

SUPPORTING YOUNG LATIN AMERICAN WORKERS MORE EFFECTIVELY

As a prelude to the International Labour Conference held in Geneva in the early part of June, officials of Latin American trade unions in charge of young workers met at Carrasco, in Uruguay, to assess the situation of the youth on the job market. The meeting was part of a project of the International Labour Organisation and the ACTRAV dubbed "Trade unionism and decent work in the context of globalisation in Latin America". The CCAS, our member organisation in Argentina, participated in this consultation on behalf of the CLAT. Lack of employment in the formal sector of the economy leads to unemployment and insecurity among the Latin American youth, reasons for which they often fall back on the informal



economy. On their part, employers put up the argument that the youth have very little professional experience to their credit, and their integration in the job market becomes more difficult. Furthermore, since the work that these youth are led to take up are often not up to their qualifications, they are under paid. It is obvious in all respects that this group of population is more prone to discriminatory behaviour, economically, socially and politically. At Caracas, 21 proposals were formulated with the view to fighting against discrimination of the youth on the job market, which is caused by neo-liberal thinking and the lack of policy initiative in most of the disadvantaged sectors. The youth must be actively involved in employment policy, among others, and to this end, they must be represented in decision-making bodies. The right of the youth to work must be recognized as a fundamental right, and inspection mechanisms must encourage and guarantee respect for workers' rights. The educational duty of creating a work culture, through

which the youth will know their rights and responsibilities better, falls again on policy. It is also advisable to work towards a social security support system which takes into greater consideration specific needs of young workers. On this subject, consultation still remains of paramount importance. Hence the demand to the ILO by trade union representatives meeting in Caracas to encourage the creation of tripartite decision structures in all countries concerned.

A NEW EUROPEAN DIRECTIVE AIMED AT REDUCING NOISE BY 50% AT THE WORKPLACE!

"Nobody should be exposed to a daily noise pollution level above 87 dB at the workplace", states a new European directive on noise pollution at the workplace. The former directive, dating from 1987, was not binding on the employer. Previously, if the noise level was above 90 dB, the employer

was obliged to find out the causes and had the opportunity to take the necessary measures to reduce it, if it could be done from a practical point of view. Fortunately, the new European measure is more binding. The sound limit of 87 dB shall under no circumstances be exceeded. The difference of 3 dB can be negligible, but the decibel scale is logarithmic, and this measure means a reduction of noise by half! If the limit of 87 dB is exceeded, the employer must immediately find solutions to reduce the noise level, and endeavour to completely eliminate the risks of excessive loud sound. The European regulation also includes directives on certain levels of specific noise pollution. When the noise level is higher than 80 dB, the employer must inform his workers about the way to



TELE-FLASH

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

Responsible editor:
Willy Thys
Information officer:
Mathieu Debroux.

Reproduction authorised under acknowledgement of source

WCL

Trierstraat 33
B-1040 Brussels
Phone: 02/285.47.00
Fax: 02/230.87.22
E-mail:
info@cmt-wcl.org
Internet:
www.cmt-wcl.org

protect themselves, and take the necessary measures. If however the noise level is higher than 85 dB, the company is obliged to immediately reduce this level and workers must regularly undergo a hearing test. The company must record the noise levels in writing and take note of potential health risks. It must also mention the effects of other harmful factors like vibrations. Then, the directive also provides that sirens of alarm systems and other security signals should not be stifled by noise prevailing at the workplace. Finally, workers must be consulted and involved in the assessment of health risks, in drawing up measures and in the choice of hearing protection. The new European directive shall come into force at the latest by 15 February 2006.

NIGER VIOLATES FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

DOAWTU, our regional organisation in Africa, has recently lodged a complaint against the government of Niger with the Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). We will go over the facts briefly. Daimyo Elh Yacouba, the Secretary General of SYNTRAVE, the trade union of energy workers affiliated to our member organisation CNT, wrote a letter to the administrator of the “*Société nigérienne de l'Electricité*” (Niger Electricity Company), NEGELEC. In that letter, the Secretary General denounced the fact that during the staff meeting, workers were victims of intimidation to make them rescind their membership of SYNTRAVE. Subsequent to this, the trade union leader was dragged to court for defamation and then dismissed for gross misconduct. The Minister for Labour and Public Services responded with a letter of protest. Since the dismissal took place without consulting the civil service, the local court of Niamey ordered that Daimyo Elh Yacouba be reinstated in his post without changes to his work contract. Despite the decision of the judge, Elh Yacouba has still not been reinstated in his post! To enable Elh Yacouba to continue to work in the company and resume his duties as trade union leader, DOAWTU and the WCL appealed directly to the Head of the ILO and requested him to see to it that freedom of association is ensured in the country, to offer workers the opportunity to form trade unions. As a member of the ILO, Niger has undertaken to respect Conventions 87 and 98 of the ILO! Recently, more than 150,000 workers of Niger took to the streets to protest against the imposition of 19% tax on five basic foodstuffs. After a month of tensions and negotiations, an agreement has finally been reached with regard to management of public assets in Niger.



This is a victory in itself!

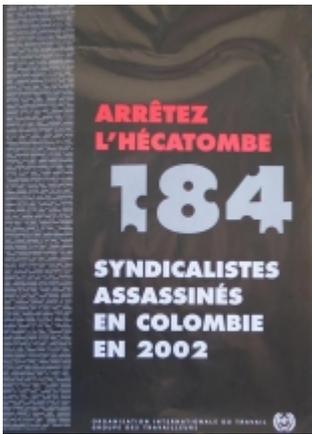
WOMEN'S WORLD MARCH MADE TO STOP IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

“Women’s World March”, an international movement of women’s groups, social organisations, trade unions and individuals from 163 countries, fighting against the feminisation of poverty, exploitation of women at work and violence suffered by them. Participants requested governments and international institutions to prevent sexual violence against women in conflict situations and to involve them in the peace process. The Women’s World March is also demanding public health care, food security, equal pay, right to education for all girls and the representation of women in decision-making bodies. The March left Sao Paulo (in Brazil) on 8 March 2005 and has already crossed more than 50 countries. Arrival in Burkina Faso is scheduled for 17 October. From 24 - 27 May, the March will stop in the Basque Country. With the help of ELA, our member

organisation on site, subject days like the Day against war, Day against violence and the Day against poverty and job insecurity have been organised, among other things. The relay race of this year had a special event like the baton, symbolically transmitted from country to country, which was the “World Charter of Women for Humanity”. This initiative was accompanied by several information and awareness activities on the content of the said Charter. The Basque platform of the World Women’s March had already taken the initiative to draw up a proper Charter by March 2006, in which the rights and demands of women will be recorded. Emphasis will be placed on freedom, equality and solidarity.

UMPTIETH ASSASSINATION OF A TRADE UNION LEADER IN COLOMBIA

The *Confederación General del Trabajo*, CGT, informed us about the umpteenth assassination of a trade union leader in Colombia. On 17 May, Harvey Niño Villareal was murdered at Cúcuta (North Santander) by mercenaries around 9.40 a.m. whilst he was driving home in his car after the day’s work. The deceased was a member of ASEINPEC, the association of workers of the National Prison Institute INPEC, affiliated to the CGT. Niño Villareal left behind a wife and three children. The WCL insisted that the Colombian President should open an inquiry into this murder,



the perpetrators of this crime must be punished. At the time of the crime, three Colombian trade unions were in a meeting with the CGT relating to a joint mission in Europe aimed at outlining the frightening reality of which Colombians are victims and also meant to claim respect for human rights in Colombia.

Schedule of activities

June 2005

- 18: ETUC – Regional conference for partners of the trade union from for the Balkans (Brussels);
- 22-24: WFIW – Congress and World Conference (Dakar);
- 24: WFAFW – Executive Committee meeting (Brussels);
- 28: G8 – Meeting of trade union leaders with Tony Blair (London).

July 2005

- 04-14: IIVE - Seminar on trade union action: What strategies to follow? (Bangkok);
- 10-14: BATU – Congress (Bangkok).

The world of



Trade Action

ARGENTINE PORT WORKERS DEMAND DECENT WORKING CONDITIONS

Bolstered by the sheer number of terminals and logistical enterprises, the Argentine ports are the base of nearly 50% of economic activity in the country. Three large exporters of agricultural products, cereal and oilseeds producers alone generate 45% of the GDP. It goes without saying that the import and export activities in the ports employ a huge number of workers in the region. But the effects of neo-liberal globalisation weigh more and more heavily in this situation also, just like in all sectors. Multinationals are embarking on modernizations meant to reduce production

costs and increase their competitive potential. These changes have serious repercussions on the occupational status of port workers. Staff are dismissed, organisation of work is completely disrupted, employment contracts change, etc. In short, workers are sitting ducks! In addition, a great number of ordinary citizens go in search of their salvation in the informal economy, which is still not beneficial for the security of the worker. In order to publicly emphasize its wish for economic growth that respects fundamental labour standards, the Federation of Port Workers and of Port Industry Workers, FEMPINRA, affiliated to the CLTTC, a member organisation of FIOST, organised a strike in all the Argentine ports. Port workers protested, among other things, against low level of salaries, undeclared work and third party sub-contracting practices. Port workers are demanding decent working conditions and a strategic development plan based on sound social agreements, for the entire port system.

THE CCAS DEMANDS SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

The Ministry of Employment in Buenos Aires, Argentina, intends to institute a compulsory job card for domestic workers from 9 August. This card shall bear the personal details of the employer and the worker, the category



to which the worker belongs, a list of his occupational income and expenses and the amount of wages he receives each month. Also on the card will be stated the social security contributions paid by the worker and amount of trade union dues (if he is already affiliated to a trade union, of course). The Argentine government sees in this measure a solution aimed at reducing the large amount of undeclared work as well as irregularities and informal practices characteristic of this sector. Ricardo Moisés, Secretary General of the domestic workers' trade union for the "Norte Zona" as well as a member of the CCAS committee, wants to go a step further in the regularisation process. *"Currently, about a million people are employed as domestic workers, and 95% of them work at night. In order to offer decent social protection to all workers*



deprived of employment contracts, which renders them illegal, a serious reform of the law is necessary", explains Moisés. *"If it is true that the Argentine government has decided to increase the level of legal salary for domestic workers from first January, so that the minimum salary of these workers equals that of other workers employed in the services sector, it is nevertheless true that the former are deprived of other legal benefits provided to the latter by government. In addition, if the latter receives an allowance of 55 pesos per month for pensions and social security, it does not say anything about the worker's chance to join a trade union. This system leaves the door open to informal practices and ignores workers' rights, that is, their right to working hours and time off (especially for those who live at their workplace), regulation of leave and maternity leave, etc. An unambiguous legal statute linked to decent social protection is indispensable!",* concludes Moisés.

WRONGLY DISMISSED SALVADORIAN CIVIL SERVANTS EMBARK ON HUNGER STRIKE

Last year December, 114 workers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Salvador were dismissed without being given a hearing nor an opportunity for redress. Nearly six months later, all the workers are still unemployed, deprived of income to enable them cater for the needs of their families, and deprived of pension. Although the affected civil servants have knocked at the doors of

different judicial and administrative authorities to explain their situation, they have not received any attention, and have embarked on a hunger strike. The Federation of Civil Servants and Municipal staff of Salvador, AGEPYM, has therefore now appealed directly to President Elía Antonio Saca to personally resolve this deadlock. Being in power for a year, it was time the President implemented his electoral campaign slogans "Salvador is worth it" and "A government with a humane face"! AGEPYM and INFEDOP, the International Trade Federation of the WCL, also call upon the international community to support the wrongly dismissed workers: *"for peace and the right to work"*.

SERBIAN TRADE UNION LEADERS UNDERGO TRAINING IN ORDER TO TACKLE THE FUTURE BETTER

Eighteen trade union leaders, mostly locals, participated in a seminar organized by CATUS, the biggest confederation in Serbia (WCL member), from 24-25 May at Kragujevac, close to Belgrade. This meeting is part of a series of three training seminars organised with the assistance of ACV-CSC (Belgium) aimed at strengthening trade union action in the country. Many sectors were represented, such as the chemical industry, catering/tourism, woodwork and building, the textiles industry, metal, public services, transport (including seaways), agriculture and the media (TV). The training basically covered topics like communication, employment policy and labour law, bipartite and tripartite consultation and strikes. Besides the training content, participants also greatly exchanged their practical experiences. There is, so to speak, no real social dialogue in Serbia. Privatisation often gives way to waves of mass dismissals, and instead of investing tax revenue in building the country, the government uses the funds for ordinary expenses. Besides, since the owners of the enterprises often change very quickly, workers never have the assurance of keeping their job. Another problem is ageing: in Serbia, the active population are practically as numerous as the pensioners. The aim of the seminar was to pass onto trade union leaders additional knowledge and skills they need to effectively deal with local problems.

