelijk Onderwijzersverbond* (COV – the teachers' federation in ACV-CSC – Belgium) assembled on 19-24 September in Panama for the 7th Congress of FLATEC (the Latin American federation of educational and cultural personnel, affiliated to WCT/WCL). The meeting was an excellent occasion for the celebration of the organisation's 25th anniversary. During the opening ceremony Claudio Corries (Secretary General of FLATEC and President of WCT) called on the delegates to continue the struggle for qualitative education for all the Latin American citizens. The Congress went into themes such as "Education and culture in the context of



globalisation” and “Task of education and development of the Latin American community of nations”. They also debated in depth about the ‘unification’ of the international trade unions and about the integration of the structures of WCT and Education International. It is particularly important for the teachers’ federations from Latin America and the Caribbean to arrive at a joint declaration of principles and to strengthen the unity by means of meetings, seminars and joint activities. In conclusion, the Congress elected a new Executive Committee under the leadership of Claudio Corries.

FIRST ‘CAPACITY BUILDING’ FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY IN PAKISTAN

The first ‘Capacity Building’ follow-up activity for Pakistan was organised in Karachi on 24-26 September. Trainers Muhammed Shakir and Saqib Ijaz Malik held a three-day information session on collective



bargaining agreements (CBAs). Twenty participants, members of the international trade federations, gained a better insight in the importance of CBAs to assert the workers’ rights. They will in turn approach workers in companies to pass on their knowledge. This should also result in a rise of the number of trade union members in Pakistani companies.

KADIATOU SOW FROM GUINEA: “ALSO INFORMAL WORKERS HAVE RIGHTS!”

Sow Kadiatou from Guinea was recently in Brussels for a visit to WCL. She is Secretary General of FSPTCA – the Guinean trade federation in textile, ready-made garments and crafts –, member of the Confederal Board



of our Guinean affiliate CNTG and Secretary General of the Pan-African federation of Leather and Clothing Workers. *“In the developing countries – and therefore also in Africa – there is a very extensive informal economy, particularly in the textile sector, in which the multinationals are deploying more and more homeworkers”*, says Kadiatou. *“The challenge for the trade unions is to*

protect also the interests of this large group of workers and to organise them. Indeed, workers in the informal economy are workers like all other workers!” During her visit in Brussels, Kadiatou discussed with Wim De Groof, coordinator of the VERBA informal economy project, new strategies to achieve this goal. Informal workers do not feel that the law applies to them. WCL wants to change this by means of sensitisation campaigns and concrete actions in the field. *“Trade union solidarity is essential in this respect”*, concluded Kadiatou Sow.

You will find the complete interview with Kadiatou Sow on our website: www.cmt-wcl.org

BRAZILIAN METALWORKERS ON STRIKE

According to a report of the International Labour Organisation, Brazil’s rate of unemployment evolved favourably in the past year. In August 2004, there were no less than six times less unemployed than in August 2003. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) attributes this to the strong growth of Brazil’s economy. But according to our member organisation FLATIC (Latin American federation of industry and building workers), this growth is not to be felt in the purses of the workers in its sectors. The buying power of the workers has hardly risen despite the increasing activity in all the sectors and the peaking production. In Sao Paulo – one of Brazil’s most industrialised regions – the forty thousand metalworkers and their brothers and sisters in engine building, household appliances and lighting therefore go on unabated with their strikes, which started on 13 September. They will do so until the wage negotiations start. In Sao Paulo, too, the metalworkers have made demands. Unless their wages have increased by 15 per cent on 20 October, they too will down tools...