
EMPLOYMENT AND PROTECTION ARE YOUR RIGHTS.

DON'T LET THEM BE TAKEN AWAY!

The general strike of 20th June is the necessary and inevitable expression of the definitive rejection by this country's working men and women of the Government's intentions, which are unequivocally directed at suppressing workers' rights and cutting back unemployment benefits. This is a mobilisation to demand stable decent, secure jobs, with rights. It is also the manifestation of the profound repulse deserved by the declarations made by the Government and its President, who blame the unemployed for their own situation, a situation they find themselves in involuntarily, and which only working men and women are the victims of.

The general strike is also a mobilisation against easier, cheaper and discretionary sacking, which, moreover fuzzes the distinction between fair and unfair dismissal by doing away with procedural salaries (**). It is a mobilisation against the reinforcement of arbitrary behaviour on the part of employers, and against breaking what has been pacted in the Inter-Confederate Agreement on Employment Stability, to reinforce stability and reduce short term contracts. It is also a mobilisation against the incompatibility of benefit and compensation for workers who, after a long working life, become victims of company restructuring and are faced with dismissal, with the impact this has, moreover, on the calculation of their pensions.

The general strike is a mobilisation against the change in the legal nature of unemployment benefit, against the attempt to convert it into a sort of "government concession", which may be granted and maintained at will. In Spain and all Europe this is a subjective right of the worker, for which he or she has already paid contributions. Moreover, the aim is to subject those who receive benefits to any discretionary demands which might be imposed on them by government departments, through the obligatory signing of a so-called "commitment to work" and the obligation to accept any job, at the risk of loss of benefits.

The general strike is a mobilisation against the situation of vulnerability and insecurity, within which it is aimed to bring in contracts such as incorporation or permanent-intermittent contracts where workers are called upon periodically and totally deprived of employment benefit. This insecurity adds on to what has already been brought in by the Government with their Labour Reform of 2001.

The general strike is a mobilisation against the gradual disappearance of the right of temporary agricultural workers to subsidies, a measure which will have extremely serious consequences for the population in rural areas in Andalusia and Extremadura and their living conditions. On the other hand, the intended replacement of these subsidies by a contributory system which is impossible to gain access to, given the precarious nature of this sector of production, and which is even discriminatory against other workers in the general scheme, does not resolve the problems of the greater vulnerability of rural workers all over the country.

The general strike is also a mobilisation by society as a whole to demand from the Government a change in direction, away from its bid - and that of the most

backward-looking sectors of the business world - to impose a production model which bases competition on unstable employment and low labour costs; on the arbitrary power of the employer, and on the deterioration of working conditions, and health and safety at work.

The general strike calls for a quality-based production model which matches the responsible attitude with which working men and women have been behaving over their salary demands, based on improvements in training and participation, on potentiating research, development and innovation (R&D&I), and on improving the organisation of employment and its quality.

This is also a demonstration of the rejection of segregation and the control of the educational system which, as in the case of the LOU (University Education Law) and the Law on the Quality of Teaching, prevent university autonomy and greater social mobility, thus propitiating a less open society which is more controlled in terms of ideology.

The general strike is thus a mobilisation against a policy and a philosophy which encourage a progressive and consistent dismantling of the pillars which uphold the European social model, based upon a set of irrefutable rights for society, provided by public institutions. These rights must be protected and efficiently managed. To achieve this, the public employees who, day after day, guarantee the functioning of these institutions must be treated with respect by those who govern, who cannot continue to ignore the justice of their salary and labour claims, nor scorn the right to collective bargaining which these entail and which are being repeatedly usurped.

Moreover, **the general strike** aims to achieve objectives which we in the trade union organisations have been constantly demanding, in order to both improve and strengthen unemployment benefits (four out of every ten unemployed have no cover whatsoever), both in terms of contributions and cover, and to offer real opportunities for employment and placement through modern and efficient Public Employment Services - claims which the government has systematically ignored.

Full employment and cover for people who, in spite of their desire to work, are unemployed, are the basic reasons for **the general strike**. A strike in favour of the rights of those who are most vulnerable, and not a corporate strike. A strike in defence of the objective, shared by the majority of Spanish society, of moving forwards, of converging with Europe in justice and social cohesion and in better working and living conditions.

The Government's measures are a further attack which comes in the wake of a tax reform which puts electoral interests before the general good, making it easier for those who have more to pay less, while prices and indirect taxes rise, more salary restraint is demanded, and the quality of public services deteriorates.

The Spanish government, from its position as the Spanish Presidency of the European Council, aims to impose cutbacks in working and living conditions which undermine the balance of economic growth and social cohesion heralded at the Lisbon summit and ratified in Barcelona. In this sense, the general strike is a mobilisation against the irresponsibility of such a perverse attack upon the consensus reached over the European social model, which daily manifests its continuing relevance, as opposed to all those alternatives which have failed to provide any firm solutions to the problems workers have come up against.

For all the above reasons, and because the responsible attitude consistently adopted by the trade unions (an attitude of openness to negotiation, which cannot be doubted by anyone well-intentioned) has been responded to with superior and

unreasonable attitudes. For this reason we appeal to all working men and women, to all students, to all teachers and public employees, and to all social and cultural groups in the country to publicise these objectives and participate in the great mobilisation of **the GENERAL STRIKE OF 20TH JUNE.**

- » » For the removal of measures which cut back unemployment benefit and aim at freer and cheaper dismissal
- » » For the improvement of unemployment cover.
- » —» —» For full, quality employment which is secure and enjoys rights.
- » » For respect for public employees' demands and collective bargaining.
- » » For true quality education for all
- » » For a social model which combines growth and social cohesion

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(**). Translator's note: In Spanish, the *salario de tramitación* is a salary paid to a worker for the duration of a court case resulting from unfair dismissal. This salary is paid for the first two months by the employer and thereafter by the state, until the case is resolved. The worker continues to pay Social Security contributions, which are deducted from this amount