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GLOBAL MINING



INTERNATIONAL
FEDERATION OF
CHEMICAL, ENERGY,
MINE AND GENERAL
WORKERS' UNIONS

A Plan to Ease the Pain Of China's Death Traps?

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GLOBAL INFO

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Info and Global are the official publications of ICEM, a Global Union Federation covering 20 million workers affiliated to over 400 industrial trade unions in 120 countries. Info and Global are published in English, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish. Reprint of articles is welcome, except credited photos and graphics may not be reproduced without the copyright holder's permission.



Maden-Is members support sacked comrades at quartz mine

Sisecam Attacking 2 ICEM Unions in Turkey

Istanbul The name Sisecam Group is known throughout Turkey and the world as a top maker of glassware. It is also now recognized as a union-busting entity intent on destroying Turkish unions.

Two ICEM affiliates have experienced just that by the firm that controls Turkish glass producing. Kristal-Is, the glass union that has membership in 13 of 15 plants, has won court decision after decision. But subsidiary Pasabahce has circumvented those rulings. Maden-Is, the General Mine Workers Union, has seen workers take up membership only to be sacked.

This happened to 55 miners a year ago at Cam-Is Quartz Mining in Yalikoy, Istanbul, a Sisecam firm that mines quartz for the glass industry. Following 71 miners taking up Maden-Is membership, Sisecam fired the union activists. The result at the mine is that ongoing collective bargaining has been at brought to a standstill.

At a glass factory in the industrial city of Eskisehir, 700 workers and subcontractors joined Kristal-Is last September. Pasabache picked 350 union activists and fired them.

That and the fact the company refuses to negotiate with the union claiming it doesn't represent 10% of the glass sector as mandated by an archaic piece of Turkish labour code has brought the 5,000 Kristal-Is members to strikes at the 13 factories.

Kristal-Is strikers march in February



But twice now, Sisecam has relied on a cozy relationship with the government to block a strike. On 8 December, following a Kristal-Is intent to strike notice, the government issued a legal decree under Article 33 of the Law on Collective Agreements, Strikes and Lockouts halting any strike on the grounds that a glass strike was a threat to national security.

Late in January, the Supreme Court nullified that decree and Kristal-Is did strike the 13 plants on 30 January. The strike lasted only 15 days; the government re-issued Article 33, this time categorizing it an "unspecified ban." The matter is now back before the Supreme Court.

At the Yalikoy quartz mine, the 55 sacked miners and their families have since last April taken up residence in front of the operation to protest their treatment. And the 16 other Maden-Is members have been on strike since 10 August 2003.

Joint ICEM, ITF Offshore Project Hitting Stride in Nigeria, Ivory Coast



Week-long missions each to Nigeria and Ivory Coast solidified the joint ICEM and International Transport Federation's (ITF) programme to enhance employment opportunities for home-country workers in offshore oil. The project is a result of last October's groundbreaking ICEM-ITF conference in Aberdeen, Scotland, on health and safety in the North Sea and unionised industrial activity elsewhere in offshore oil.

The joint fact-finding mission spent 15-20 February in Nigeria forging understandings with several principals that Nigeria's burgeoning offshore fields are better served using Nigerian labour. The mission met entirely different circumstances in Ivory Coast 21-27 February where it helped sort out a brewing labour dispute between Norwegian drilling concern Prosafe and the country's maritime union, SYMICOM.

Norrie McVicar, ITF's Offshore Task Force chairman, and ITF Head of Strategy Tony McGregor, led the mission.

In Nigeria, ICEM affiliate NUPENG is involved directly in the effort to recruit, train and place more Nigerians in both seafaring and offshore oil work.

"The heart and soul of our early accomplishments are that our African affiliates are witnessing the outside world bonding together to assist them with local problems," stated McVicar. "Both our Nigerian and Ivory Coast affiliates have seen themselves as forgotten step-children. That is now not the case."

In Nigeria, Africa's biggest energy-producing nation, the mission was met by key stakeholders including the Energy Ministry, Nigerian National Petroleum Corp., the Labour Congress and the newly-established Joint Maritime-Labour Industrial Council (JOMALIC). McVicar said of some 400 ships operating off the continental shelf, less than 10% of workers on them are Nigerians. "Oil companies and contractors alike have claimed that Nigerians just aren't available for this work," he said. "We disproved that."

The ICEM/ITF delegation visited the Maritime Training College in Oron where it found that of 600 graduates annually, two-thirds do not find jobs. "There is no structure, no feeder system to place these bright, capable workers," said McVicar.

That should change with the effective date this summer of Nigeria's Cabotage Act. Coupled with a government decision to extend a revenue-enhancing measure on oil production up to 200 meters in territorial waters, local employment opportunities should result. The Nigerian Maritime Labour Act of 2003, establishing JOMALIC, also mandates that safeguards and working conditions meet ILO Conventions and Recommendations.

The ICEM/ITF mission exchanged viewpoints with E.O. Ayoola, exploration and production director of the national oil company and President Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole of the Nigeria Labour Congress. Despite contentious labour issues facing NLC in the country, Brother Oshiomhole has prioritized offshore oil employment high on NLC's agenda.

In Ivory Coast, with a vastly smaller and relatively newer offshore sector, the mission found an "apartheid" offshore jobs system in which Filipino and Indonesian workers earn four times the wage and benefit levels than local workers despite equal training and skills. The delegation met head on the Prosafe dispute in which the drilling firm and its manning agent CIAM have allowed Ivory Coast workers to associate freely with SYMICOM, but have denied collective bargaining.

With the aid of NOPEF, the Norwegian oil union playing a key and pivotal role in the ICEM/ITF offshore programme, the dispute was brought to the Oslo-based firm and is expected to be resolved with directives to the Singapore subsidiary that oversees Ivory Coast operations.

"The Offshore Task Force is in on the ground floor of the Cote d'Ivoire offshore sector," said McVicar. "As it develops, it will develop with trade union involvement."



An EGAT-LU rally in Bangkok:
“Selling public service is killing
all Thai people”

Thailand Pressing Electric Privatisation Over Workers, Public Demands

The government of Thailand is pushing ahead with electric privatisation, ignoring the demands of utility workers and the sentiments of the public.

A series of sham hearings for members of EGAT-LU, the ICEM affiliate representing workers at the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), were scheduled for early in 2004. But meetings have either been abruptly canceled or staffed by low-level bureaucrats with no power.

ICEM put out a worldwide call to utility workers' unions to protest Thailand's privatisation and over 20 responded. EGAT-LU, supervisors and community groups have staged mass rallies with some being disrupted by Thai security forces.

Thailand's Energy minister has threatened to fire top management of EGAT who have sided with EGAT-LU in opposing privatisation. And Prime Minister Thaksin Sinawatre publicly said he'd sack EGAT Gov. Sithiporn Ratanopas if he couldn't stop EGAT-LU members from protesting.

That only intensified the protests in late February and early March as the government's heavy-handedness served to fuel the opposition's growth and determination to halt the approaching stock sale.

Stating in the media that blocking privatisation is broader than just protecting workers' interests, EGAT-LU Gen. Sec. Sirichai Maingam pointed to the increasing resistance across Thailand: “These protests are by the people and not instigated by (management of EGAT), as the prime

minister alleges.”

EGAT-LU and allies conducted a mass demonstration on 2 March that drew 50,000 protestors, Thailand's biggest rally since the May Uprising of 1992. But even before that, workers at EGAT's headquarters in Bang Kruai, Nonthaburi, began 24-hour picket lines that saw 10,000 demonstrators on 23 February and grew to 30,000 on 26 February. Authorities used aggressive tactics to quell the rallies, including using pepper gas.

On 25 January, EGAT-LU members who tried to raise banners in a Bangkok hearing were forcibly removed, causing 1,000 others to walk out, thus canceling the meeting. And on 20 February, a workers' teleconference at EGAT headquarters, was stopped when 500 protestors demanded no privatisation.

The hard reality is that 2,000 of the utility's 27,600 workers will lose their jobs following initial public listing of EGAT on the Thailand Stock Exchange, due to occur in May. The IPO is to become the biggest share auction in Thai history, totaling some Bt300 billion.

The resistance to privatisation and EGAT-LU's action plan has been forefront for 40 unions affiliated with the country's State Enterprise Unions' Federation. The government is acting under the 1999 Corporation Act, a response to satisfying a US\$17.2 billion reform programme by the

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News of Affiliates

Pay Dispute Erupts with Chamber of Mines in Zimbabwe

Harare, Zimbabwe ICEM affiliate Associated Mineworkers of Zimbabwe (AMWZ) is facing great difficulties with the Chamber of Mines, the employers' association in that country. A dispute arose in February when the employers walked out of negotiations after refusing to award reasonable wage and salary adjustments.

The Chamber then unilaterally implemented—without bargaining with AMWZ—inferior pay increases that amounted to less than half of what AMWZ considers a livable wage in inflation-ridden Zimbabwe. That caused the Labour Ministry to compel the employers back to the bargaining table with AMWZ. Miners were due to receive an increase in January, but the bargaining stance by the Chamber of Mines has prevented adequate pay hikes in most mines.

ExxonMobil Defies Labour Court at Canada's Hibernia

Newfoundland, Canada ExxonMobil, the operating firm for the offshore oil platform Hibernia, is continuing to resist unionization, this time ignoring a court order calling for the reinstatement of 25 workers with 13 months backpay. A Canadian Labour Relations Board made that determination in December. The 25 were sacked in late 2001 during a successful organising drive by ICEM affiliate Communications, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP) Union of Canada.

Some 420 workers at Hibernia, located some 200 kms offshore in the North Atlantic, became the first North American offshore oil workers to unionize, but ExxonMobil has thwarted the effort by filing continuous appeals. Meanwhile, talks got underway for the second set of oil workers in NA's offshore sector to unionize. CEP and managers at PetroCanada's Terra Nova platform began negotiations 17 February toward a first contract.

President of Korean Affiliate Takes Post at KCTU

Seoul The leader of ICEM affiliate Korean Chemical & Textile Workers' Federation (KCTF), Oh, Kil-Sung, was elected full-time vice president of the progressive Korean Confederation of Trade Unions 16 January. Oh has been forefront in the Korean labour movement, having served as general secretary of KCFU's predecessor, the Korean Trade Union Congress, in 1992, and then elected founding president of the KCFT in 1994. He served three terms in that position.



*Oh,
Kil-Sung*

He joined the Korean trade union movement at age 19 in 1972 during a time of military dictatorship. In 1984, he formed the regional union in Sungnam of the Leather and Chemical Workers. He was arrested twice in 1986 when he initiated collective bargaining legislation and for supporting trade unions under repression. His election as vice president of the 685,000-member KCTU under new President Lee Soo-ho comes at a crucial time with the union federation expected to play a pivotal role in a shortened workweek, a new industrial plan formulated by the government and the government's attempted overhaul of the national pension system.

Two Affiliates Join to Protest at Sappi's Annual Meeting

Johannesburg South Africa's Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood & Allied Workers' Union (CEPPWAWU) hosted fellow unionists from US-based Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical, Energy (PACE) Union to protest inside and out at Sappi Ltd's annual general meeting here 1 March.

The demonstration underscored labour shortcomings in paper mills in both countries. At Sappi's South African mills, the firm stands accused of ignoring its statutory obligations to train unskilled workers for higher level jobs. The firm is also seeking broad flexibility that would weaken CEPPWAWU's ability to protect workers' rights on the shop floor.

In the US, PACE members at two mills in the state of Maine have been without a current collective agreement for over a year as Sappi seeks premium pay cuts and higher health care cost-sharing by workers and retirees. A third US Sappi mill in Michigan has got a contract coming due this year.

ICEM coordinated the demonstration and week-long activities between the two unions, and CEPPWAWU and PACE leaders are hoping to include unions from Sappi mills in Europe in future solidarity-building efforts.



PACE Michigan members (kneeling) with CEPPWAWU

NUM Fends Off Retrenchments with BHP in South Africa

Mpumalanga, SA By threat of strike, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) here beat back retrenchments at BHP Billiton's Ingwe coalmines. Ingre Coal, a BHP subsidiary, proposed 800 jobs to be cut. NUM filed a 48-hour strike intent notice and took the matter before a labour court.

BHP claimed the high Rand and environmental costs due to regulations were to blame for the firings. But strong demand for South African coal and price jumps from US\$23 to \$43-per-ton belied company rationale. Through negotiations the two sides arrived at 397 jobs to be cut.

Had the strike occurred in late January, BHP would have been plagued by three simultaneous strikes. In February, strikes by ICEM affiliates against BHP in North America and Chile were settled. In Chile, BHP came to terms with copper miners represented by Confemin de Chile on 6 February. A strike at Cerro Colorado mine increased BHP's pay offer to 4% and cut the pact from four to three years. In the state of New Mexico, US union Operating Engineers also won substantial pay hikes for 900 coalminers in an 11-day strike. Issues of respect and dignity also were discussed in strike talks. The vast majority of the miners are Native Americans of the Navajo, and the lands BHP mine are Navajo lands. The three strikes would have put thousands of BHP workers on picket lines.

ILO Hands-on over Contract Labour with Pakistani Affiliate

Lahore, Pakistan The Pakistan Labour Federation (PLF) and ILO held a joint three-day conference here in December that examined contract labour. Social variations between a growing call for contract labour and the fact that such labour will free employers from ensuring job security, Social Security and other benefits were central to discussions. Focus also was on how countries with lack of labour and other social protections in their laws become a haven for employees seeking exploitive and disposable labour to achieve capital gain. The conference stressed that developing nations like Pakistan are vulnerable to the economic decisions made in industrialized countries by major corporations. The conference also addressed the inevitable informal job sectors that arise in developing countries due to globalisation.



PLF Gen. Sec. Haji Muhammad Saeed presents to the ILO's Gagan Raj Bhandari. Also, Women's chair Wing Atia Saleem and Syeed Faquir Hussain Bukhar.

Women's Bargaining Issues Take Root in Costa Rica

ICEM and Costa Rican affiliate SITRAPEQUIA, the oil workers' union, sponsored a seminar on collective bargaining from a gender perspective in the Central American nation late last year. The aim was to make both men and women

aware of what can be accomplished through bargaining when women's rights are put forward.

Women and men considered what their bargaining priorities might be in a workshop, and then drafted language to be used in negotiations. The priorities they identified were equal pay and the elimination of sexual harassment at work.

Collective bargaining in Costa Rica is currently proving to be very difficult for workers. "It is almost better not to negotiate at all than to lose what we have," said SITRAPEQUIA Gen. Sec. Gilbert Brown Young.

But once the current rough period passes, women and their unions will be well prepared to move forward with an agenda of equality and fairness.

ICEM and SITRAPEQUIA teamed up 28 Nov. in San José to present the workshops.

ICEM and SITRAPEQUIA also launched a simultaneous campaign for equal opportunities and pay for women and men. Government ministers, researchers and the ILO made presentations at the event, discussing discrimination, gender-related income differences, gender roles in society and at work, women's health concerns and violence. The campaign will cover information and public relations activities, cooperation with other trade unions and NGOs, and lobbying of government representatives. Links will be built as well to other groups in civil society. The campaign's central aim is eliminating discrimination and achieving equality.

Before the campaign was launched, two national demonstrations were held in San José: one against free trade treaties, the other on violence against women. The latter is a phenomenon that appears in all walks of life and in all countries. It is the worst perversion of the power that men exert over women and the most serious expression of gender inequality.

The equal opportunities campaign is in the framework of the equal opportunities project supported by FNV Bondgenoten, Netherlands, and SASK, Finland.



Thai Protests ...

From page 5

International Monetary Fund in the mid-1990s during the Asian economic crisis.

But EGAT has continued to prosper as a state-run firm, posting revenues of Bt230.4 billion in 2003, up from 207.1 billion in 2002. The ICEM is on record with the Thai government that secure, safe and affordable energy is a fundamental human right that fulfills basic social needs. "There is ample evidence the world over that privatisation of essential services inevitably leads to price hikes as electricity becomes a commodity that is traded for maximum profit," wrote Gen. Sec. Fred Higgs to Prime Minister Sinawatere.

EGAT-LU has demanded—but the government has refused to address—key issues: that the vast sum of shares remain in state control; a guarantee of price control with no rate increases to consumers; private investment come from inside Thailand; full transparency be assured by Thailand; and consultation and negotiations be held with EGAT-LU, a fact sadly missing in the government's run-up to privatisation.



FNTPGC Gen. Sec. Brother Mohamed Lakhdar Bedreddine (center) with Fred Higgs.

ICEM Received Warmly by Algerian Unions

The ICEM Secretariat responded to an invitation from Algerian trade unions in relevant sectors and visited several host unions in February. The ICEM was warmly received and engaged in very useful and positive dialogue with three unions, plus the national center.

The exchange is part of ICEM's Congress resolve to open more doors with free and democratic trade unions in North Africa and the Middle East.

Algeria's oil, gas and chemical union FNTPGC, the Federation Nationale des Travailleurs du Petrole du Gaz Et de la Chimie, told of those sectors and relationships with employers, particularly the country's nationalized firms. Gen. Sec. Mohamed Lakhdar Bedreddine hosted the interesting and pointed discussion. Visits to Algeria's miners' union and electric power unions proved productive as well.

ICEM's Fred Higgs and Jim Catterson

also met with the national center's general secretary, Abdelmadjid Sidi-Said of l'UGTA (Union Generale des Travailleurs Algeriens). The trip did forge bonds and dialogue is certain to continue.



l'UGTA Gen. Sec. Brother Abdelmadjid Sidi-Said greets Fred Higgs.

ICEM, US Flint/Glass Unions Aid Colombian Contract Gains

Quick action by the Flint/Glass Industry Conference in the US and ICEM involvement resolved a labour dispute in Colombia between Sindravidricol and glass-maker Peldar, owned by Owen Illinois of the US. In January, Sindravidricol members were on the verge of striking because Peldar refused to negotiate.

Simultaneous with strike plans then, the Flint/Glass Union Conference chaired by the United Steelworkers was being held in Pennsylvania. With US unions representing thousands of Owens Illinois workers present, the council took immediate action and protested directly to the company's co-CEOs. ICEM Gen. Sec. Fred Higgs also wrote Peldar managers in Colombia at the same time. The three actions immediate brought managers to the bargaining table, resulting in a two-year contract. Sindravidricol won a first-year 8.8% wage hike, retroactive to 21 Nov. 2003, and one in 2005 equal to the Colombian consumer price index plus 1%. In addition, the union won bonuses for education and for health.

"We're thankful for the support of the workers, their conviction and strength to defend their rights," stated union Peldar Unit President Luis Pelãez Montoya. "In the same way we thank most sincerely the international and national organisations who brought support."

ICEM Calls for Address to Chinese Mine Safety

Will the tragic string of Chinese mine disasters abate with assistance from the international mining community? The ICEM believes it would, and has approached the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) to be a full partner in such a venture inside China.

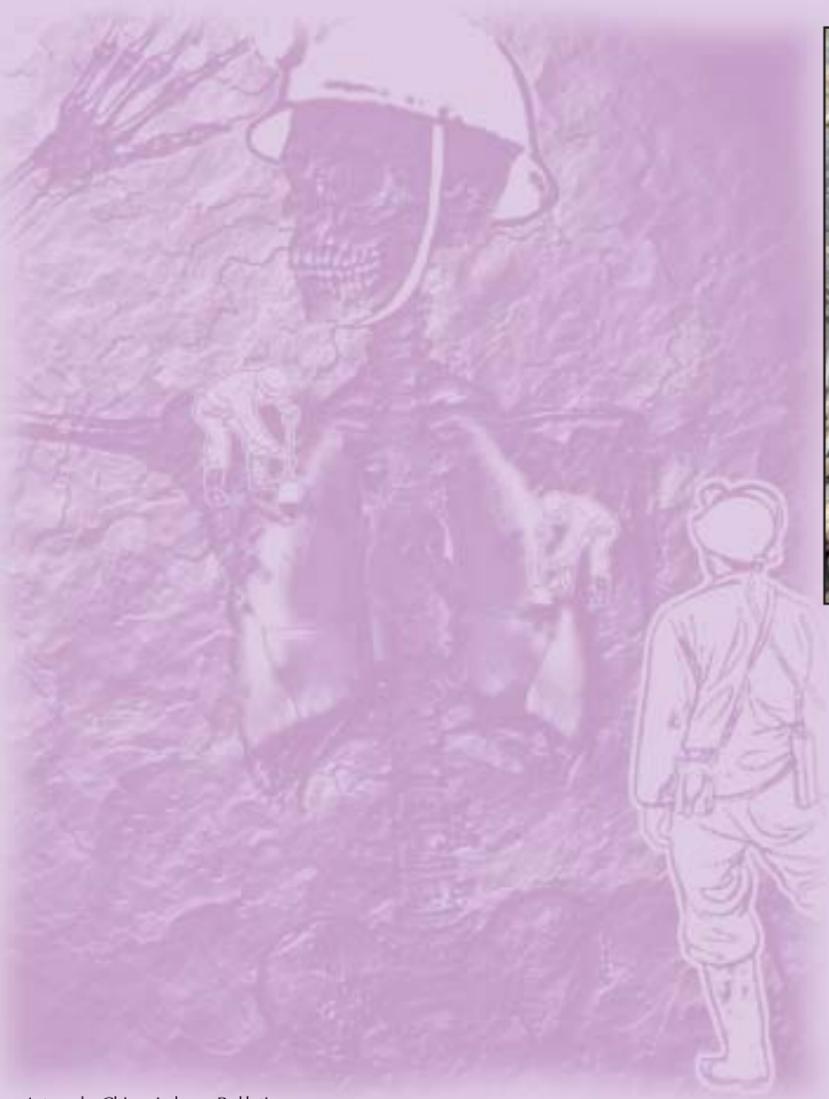
We are optimistic of a favorable response by the London-based ICMM, an international organisation of mining companies. The organisation's member-companies are considering ICEM's proposal and if approval is gained, the labour federation and the international mining community could join hands with the Chinese mining sector including government to solve the world's worst run of industrial accidents.

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) has already cracked the door open. Responding to a letter last year by ICEM Gen. Sec. Fred Higgs asking for a joint project on mine health and safety, Zhao Yongjin, chairman of ACFTU affiliate Chinese Energy and Chemical Workers' Union, was positive about such an exchange.

"It is in everyone's interest to seek ways to eradicate the obvious unsafe practices that exist in China's mining industry," said Higgs. "Nearly every week a disaster strikes inside China's mines that costs lives. The international mining community cannot sit idle while such carnage is taking place. Mine safety in China is a reflection on the international mining sector."

The ICEM General Secretary envisions an initial evaluation and assessment phase in which a team of ICEM and ICMM experts visit China. Such a team to include representatives of Chinese industry, government and trade unions will make a determination on how best to make an impact to curb China's horrid safety and health record. "Training, obviously, will be a major component, but we intend to go beyond that," added Higgs. "Our goal is to achieve constant and continual exchange with Chinese mine operators and workers' representatives alike and to reduce the risks in China's mines."

The ICEM will be seeking support for the project from the ILO. Mine safety among ICEM affiliates has a long and cherished tradition leading up to passage of ILO Convention 176 on Mine Safety and Health in 1995. With the current ICEM offer of assistance—and full concurrence from the global mining industry—the future safety inside China's mines can only get better.



Artwork: China Labour Bulletin



One Year Later: Death Toll Mounts in China's Mines

March 2004 ▶ March 2003

2 March 28. gas explosion Jinzhanpo mine, Jiexiu, Shanxi; **23 Feb. 37.** gas explosion illegal Baixing mine, Jixi, Heilongjiang; **16 Feb. 7.** explosion/cave-in gypsum mine, Xingning, Guangdong; **10 Feb. 3.** carbon monoxide poisoning Zishanzi mine, Lanzhou, Gansu; **11 Feb. 26.** gas explosion Yinjiadi mine, Liupanshui, Guizhou; **5 Feb. 29.** intentional explosion at illegal mine, Huizu, Shanxi; **30 Dec. 7.** gas explosion Baishanping mine, Changsha, Hunan; **26 Dec. 26.** electric fire igniting timbers, Wuan, Hebei; **8 Dec. 20.** gas explosion Longtai mine, Zhangjiakou, Hebei; **22 Nov. 23.** gas explosion Sundian mine, Xiaotun, Henan; **14 Nov. 49.** gas explosion Jianxin mine, Jiangxi; **12 Nov. 15.** gas explosion illegal Wangou mine, Tonghua, Jilin; **31 Oct. 5.** gas explosion Anshun mine, Huadian, Jilin; **28 Oct. 12.** gas explosion Chongqing, Sichuan; **25 Oct. 7.** mine collapse, Naming, Guangxi; **23 Oct. 44.** gas explosion Zhujiadian mine, Shanxi; **15 Oct. 6.** gas explosion Banjita mine, Linghai, Liaoning; **12 Oct. 9.** gas explosion Tailaiyao mine, Guoqing, Inner Mongolia; **9 Oct. 18.** flooded mine, Dengfeng, Henan; **22 Sept. 8.** gas explosion Pingguang mine, Heilongjiang; **8 Sept. 10.** gas explosion Wulong mine, Jinsha, Guizhou; **18 Aug. 27.** gas explosion Henan mine, Jinzhong, Shanxi; **13 Aug. 28.** gas explosion Yangquan mine, Shanxi; **11 Aug. 42.** gas explosion Xingergou mine, Datong, Shanxi; **26 July. 27.** flood at Mushi mine, Zaozhuang, Shandong; **24 May. 25.** flooded Anli mine, Anyang, Henan; **21 May. 24.** faulty ventilation shafts, Jizuo mine, Huaping, Yunnan; **20 May. 25.** gas explosion illegal Yongtai mine, Linfen, Shanxi; **19 May. 9.** Sudden water leak, Fudong mine, Shouyang, Shanxi; **19 May. 25.** gas explosion illegal Yongtai mine, Anze, Shanxi; **13 May. 86.** failure to extract gas Luling mine, Hefei, Anhui; **17 April. 14.** flooded mine, Jiangshuping, Shanxi; **17 April. 8.** gas explosion Huaxing mine, Qujing, Yunnan; **17 April. 14.** flooded Jiangshuping mine, Shanxi; **30 March. 26.** gas explosion Mengjiagou mine, Fushun, Liaoning; **22 March. 77.** gas blast/workers' smoking Mengnanzhuang mine, Xiaoyi, Shanxi.



Standing, PCWC Gen. Sec. Sammi Eslava and JV Villanueva of LEARN. Seated, Joe Alejandrino, vice president of FRCEU, and PCWC Vice Chair Bernabe Abarquez.

Cement Project Fast Progressing With Filipino Unions, Associations

The Philippine Cement Workers Council (PCWC) has become a model ICEM project that is fast proving that linking unaffiliated trade unions and unofficial workers' groups in a sector will pay dividends. Another meeting of the PCWC was held in December with ICEM staff facilitating.

The success of the Council is due to its chief facilitator, LEARN, or the Labor Education and Research Network, the Philippines-based NGO that is doing tremendous work across Asia and the Pacific. Ten formal member-unions and associations comprise PCWC, and the group has three other organisations lending resources.

Under Filipino labour code, a group can be registered as an official union if it has ten collective agreements. Many groups prefer operating as workers' associations in order to build coalitions on issues with the ten national trade union centers, and other groups. PCWC itself is registered as a workers' association.

The council set goals for 2004; to affiliate six new groups or unions, to further define strategy at a national Executive meeting, and to hold orientation seminars in three key regions. One vital aspect already complete by the council is thor-

ough and comprehensive research of the country's cement sector.

PCWC is hoping to open dialogue with the major cement firms operating in the Philippines. In recent years, a wave of investment by LaFarge, Holcim and Cemex has resulted in an industry, previously dominated by local ownership, once 90% locally owned to now 90% owned by the multinationals. Cement firms have recently been engaged in a price war, which has bottomed cement prices.

The Council seeks to address pay parity across the sector and conditions of work. Wide disparity exists from one operation to another, and from one island to another. The PCWC also seeks to establish a tripartite mechanism with government and CIMA, the country's cement employers' association. But although the government favors such a plant, the giant cement firms have turned a deaf ear, preferring split and divide worksites in the Philippines cement industry.

Nonetheless, the PCWC has completed the research, made the necessary links to cement sites across the nation, and is now ready to put a formulated plan having broad support out to the cement sector of the Philippines.

REACH Fails to Recognize Labour Practices, Initiatives Already in Place

By Reinhard Reibsch
EMCEF General Secretary

Deliberation has been on-going in the European Union on legislation pertaining to chemical policy since 2001. In a first step, the EU Commission presented the principles of the envisioned regulation in a white paper on chemicals policy in 2001. Detailed draft legislation was discussed last year in an Internet hearing conducted on applicability and practicability; the individual aspects of the proposed regulation were commented on in some 6,400 positions submitted. The Commission passed its revised draft on 29 October 2003. The draft has been submitted to the European Parliament for deliberation. Following Parliament elections in May 2004, deliberation will begin with the first reading; the rest of the European legislation process will not be concluded before 2005. This will be followed by implementation in a number of individual steps.

What is REACH and its Designated Purpose?

REACH stands for "Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals." Tiered according to annual production quantities (beginning at one metric ton per annum) and hazard classifications, various comprehensive studies and registration processes are to be applied, ranging from the provision of previously existent information on the properties and effects of chemical substances to conducting in-depth surveys and analyses of them. Particularly hazardous substances (PBTs, VPVBs, carcinogenic substances) are to be subjected to a more rigorous authorization procedure.

There are different ideas concerning impact and costs, and also possible benefits of REACH. The EU Commission estimates that introducing this regulation will result in direct costs to the chemical industry of about €2.3 billion over 11 years, with downstream and final users being faced with an additional €2.8 and €5.2 billion during the same period.

This is contrasted with the projected benefits, particularly by virtue of an improvement in health protection valued at an estimated €50 billion: 1% of the illnesses in the EU are said to be chemically induced. In reducing this figure by 10% as a result of the new regulation and putting the economic value of a human life at €1 million, results in benefits could reach €50 billion within 30 years. In addition, REACH is designed to promote the innovation and modernization of industry, but how that will occur is unclear. Although some data and the key arguments justify REACH, it can only be added that the EU Commission's current draft contains a reduction in costs for industry as opposed to the previous versions.

Labour's Position: Social Consequences Ignored, Economic Consequences Understated

EMCEF has been involved in the various deliberation phases from the onset. The first white paper version contained deficiencies in principle: the legislation was formulated in competition between environmental and economic interests. Up until now, the social consequences for European society in general, and for workers in particular, have been overlooked. The objectives established by the summit held in Lisbon in March 2000 for the successful development of the EU provided three pillars: economic, ecological and social, all equal in weight. The deficiency in principle has not been remedied, not even in the revised versions of the draft. Instead there have been key changes made in the other



Reinhard Reibsch

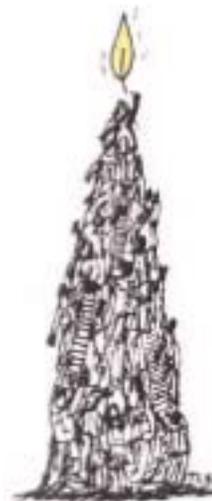
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Workers' Memorial Day: Double the Focus

April 28 is universal Workers' Memorial Day, and this year's agenda will have twin themes: "Safe and Healthy Work For All" and "Employer Accountability."

The ICFTU again is coordinating activities for this global day of action and has called on unions around the world to begin planning for the "28 April International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers." The date has become an annual opportunity for the global trade union movement to highlight the impacts of unsustainable work and harsh forms of production on workers' lives, and to provide examples of activities that address these subjects. For 2004, "Safe and Healthy Work For All" is the primary theme, while "Employer Accountability" is the secondary theme. Where appropriate, unions are invited to link both themes in some way.

It is up to individual trade unions to decide the focus and types of activities they will organise. The ICEM would like to be informed of your plans so information



28 April

and specifics can be shared with others. This will contribute to an overall global press strategy for 28 April. However, obtaining such information soon enough to circulate in the weeks leading to 28 April is a must, so ICEM affiliates are asked to provide whatever relevant information they have as soon as possible. The ICFTU is seeking to tie the 28 April event with this year's Global Unions' May 1 mobilisation, which in 2004 will once again focus on "Respect." This year a particular focus will be on workers' rights, women workers and those working in poverty in export processing zones and the informal economy.

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Safe and Healthy Work

Chemicals Relating to Occupational and Public Health: The Working Party has agreed to promote a clear position on a world asbestos ban. Promoting such a ban in your country would be important. In addition, any actions related to the POPs list of three chemicals groups would aid the Working Party: pesticides (aldrine, DDT, dieldrine, endrine, heptachlor, chlordane, mirex and toxaphen), industrial compounds (PCB's) and byproducts (PCB variations, PCDD, PCDF and dioxins).

Promotion of Sustainable Workplaces: This would link trade union activities to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) aimed at implementing the outcomes of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

Employer Accountability

Governments and Public Sector: Governments are both employers and guardians of the public interest regarding private sector initiatives. In some countries, public employers are not bound by legislation on occupational health and safety and this needs to be challenged.

Private or Corporate Sector: Focus is to take action promoting key institutional mechanisms that address the responsibilities of business, such as ILO Instruments, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the UN's Global Compact and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Unions need to demonstrate positive contributions to enhancing corporate responsibility and accountability such as effective social dialogue and sound industrial relations based on full freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

The ICFTU hopes to document at least one main event in each country, complemented by other smaller ones where they take place, so the feedback of ICEM affiliates is important. We would appreciate being informed of your activities by e-mailing us at info@icem.org, and please send a copy to Lucien Royer at ICFTU/TUAC,royer@tuac.org.

At present the following countries or territories have adopted legislation making 28 April a National Workers' Memorial Observance Day: Argentina, Bermuda, Canada, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and Taiwan. As a result of a recent survey undertaken by the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, certain national trade union affiliates in the following coun-

tries have initiated a request for their Governments to recognize 28 April: Belgium, Bulgaria, Korea, Malaysia and Poland.

Trade union affiliates in the following countries have agreed to initiate a process in 2004: Benin, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Malta, Nepal, New Zealand, Romania and Singapore. A few countries already have other dates, for instance, Thailand, May 10.

In 2002, a 28 April publication about worker monuments was published and this is now available for US\$10 (including shipping). The book, *Dead But Not Forgotten*, is available through ICFTU. Proceeds will help build a fund toward the eventual construction of an International 28 April monument. It can be obtained by contacting Lucien Royer, or calling the ICFTU at +32 2 224 0211.

Reinhard Reibsch on REACH...

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direction: the number of substances has been reduced by virtue of elimination of intermediate products and polymers, and requirements to be satisfied by available data have been eased. Nevertheless, the current proposed regulation would have substantial social consequences: some chemicals will no longer be available in the EU. This will lead to loss of jobs, and jobs among downstream users as certain production operations will discontinue. As for union numbers, there are various estimates. As unions, we are well aware that cost increases incurred by companies lead to job cutbacks: a €50,000 cost hike corresponds to one job. This effect is more pronounced in small- and medium-sized companies.

We are observing another social consequence regarding research and development. When more data is required, it comes from companies' labs and research activities. Since today's research is tomorrow's production, this will also have a substantial long-term knock-on effect on jobs, not to mention the loss of attractiveness of these jobs for ambitious researchers.

Apart from these consequences to the number and quality of jobs, we consider the expected health protection savings to be nothing short of an illusion. All compar-

isons involving occupational illnesses at the national level in EU member states show a continuing drop in occupational illnesses in the chemical industry, no doubt the product of decades-old fight by unions for workplace health protection. Thanks to the high profile of this topic and the existing dialogue and obligations between employers and unions, the number of cases today of occupational illnesses in the chemical industry in almost all EU countries is far below that of other industries, particularly with downstream users. We doubt that surveys can collect data and compile the necessary information on properties of chemicals in other industries and in society at large. The only way to achieve this is a joint commitment between employers and unions as workers' representatives to improve occupational safety. The lack of mutual recognition and agreed-upon initiatives for improving occupational safety and health protection cannot be achieved with REACH.

Without doubt, the compilation of existing regulations on chemicals to form a unified system does offer an advantage. Unfortunately, the other projected improvements are part of a noble wish-list outweighed more by negative consequences.

Sleep Deprivation Akin to Drunkenness

Recent research in Finland has indicated that staying awake for long periods is comparable to drunkenness. That finding was produced by the Sleep Disorders Clinic and Research Center of the Haaga Centre for Neurological Research and Rehabilitation.

Markku Partinen, author of the research, has established that continuous sleep deficit causes a serious workplace safety risk. He says, "A tired employee more readily takes risks than a well-rested employee, as tiredness weakens attentiveness and observation."

Partinen points out that sleep deficit not only puts the worker and others in danger, but a tired employee is less productive and that aside from possible loss of life or serious accidents, financial losses to an employer may run very high. He says a 16-hour period without sleep poses significant risk, and is comparable to a blood alcohol content of 0.5 per milliliter. Staying awake for 24 hours is comparable to a blood alcohol content of 1.0 per millilitre, while 36 hours without sleep corresponds to drunkenness of 1.5 per millilitre.



But it is not only the occasional long period without sleep that is a problem. Regular sleep deficiency is also a problem. If an individual has insufficient sleep over six consecutive nights, the mind functions abnormally, causing faulty assessment, decision-making and judgment.

Stress is considered to be the most common cause of insomnia. It has long been established that work alone does not necessarily cause stress, but workers who are experiencing problems outside work at the same time they face undue stress at work, then pressure can accumulate with potential serious consequences.

Partinen has observed that people who generally suffer most from sleep deficit are typically the most profitable employees. Good, sound sleep, appropriate relaxation and avoidance of unnecessary stress are therefore important for ensuring high standards of occupational safety and health. Consequences can range from a drop in the quality of life for a worker to real threat to life and limb, both to the individual worker and to colleagues. The consequences in many industries for the integrity of plant safety can be equally grave. The problem is that knowing the solution is not the same as knowing how to achieve the solution; in instances where a problem is suspected, workers should raise the matter with union representatives and in workplace safety meetings.

Partinen and the Sleep Disorders Clinic and Research Center is located at Makipellontie 15, FIN-00320, Helsinki, Finland; phone: +358 9 588 2412.

Define Decent Work?

At the Third WTO Conference in Seattle in 1999, ILO Director-General Juan Somavia made a presentation entitled "Decent Work for All in a Global Economy: An ILO Perspective." This was the start of an ILO initiative to improve the quality of working life for workers around the world.

What decent work should or could be varies between countries, cultures and prevailing realities. A worker in a highly-developed country will have a very different view of it than one in a developing country. How people view decent work is largely dependent upon experience, not least their ability to influence and control what happens at work.

A recent ILO-published book with the World Council of Churches and the International Institute for Labour Studies attempts to identify decent work. The book, *Philosophical and Spiritual Perspectives on Decent Work*, has contributions from some 20 authors.

Beryllium Disease: Clear and Present Danger



According to the British medical journal *The Lancet*, studies over the past decade indicate the proliferation of industrial uses of beryllium is causing an unrecognised epidemic of chronic beryllium disease. Recent cases have occurred in US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, Israel, Japan and Russia.

Estimates of exposed workers in the US alone currently range from 200,000 to 800,000. By contrast, an estimated 30,000 were exposed to beryllium in the 1970s.

The following ICEM sectors and work-sites are seen to produce significant occupational exposure: nuclear, metal machine shops, alloy applications such as tubing for oil and gas drilling, tool and die, jewellery and ceramics. Beryllium is most often used as an alloy with copper, aluminium, magnesium or nickel; however beryllium content and its attendant hazards may not be obvious to workers when dust and fumes are not prevalent.

The International Programme on Chemical Safety in 1990 published an Environmental Health Criteria booklet on Beryllium (EHC 106) that traces the earliest reports of beryllium disease in workers back to Europe in the 1930s and early 1940s. Use of it then was known to cause chronic beryllium disease, a debilitating and potentially fatal disease that mainly affects lungs. In 1949, permissible exposure limits (PELs) that were applicable to workers was established. Similar limits were adopted for US workers in general industry beginning in 1971. PELs levels of the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration for beryllium are currently: two micrograms per cubic metre of air ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) in an eight-hour time-weighted-average (TWA); five $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ as a ceiling limit not to exceed 30 minutes at a time; and 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ as maximum peak limit never to be exceeded. Many other countries have eight-hour TWA PELs for beryllium of one-to-two $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

Many now argue that it is clear that the current two $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ PEL for beryllium in the workplace is grossly inadequate to prevent disease occurring. Chronic beryllium disease has been identified in workers whose average beryllium exposure levels ranged

between 0.02 and 0.10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, levels that are 20-100 times lower than the current permissible limit. This means that individuals with bystander exposures, such as secretaries, security guards, inspectors, can contract this disease.

In 1993, the International Agency for Research on Cancer categorised beryllium as a human carcinogen on the basis of increased rates of lung cancer in beryllium production workers.

It is also apparent that very little cumulative beryllium exposure can cause beryllium sensitisation and chronic beryllium disease (cumulative exposure is the product of average intensity of exposure multiplied by the length of exposure, eg, 0.05 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3 \times 40$ days' exposure equals 2.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ -days cumulative exposure). Two

workers employed at a ceramics manufacturing plant, according to *The Lancet*, who had beryllium sensitisation, had cumulative exposures of 0.04 and 0.07 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ -years. In another study, beryllium disease was observed in two workers whose total cumulative beryllium exposure was only 2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ -days, an amount of exposure allowed in 1 day under a 2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ PEL.

Appropriate medical surveillance offers an opportunity for sensitised workers to avoid or reduce to a minimum further exposure. Importantly, identifying beryllium sensitisation and chronic beryllium disease can help employers and workers shape worksites and practices that contribute to lessening the risk. There are now growing calls for a new beryllium standard. It is important to counter the antiquated and erroneous belief that manufacture and machining of beryllium-copper and other beryllium alloys is not toxic.

(The beryllium article in *The Lancet* can be obtained at reprints@lancet.com.)



Women Shortchanged in Health and Safety

Safety and health risks of women at work tend to be underestimated and neglected, according to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. The agency has a new report out entitled *Gender Issues in Safety and Health*.



The report examines gender differences in workplace injuries and illnesses, and asserts that the traditional prevention approach practiced in health and safety underestimates work-related risks to women. The report provides evidence that gaps in knowledge and imprecise methodology combine to shortchange a variety of aspects related to health and safety for women. It shows, for example, that the design of work—its organisation, structure, equipment—are often based on the “average man” model, despite the fact that the principle of matching work to workers is enshrined in the EU.

(The European Agency also has launched a web feature on gender and safe-

ty and health, giving links to many sources. *Gender Issues in Safety and Health* can also be found at www.gender.osha.eu.int.)

The agency reports that women suffer more than men from work-related stress, infectious diseases, upper limb disorders, skin diseases, plus asthma and allergies. Men suffer from more accidents, back pain and hearing loss.

Recommendations include promoting and facilitating a better gender-sensitive approach in research, shaping policy and preventative practices to ensure effective and non-biased analysis and prevention techniques in workplace health and safety.

European Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou said of the report, “Improving the quality of women’s work is a fundamental part of achieving the European Union’s goal to significantly increase the participation of women in employment.”

European Agency’s Director Hans-Horst Konolewsky commented, “Risk assessment and prevention need to be more gender sensitive and in general take into consideration the ever increasing diversity of the European workforce.”

Goodyear Network Starts Interactive Health, Safety E-Mail Exchange

At the ICEM’s 2002 World Rubber Conference, it was agreed there is a need for unions involved in the Goodyear Global Union Network to communicate on health, safety and environmental matters. Thus, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), the host union, has launched a global e-mail network.

The USWA and unions worldwide use e-mail as an effective means to communicate on topics of interest. The purpose is to allow issues of concern among ICEM affiliates to be identified, communicated and discussed.

Those working for Goodyear globally, and staff with affiliated unions, will need to sign on to the USWA’s list-serve.

The Goodyear Network’s Health, Safety and Environment e-mail list-serve is now in operation and it is designed to facilitate fre-

quent communication for workers and their unions in these important areas.



To be added to the list-serve, send an e-mail to safety@uswa.org. Anyone having a health, safety or environmental concern, can then send to icemgoodyear@list-serve.uswa.org. The mes-

sage will be sent to all in the group.

The e-mail network is interactive, so additions can be made to posted messages by replying to the original message received. Replies will be sent to everyone in the group as well.

Questions, concerns or need for other information can be communicated to Jim Frederick, USWA’s Health and Safety, at jfrees@uswa.org.

OECD *Principles* Ever-Evolving



The OECD's revised Guiding Principles for Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response was published by the OECD in 2003. (Requests for reprints can be made to ehscony@oecd.org.) ICEM was involved in the revision of this document, and also represented international labour in the drafting of the original Guiding Principles.

What are the Guiding Principles?

This, second edition of The Principles provides practical guidance on chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response. The principles build on and go beyond those originally published in 1992, and include additional guidance from ten years further experience plus input from a several expert workshops on specific themes.

Why are the Principles needed?

Some aspects of manufacture, distribution, use, storage and disposal of chemicals (including pesticides and petroleum products) is undertaken to a greater or lesser degree in all countries of the world. In more highly developed countries—the member countries of the OECD—there may be high levels of regulation governing chemical safety, and controls in locating hazardous installations near population centres. In much of the world, however, such legislation and control is frequently absent, deficient or inadequately enforced. But legislation alone—even in the developed world—has never been sufficient to address chemical safety in its entirety. In the realm of chemical safety, legislation falls under the general description “necessary but never sufficient.”

Communities worldwide experience chemical releases, fires and explosions at both big and small facilities regularly. In fact, in the last couple of years several highly publicised chemical disasters in various corners of the globe including Toulouse (France), Lagos (Nigeria), Enschede (Netherlands) and Baia Mare (Romania) have occurred. For this, it is important in all countries to reach an objective of improved chemical safety and reducing any risk inside the community.

Who finds the Principles useful?

The principles are designed to be of use to all those involved in chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response, and those affected by chemical accidents. It identifies the roles of various parties including both sides of industry (employers and labour), the range of government agencies at various levels (environment, occupational and public health, civil defence, industry, etc.), including local authorities and response personnel, and members of the community. The principles are designed for universal application, recognising the need for flexible application so that large and small companies and organisations everywhere can achieve the identified objectives.

Who has developed the Principles?

The principles have been developed through a multi-stakeholder process of meetings and workshops. They are the result of detailed input from a wide range of experts in the field of chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response. They come from various stakeholder groups (including public authorities, international organisations, communities, academia, and other non-governmental organisations).

What is new in the 2nd Edition?

In updating the principles, several new subjects were added such as transport interfaces and pipelines. In addition, the text has been expanded in a number of areas including, for instance, health aspects of chemical accidents, audits and inspections, and accident investigations. The new version has been re-organised and reformatted in order to be more reader-friendly and a web-based version has been developed to allow for easy searches.

How will the Principles be distributed?

The Guiding Principles can be obtained electronically (www.oecd.org/ehs). It is hoped that the respective agencies in various countries will translate the Guiding Principles into their own languages—something done by several countries with the first edition.

8 de marzo

día internacional de la mujer

Fragmento de Le Bal Bullier, de Sonia Delaunay

2004

participa y decide es el momento



secretaría confederal de la mujer

CC.OO.

International Women's Day commemorations will continue this year through the 1 May Dignity Celebrations. With rising militarization and attacks on Women's Rights, Solidarity among Women is essential. *Art Courtesy: Confederación de Comisiones Obreras, Spain.*