

TOTAL STOPPAGE IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY



The strike on 29 March was fully supported in companies, sectors and out on the street throughout the Basque Country. The unions who called the strike have pointed out in recent years that cuts were inevitable if policies were not changed. It is the fourth general strike since 2009 and continues our ongoing work to put forward proposals and alternatives that are widely gaining support among Basque society overall. The collective bargaining and labour reform imposed is yet further proof of this unprecedented aggressive stance towards the working class and the response to the

general strike has to be deemed a huge success.

The strike has been tangible proof that the Basque working class is ready to respond to the attacks by management and the political and economic powers that have agreed to slash our rights. Basque society, in an exemplary show of solidarity and collective struggle, has shown its overwhelming response to this attempt to impoverish the working class, to erode its working conditions even further and to slash the social rights of the most disadvantaged.

They have tried to hide the alternatives that we

have been proposing, but they have not succeeded. On the contrary, our demands were consolidated around shared goals::

- withdrawing the Collective Bargaining and Labour Reform
- repealing the budgetary and legislative cuts
- a fairer distribution of wealth
- applying a progressive and fair fiscal policy
- bolstering job creation policies
- guaranteeing the right of the trade union and social stakeholders to real participation in defining and assessing public policies.
- and, of course, the demand for the decisions regarding our living and working conditions to be taken in the Basque Country as part of the Basque Framework for Social Protection and Labour Relations.

BAD MODEL

According to the unions that called this strike, the overwhelming response is

proof of the failure of the so-called social dialogue, designed to cover the policies of the governments and to maintain the privileged position of management. All the policies are now unilateral and their decisions always ending up slashing the rights of the most deprived.

Apart from the spectacular results of the strike, special mention should be made of the widespread participation at the demonstrations and the many mobilizations organised throughout the day. The Basque working class and the citizens in general must be congratulated for the overwhelming response given, despite all the attacks against the right to strike.

Finally, our congratulations must go to the militants, to all the social and trade union militants that made it possible to gain ground in the response and mobilisation. And to the whole Basque working class that continues to react to defend our social and labour rights through collective fighting.

PLURAL ALLIANCE

It should be noted that this strike was called, alongside the ELA, LAB, STEE-EILAS, ESK, CGT, EHNE and HIRU trade union, by thirty or so social organisations that represent collectives fighting for social benefits, the unemployed, migrants, women, pensioners, students, etc. A new social and trade union alliance has thus emerged and which is very powerful in the mobilisation and demand dynamics, as could be seen at the huge demonstration on 25 February, the prelude to the strike on 29 March.



THE STRIKE IN FIGURES

As usual, on the very day of the strike, ELA provided the media with an exhaustive breakdown of the support for the strike in the public and private sector with the list of the companies and the degree of support in each of them. The aim was to ensure accurate figures in order to provide credibility and

■ It should be noted that there was total stoppage – over 70% - in 470 companies, which means 86.88% total.

■ There were 47 industrial companies that reach partial stoppage levels over 30% and which account for 8.69% of the total.

SECTOR INDUSTRIAL (cuadro resumen)

Territorio	Total empresas	>70% paro	>30% paro	<30% paro	Sin datos
ARABA	120	93 77,50%	17 14.17%	4 3,33%	6 5%
BIZKAIA	213	186 87,32%	19 8,92%	5 2,35%	3 1,41%
GIPUZKOA	208	191 91,83%	11 5,29%	5 2,40%	1 0,48%
EAE-CAPV	541	470 86,88%	47 8,69%	14 2,59%	10 1,85%

which can be compared. We have included below a summary of the data for the industrial sector for a nominal list of 541 companies with Workers' Council (over 50 workers).

(Management itself and the public administration have acknowledge levels of support of 60-70% and over 70%, respectively)

■ The stoppage had a residual impact or there was normal activity in 14 companies, which represent 2.59% of the total.

Speech by Adolfo Muñoz, Txiki, following the Bilbao demonstration

"POLITICS MUST STAND UP TO THE MARKETS AND RECOVER ITS SOVEREIGNTY"



WHAT WERE OUR REASONS FOR GOING OUT ON STRIKE?

1.- To say NO to this brutal reform. The collective defence in the work centres needs to be strengthened. It our responsibility.

2.- To defend JOBS. We have to apply pressure to change policies, distribute wealth, strengthen the real economy, defend salaries and distribute work by reducing the working day.

3.- As SOLIDARITY: We have to demand a radical change in tax policy. Our authorities prefer to opt for cuts sentencing many people to poverty and exclusion, rather than attacking the tax privileges of capital and high earners.

THE 29M HAS NOT BEEN THE END: WHAT THEY ARE COOKING UP IS GOING TO FORCE US TO CONTINUE DEMONSTRATING

Their policies are the source of the problems. Unemployment and poverty are increasing while the interests of capital are being defended. Further cuts are being announced; 60,000 million euros over two

years, a further 10,000 cuts in education and health,... when they know that where those measures have been applied, poverty has skyrocketed. Destroying jobs, lowering salaries and social cover, worsening public services...

That is the neo-liberal agenda. Capital has imposed very narrow margins on politics and the latter has accepted them. It wants the whole political policy to do the same, either voluntarily or by legal imperative.

Capital dictates to political elites what they have to do and the ones of us who speak out as their decisions harm us annoy them.

EUROPE IS THE EXCUSE

They have constructed a political structure to serve capital. In Europe, in Spain and in Euskal Herria. A structure for all Administrations to apply anti-social policies.

A structure to blur the political colours until they disappear. Market, market, market... It hinders anybody that refuses to turn everything into a business opportunity. The ones that created the debt and deficit, and that now use them as an excuse to

bring about the reforms and cuts that interest them. It is all a huge lie.

In Greece, parties have been forced to accept that, irrespective of what they say in their election manifestos, whoever wins the elections will not reverse any of the cuts. What is this all about? Taking over, deceiving. Programmes full of empty rhetoric. We have had enough hypocrisy.

AND THE SPANISH STATE AS WELL

That same structure and with the same goals is operating in the Spanish State. The PP (ruling Partido popular conservative party) is going to use basic legislation to impose the coordinated destruction of employment (public and private), budgetary cuts on social spending, the loss of labour and social rights, etc.

Some of the leaders in our country (López, Barcina and others) have strongly urged Rajoy to do so; to decide using the rank of Basic Law, which "forces them to do so" so their hands are clean when applying those policies. That is simply and completely unacceptable. It involves their acting as the social executioner.

We do not want executions and we are entitled to ask... "Is the policy of the PP the policy of everyone else?" Yes? No? If the answer is no, we should be able to see that... If they are not in agreement, if they believe in something different, they should not apply it. They should not enforce the most anti-social policy that we have seen. Otherwise, we will conclude that it does not matter who is in power.

Capital does not care about politics being discredited. We do.- We know that is this policy is applied there is no alternative. Furthermore in Euskal Herria neither the size of the deficit (2.59 BAC and 1.89 in Navarra) or that of the public debt (7.90 BAC and 11.10 in Navarra) justify, in any way, the decisions being taken. That is even more so if we take into account the difference

in tax pressure. It is unfair and also unnecessary. It is senseless and it is brutal.

WE ARE DEMANDING SOCIAL SOVEREIGNTY POLITICAL ACTION

We demand political action for sovereignty that is directly related to labour and social rights: The political class has to rise up against this plundering. It must not apply the cuts...

An act of sovereignty that projects the citizens of our country and their rights. That is the sovereignty that we want: Acts of sovereignty today, not tomorrow, today. Credibility is essential in political. We need, we demand, different political action. Action and not election rhetoric.

This general strike is a call for that. For the political class to claim its stake, for it to know how to say NO, for it to put its social interests at the forefront. For it to listen to this social clamour, for it to listen to the people and their demands. This has to be done today, it is urgent. Doing so would be a democratic act of sovereignty with social roots; it would mean following the path of Iceland and not of Greece. It would mean politics showing solidarity. That is what we are asking for. And in case it is still not clear... the attack on us (and which is going to continue) is terrible and unprecedented. What they are cooking up is very hard. We are forced to say so to awaken the social conscience; to shout: The weak have been trampled on enough. We do not want, based on lies and manipulations, our political representatives do so.

SOCIAL AND TRADE UNION ALLIANCE

Those of us who are here - trade unions and social movements - must continue with an alternative agenda. We need each other, without accepting any subordinate position. Nothing ends today. A MESSAGE: Trust in ourselves, trust in the power of fighting and mobilisation, trust in the organisation. It is essential. This is the path; this is our path.



MORE CUTS

The day after the successful general strike, the Spanish government approved the budget project for 2012. Consequence of the political decision to prioritize the reduction of the public deficit, the budget contains very serious spending cuts that will worsen the conditions of life and work of most of the population.

The government of Rajoy intends to reduce the public expenditures in 27,300 million of euros primarily in areas related to unemployment benefits, employment policies, investment, development aid (with a 72% reduction), support for access to housing, education, dependency... The cutting spending is clearly lower in other areas such as defense, security or the royal house, that will only have a 2% of reduction.

And just a few days later the government announced further cuts in health and education amounting to 10,000 million euros.

ELA will continue to promote the path of trade union and social mobilization to address these cuts and to demand to the Basque authorities to give a radical shift in fiscal and budgetary policies to put forward the interests of the majority of the population.