



To be held in Bilbao under the slogan
"Countless reasons to fight"

ELA will hold its XI Congress on November 26th and 27th

ELA's National Board, the Confederation's maximum authority between congresses, has convened the XI ELA Ordinary Congress in Bilbao on November 26th and 27th. It has been convened as the four-year period established between congress and congress ends this year.

This will be the 11th Congress since ELA was founded and this is reflected in the slogan in Basque, "11 arrazoi borrokarako", whose literal translation would be "11 reasons to fight".

The number eleven in Basque is also an indeterminate quantifier which means countless or many, and therefore the slogan will be "countless reasons to fight".

Countless reasons to fight

This slogan aims to highlight the importance of the trade union struggle in the neo-liberal context of today's society, bearing in mind that our greatest recent achievements are the result of this fight. This approach continues

to be necessary as we are dealing with management that has zero interest in negotiating, which makes it difficult to reach agreements with respect to wages, the working time and employment.

We have to fight to end job precariousness, which accounts for over 30%, and the exploitation of thousands and thousand of workers in our country.

On the other hand, various groups have already begun work on the four focal points of the conference, which will be: organization, collective bargaining, political and socio-economic spheres.

"We have to fight to end job insecurity, which accounts for over 30% of jobs, and the exploitation of thousands of workers"



■ COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

■ PFERD-RÜGGERG

Standing firm for their jobs

The Caballito workforce, which has been on strike for over 7 months, continues to stand firm and says it will not return to work without a legal guarantee that all the jobs will be saved (the 25 which have been threatened during the negotiations, and the reemployment of the 6 people laid off, 4 during the strike and 2 more beforehand, when they were on sick leave).

The conflict has reached a deadlock. The company issued an ultimatum at the end of April, announced that the negotiations were over and asked the workers to say whether or not they accepted the company's last offer. The workers voted by a majority – 114 to 58 – to reject management's offer as their jobs were not guaranteed.



■ IN SAS

Permanent jobs

The SAS workforce, in Vitoria-Gasteiz, called off the indefinite strike that would have brought Mercedes Benz to a standstill, after they reached an agreement whose main achievements are: wage increases of 14.5% (2004), CPI+2.5% (2005) and CPI+2.5%(2006); reduction of 10 working days over three years; the jobs of 90% of the current workforce (90 people) are now permanent, as well as improved terms regarding licenses, sick leave, occupational health, etc...



According to ELA, this agreement shows that a trade union can be strong in a recently established company, which mainly employs young women, and the workforce can fight and improve their wages and working conditions.

■ FCC-BASAURI CLEANERS

Over 100 days on strike

The cleaners of the municipal buildings in Basauri, an industrial town with 47,000 inhabitants, have been on strike for over 3 months and are demanding an end to the discrimination that they suffer from being subcontracted workers and decent working conditions. Their claim is summarized in their slogan, "the same pay for the same job".

■ GIPUZKOA CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

On strike

The construction workers in Guipúzcoa started an indefinite strike on May 10th, called by all the unions -ELA, COO, LAB, UGT- to force management to change the approach it has taken towards the collective bargaining process.

The joint trade union ELA and LAB platform is demanding a salary rise of 170% of the CPI (an increase of 4.42% for 2004) and for the working

week to be reduced by 16 hours.

They are also seeking greater indemnities and that the term of the specific work contract be reduced. Other demands include the main companies assuming more responsibility regarding the closure of subcontracted companies and improved job quality.

■ GRAPHIC ARTS SECTOR IN GIPUZKOA

95% of the workers back the strike

ELA considers that the strike in the Guipuzcoa graphic arts sector on May 25th and 26th has been successful. Given the deadlock in the negotiations for the sectorial collective agreement, management has been asked to change its attitude or the mobilizations will begin again. This agreement affects 2,000 workers in this region. The trade union platform is demanding a salary increase of 4.2%, a reduction of the working week by 15 hours and the minimum category being raised to the 1.34 scale.



ACTIONS



● 20,000 people took part in the May Day Demonstration in Bilbao

The main figures were the workers involved in unresolved conflicts, such as the subcontracted Basauri and Pferd-Rüggeberg workers. The speeches at the end of the demonstration focused on the World March of Women, the occupation of Iraq, the housing problems facing young people, the place of social rights and workers in the European constitution...

Nearly 6,000 people took part in the traditional fraternal meal and the day ended in a party atmosphere.

● "Housing, a violated right"

ELA has convened demonstrations under the slogan "Housing, a violated right" in front of the Basque Parliament and the Navarra Parliament, to protest against the housing policy of these institutions and demand changes in it.

This fundamental universal right has been commercialized, in such a way that access to housing is conditional on market laws and speculation. The outcome of this is a major social problem, which is in sharp contrast with the increase in the wealth of certain private sectors.

● Welfare is not charity

On May 26th, ELA took part in the camp out organized by different groups and trade unions against the decree by the Basque Government to reduce emergency welfare.

● World March of Women: "different yes, unequal no"

ELA took part in the European mobilization of women which was held in Vigo, Galicia, between May 21st and 23rd and which was one of the events organized for the World March of Women. Following the meetings and the discussions in the various Forums, a demonstration was held under the slogan: "Different yes, unequal no".



ELA, AGAINST HZ BEING DECLARED ILLEGAL

ZAPATERO, JUST LIKE AZNAR

ELA considers the ban ordered by Zapatero's government to prevent the popular Herritarren Zerrenda list (list of citizens) from being able to stand in the elections for the European Parliament to be "an act against democracy" and proof that when it comes to the "Basque question", the rule of law is reduced to a formal structure completely devoid of the spirit of the rule of law: the protection of

the rights and guarantees of the citizens, without exception.

It is significant that this ban coincides with the publication of Amnesty International's annual report, which, in the section referring to Spain, echoes the threats to the freedom of expression and the right of assembly in the Basque Country. The report highlights the accusations of torture by the police and cri-

ticizes the legal reform that allows people to be held incommunicado for 13 days.

However, politicians and opinion leaders who threw up their hands in horror when the photos of the torture in the Iraqi jail, Abu Graib, were published, bury their heads in the sand when it comes to the reports of the treatment of the people being held in Spanish police stations prepared by Amnesty

International or the United Nation's Commission against Torture and ignore the proposed measures to guarantee that they are treated correctly. It is obviously easier to protest against Abu Graib than end the Abu Graibs in some Spanish police stations.

If Zapatero wants to govern democratically, which was not the case of Aznar, he has a great deal to do. Although his declaring the popular Herritarren Zerrenda list illegal does not bode well.

ELA newsletter

Solidarity of Basque Workers

JOSE ELORRIETA, the outgoing secretary general analyses the current situation

To organize the fight



-Against what background is the XI Confederal Congress going to be held?

-One where ELA is particularly dynamic, both in respect to trade union action and organizational aspects. Within the trade union, we are trying to applying the organizational plan at every level, and this was discussed at the extraordinary Confederal Congress held some years ago. On the other hand, this organizational restructuring also implies an ongoing renewal of the officials, from the confederate leaders to the very trade union sections in the companies.

- With respect to trade union action, this spring has been particularly active.

Our aim is collective bargaining that goes beyond what

has become routine and achieves notable improvements in areas such as wages and the working week, and incorporates contents that traditional negotiating processes left on one side: to transform temporary jobs into permanent ones, fight against discrimination, prevent subcontracting from being an instrument of overexploitation, etc. We cannot allow that the conditions of people who are doing the same job are worse because they do not belong to the main company, but are subcontracted.

Management is strongly resisting these qualitative changes and the fights are hard, in some cases involving strikes that last for many months.

Public service, private business

-The question of subcontracting has become a central issue with the Basque Government.

-The various Basque authorities have opted for privatizing public services, which means

they are provided by workers in poorer working conditions, while private companies get a good deal. From the trade union, we organize and cover the fight of these workers, the majority of whom are women, against discrimination and for decent conditions.

-To change the subject, what do you think about the change in the Spanish Government?

-It has made good decisions in the field of foreign policy. With respect to the Basque Country, it is disappointing that Zapatero has not shown signs of democratic regeneration and is following the same repressive guidelines as Aznar.

The ban on a candidature made up of people in full use of their civil and political rights, backed by fifty thousand signatures of people also using their full civil and democratic right, is a scandalous violation, which affects the democratic credibility and legitimacy of the European Parliament. Europe cannot accept this situation or ignore it.

The outcome of head-on resistance by management towards improving the workers' conditions is strikes lasting several months.

