

CNT joins call for 29 September General Strike



The Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union the CNT is calling for a nationwide walkout against the government's new labour law reform.

Their press release stated:

The labour reform that the PSOE [Spanish Socialist Party] intends to introduce will be the greatest act of aggression against the rights of workers since the transition to democracy.

We must use the one-day strike as a trigger for later and broader mobilisations.

A labour reform that they claim is justified by the crisis, but that in reality is only oriented to creating opportunities for employers to use irregular contracts, ignore collective agreements, and fire their workers more cheaply. A reform that will mean more temporariness and deregulation in contracting workers; a substantial reduction of the penalties for improper firings; enormous opportunities for employers to break away from agreements in matters such as wages, the working day, or guaranteed hours. More precarity, more insecurity, less income, less rights. This is how the PSOE governs.

Yet, in spite of all this, this reform is only the tip of the iceberg. Beneath lies the reality: the miserable working conditions in the immense majority of companies, the continual non-fulfilment of agreements, paying lower wages than stipulated, insecure work, working full-time on a half-time contract; the obligation to work extra hours if you do not want them to fire you, or skipping vacations or doing the work that they order you to do, even if you're not supposed to. All this if you don't want them to show you the door. Another piece

of the reality is formed by the contempt with which we are treated by governments, politicians, and the media, in which they present us as lazy, unproductive, and useless. We, the workers, live knowing that we are interchangeable, that we are clutter who can only find work if we do it cheaper than whoever was doing it before. We live with the fear of not knowing if tomorrow we will continue to be paid, or even continue to eat.

And what are we going to do? Sit down to wait and see how everything turns out? Hope that maybe one day we will find good work? Elbow each other in a struggle to grab the last subsidy?

Anyone who wants to do this, go for it – you will be rewarded with nothing but misery. *But the CNT is proposing something else to the working class: the struggle for our rights and our dignity. Without state financing [subvenciones], without union bureaucrats paid for by the companies [liberados], without mortgaging ourselves to the political system. Although we can't guarantee to anyone that we will be able to bury this reform, what we can guarantee is that we will give it everything we've got. We are calling upon everyone who wants to form part of this fight to come to our locals and organise themselves in the CNT.*

Therefore we are calling for the General Strike on September 29th. Let this strike serve as a trigger for the mobilisations that lie ahead for the working class if we want to stop the Labour Reform. And regain our dignity.

*Translated from the press release of September 6 by OliverTwister for libcom.org.

Polish anarcho-syndicalists building for a rent strike in Warsaw



Evict the public officials before they evict you

The Polish anarcho-syndicalist ZSP are building for a strike from October 1st in Warsaw against the housing policy of the city and against serious problems with reprivatization. They hope to radicalise tenants' protests, which the local politicians have been trying to ignore. The strike will "bring together tenants who face eviction or live in dangerous and substandard housing to organise for their own mutual self-defence" and will be accompanied by public meetings, assemblies and, it is hoped, the creation of neighbourhood committees.

Some of the most pressing problems facing Warsaw tenants include:

- In April 2009, rents were raised by 300% in some Warsaw neighbourhoods. Local politicians, at the time, claimed that this was necessary in order to repair houses which are in a tragic state. Unfortunately, when it was time to submit the city budget for 2010, it turned out that this money was earmarked, among other things, for bonuses for politicians. Only consistent protest led to part of this money being returned, and then only in the Praga district.

- The income criteria for receiving public housing is too low. As the Tenants' Defense Committee pointed out in inquiries and statements to the President of the City of Warsaw, rental of one-room flats in Warsaw on the commercial market start at about 450 Euros per month and the only housing which could be cheaper is the illegal subletting of public housing. Yet people with incomes over 300 Euros per month are not eligible for public housing.
- The city of Warsaw, in its housing policy until 2012, plans on reducing public housing.

- Due to lack of repairs thousands are forced to live in substandard conditions, including: lack of heat; lack of private toilets/bathrooms; fungus problems; living in buildings which may collapse; severe

overcrowding; living in buildings where there are fire hazards and threat of explosion (faulty gas installations and homemade heating installations). When the city does react, it is usually to resettle people from these houses. People are forced out of their communities and people who had some problems with paying rent in the past are moved into worse "social housing" - often a container. When repairs are done, tender contracts are usually awarded to the same companies connected in some

way to the public housing mafia. The Tenants Defense Committee has documented many cases of repairs done at artificially inflated costs or not done at all, but charged to the city.

- Tens of thousands have been affected by reprivatization. The city does not consider tenants to have the right to be informed about claims on their buildings, does not provide them information on the process or even the names of the new owners of the building. Many claims turn out to be fraudulent. Tenants in reprivatized houses often become the victims of slumlords who illegally raise the rent and who cut off heat or water to get people out. The legal system does not protect people against these things in practice. Many tenants cannot afford the new rents get into debt and face eviction. The city does not automatically supply replacement municipal housing.

It is clear that the city has, for years, been collecting rent from tenants but refuses to invest this money in either the maintenance of buildings or the construction of new public housing. Tenants do not have any influence in this matter - unless they protest and hold these politicians accountable.

The ZSP demand more however and state "public housing belongs under popular control, which will prove more efficient and beneficial than spending countless hours trying to track down, expose and correct the fraud committed by the local housing authorities, real estate speculators, reprivatizers and local politicians on a daily basis".

Some protests and neighbourhood meetings will kick off this action at the beginning of October.

Updated information will appear on the page of the campaign (in Polish) at: www.strajkczynszowy.pl

Mass strikes in France over proposed increase to retirement age

7th September 2010 - In response to the government's proposal to raise the pension age from 60 to 62, 3 million French workers have held widespread strikes and protests that brought severe disruption to the French economy.

Police gave an estimate of 1.2 million people at rallies nationwide.

Schools were closed and public transport disrupted, with demonstrations held in about 200 towns.

Unions are demanding more is spent to protect workers in the recession. Unemployment has reached two million and is expected to rise further.

Marches took place in Paris, Marseille,

Lyon, Grenoble and many other towns and cities.

Noel Kouici, demonstrating in Marseilles, said protesters had a "grudge" against the government.

"Of course we are angry against the government when you see the way they serve the banks and leave the people starving and losing their jobs".

The strikes began on the Wednesday evening forcing the national rail operator, SNCF to cancel 40% of high-speed trains and half of regional services.

A third of flights out of Paris's Orly airport were cancelled, while a tenth of France's electricity output was been shut down.