



Movement of Christian Workers

REVIEW

Issue 55 February 2015

If it's not
Decent
Work then
it is ...



The Method of the Movement Remains Essential

Being 'disconnected' from the political is a phrase much repeated in the media describing people's disaffection from politics and politicians. Sometimes it refers to the public in general, at other times those living in disadvantaged areas and more recently, young people. Certainly many of those interviewed in the media and certainly, by chance conversations at bus stops and supermarket queues suggest there is some truth in this. However, many of the voices heard in these situations appear more to hold inconsistent and conflicting views rather than perhaps being detached or disengaged.

What can be striking is, for example, the seemingly lack of connection made between their demand for services and decent jobs yet seeking lower taxes and benefit cuts or the policy decisions made by local and central politicians and the resounding impact and implications they hold for them and their families.

Apparent is the acceptance of a divide, no matter how contrived, between hard working tax payers, thus deserving, as opposed to receiving benefits and undeserving. Yet in reality these divisions are on the precipice of being more akin to each other than is realised or we care to admit.

The Movement's Review of Life method allows the opportunity for us to challenge our own and the 'mismatched' thinking of others, questioning the language, spin and media headlines in an attempt to unearth and reveal what is hidden and veiled. On a European level the MCW had an opportunity to do this on two occasions; the European Movement of Christian Workers (EMCW) Meeting, Lisbon, October 2014

and the Review of Life Movements' Meeting, Madrid, January 2015. Our representatives were part of the sharing that took place describing the reality of people's lives and the critical situation for many because of the policy changes in their respective countries. Summaries of the final declarations from these conferences are included in this Review. The need for decent work and the very thin line between being employed and unemployed, articulated by our representatives, became shockingly apparent with the City Link Company going into administration at Christmas 2014. The plight of the workers demonstrated all too clearly what is concealed by being in 'employment'; what having a job can really mean for some through agency work, zero hour contracts and self-employment. Many workers spoke about buying their own equipment & petrol whilst receiving low wages in return. The covert lack of decent work became crystal clear when listening to the situations of these 'employees'.

Also in this edition there is a summary from the Spiritual Accompaniers' Meeting emphasising the need to train Accompaniers so that more groups can meet, learn to question, reflect and review lives to help reveal what is hidden. A Local Councillor illustrates the choices to be made and pertinently perhaps, demonstrates the questions we need to ask of our own national and local politicians. A fact from an MCW meeting exemplifies how the Review of Life is never static and we invite you to share with others our Prayer for Decent Work. Yes, the Method, interrogating & provoking enquiry remains essential.



Why is action necessary? Spiritual Accompaniers' Meeting Report by Ann Smith

This meeting, which followed on from the European Seminar of the European Christian Workers' Movement (ECWM) in Lisbon, Portugal, October 2014, lasted one and a half days. It had a strict timetable and agenda.

Fifteen people participated. Eleven were priests along with 1 deacon and 3 lay people.

It was my first time at such an event and I didn't know what to expect, but was in for a pleasant surprise! The tone and working of the whole meeting was courteous, open and very spiritual.

The meeting was opened by Guy Boudaud, the Chaplain of the World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW). We started with a gospel reflection on the Marriage Feast of Cana. The main points from this were the need to be aware of social situations, be able to respond with sensitivity and to remember occasions of joy and celebrate them.

We then did personal introductions so that we could all appreciate who each person was and the work in which we were engaged.

The aim of the meeting was to compile a working document of the needs of lay accompaniers, following on from the work first begun 8 years earlier. This then was to be the culmination of all the previous work undertaken. In the prior discussions it had been established that there is a very clear need for lay accompaniers in the WMCW. This was for several reasons:

- The main reason being the unique role of lay people having the actual experience of working life coupled with their understanding and experience of the method of the movement. They are not necessarily experts in theology or biblical study but can learn about these as well as about the wider social economic and

political causes of the difficulties that arise for workers.

- The lack of availability of priests to act as chaplains is very obvious. In many countries there is a shortage of priests and the work of chaplains is not seen as important. Those who are chaplains are ageing and younger priests have no understanding of worker movements.
- The lack of understanding in the church structures and hierarchy of the need for and value of formation of workers and support for their movements.
- The lack of recognition (until recently by Pope Francis) of the role of every lay person through their baptism as Priest, Prophet and King in the building of the Kingdom and what we mean by "the Kingdom".



Ann with many of the participants from the Spiritual Accompaniers Meeting having a well earned break.

All the priests present said that they had been taught how to be chaplains by the worker members themselves in their groups. Chaplains and accompaniers learn through experience but there does need to be training, so that they are correctly informed, understand the method of the movements and appreciate the unique Christian dimension.

We determined that this whole area of lay apostolate and specifically lay accompaniers:

- Should be a field of dialogue with church leaders worldwide; it should be part of the mission of the church for the laity.

- We should use relevant documents of the church such as “Evangelii Gaudium”.
- We should use our own resources already published e.g. on “Review of Life”

The qualities & gifts of a lay accompanier to:

- Be an “accompanier” i.e. accompany, partner, mentor, support the members of the group, “walk with them”.
- Be able to listen and discern what is being said.
- Have a knowledge and understanding of the gospels.
- Understand and use the “Review of Life” method.
- Read and use social teaching and other documents of the church.
- Bear witness to the joy of the gospel.
- Have solidarity with members.

Obstacles were recognised as time in relation to the shortage of priests and their ages and the difficulty in convincing people of the importance of the work
Emphasis was given to:

- The need and importance of priests.
- The need for partnership of priests and lay leaders, not in opposition to one another.
- Lay accompaniers not being fully formed from the word go; but that they grow and develop as does a baby and then through experience and the Holy Spirit reach maturity.
- Training is like no other and therefore not just leadership training for social work, this would lead us to becoming just like NGOs but we have a special Christian dimension to leadership. It is all too easy to be distracted from the main message and become involved just in social projects.

At the forefront of everything we do we should always have the link between life, work and our faith; they are integrated and essential essence of the movement.

And the Poor get Poorer with no Relief in Sight by Paul Edwards



Ever since I was a YCW member I have tried to live out my apostolate by actively engaging in the wider Labour movement. I joined a trades union at 18 and remain a member today. On 21 May 2014 I was elected as a Labour Councillor in the London

Borough of Barnet, defeating a sitting Tory.

The overwhelming majority of our casework is to do with housing and economic hardship. Overcrowding, poor quality housing and the lack of social and affordable homes are having huge social, emotional and economic consequences on the lives of the poorest members of our community. With the private rented sector charging around £1400 per month for a two bed roomed flat and the Conservative Council proposing to charge its tenants 80% of market rents for Council tenants, many low income families will be pushed over the edge into poverty and indebtedness.

In addition, Government welfare cuts are impoverishing more families, with 60% of welfare losses in Barnet affecting working families. The Government’s welfare changes have meant an average annual loss of £2,100 per household in Barnet and 1200 families having a £2500 gap between their housing benefit and the rent they have to pay.

Just when you thought it couldn’t get any worse, the Government cut funding for Council Tax benefit. Recently Barnet Council increased the Council Tax contribution for families who are in receipt of Council Tax benefit by a staggering 130 %.

Here is an extract from my speech in the Council Chamber:

“At the start of tonight’s council meeting we stood up for prayers. Across both

sides of the chamber there are people of faith. Whilst there are those who don't profess to have any religious belief, there is clearly a significant section of the council that share a common Judaeo-Christian tradition.

So, I would like to recall the practice taught to us in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 15, which reminds us that every 7 years the debts of the poor were cancelled in order for them to begin again and earn a living with dignity. I appeal to you all and especially those of you who understand and share a common belief that the just person shows compassion.

Ironically if the Council wanted to raise the Council Tax by 2.5% you would have to have a referendum, but you feel you can impose a 130% increase for the poorest local citizens. **This is not fair, just or equitable.**"

We need to end the policy of austerity. This policy has fallen disproportionately harder on the poorest members of our community. Since 2008 inequality in Barnet has increased compared to Great Britain as a whole.

Christ's Gospel is about bringing good news to the poor. What does that mean, in the current climate of austerity, huge cuts in public spending, cutting the incomes of the poor and pushing them into greater poverty and indebtedness? I believe there is a need now, like never before, for all women and men of good will to denounce the sin of growing inequality where the gap between the rich and the poor increase by the day, with 10% of the population in Britain owning 50% of the nation's household wealth. How can it be just when everyday children and families, here in the UK go without a decent meal, live in cold and damp accommodation because of the lack of financial resources, yet a small minority have a wealth they can never spend, and could well afford to share?

Whatever the outcome of the General Election on 7 May, there will still be a

need for social movements like the MCW to enable members to challenge the current political and economic orthodoxy that puts the economy before the suffering of its people. This challenge can and must recall the practice of Christ's life to be concerned for the widow, the stranger and the orphan. When I evoked the spirit of Deuteronomy, I did so with considerable apprehension because all too often religious views mixed with politics does not go down well. However, on this occasion the chamber was silent throughout my intervention and people on both sides said it was a powerful message for us all. Not powerful enough to persuade the Conservative majority to vote with me, but it has woken up some of my own comrades to the questions, why are we in politics, and what are we trying to achieve, what are the values on which we want to construct a new and more just world?

Extract from the Final Statement of the European Christian Workers Movement (ECWM) Seminar

The meeting of the ECWM was held in Lisbon (16th – 19th October 2014). The theme of the seminar was "The fight against unemployment in Europe – Perspectives for decent work".



(From L to R Jim Dearlove member of the European Coordination Group, MCW delegates Mary Foy & Paul Foy and Ann Smith, Spiritual Accompanier)

The final statement covered 3 issues; the reaffirming of the ECWM commitment to the fight against unemployment; supporting the demand for the cessation of negotiations under

the Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement and the rejection of the “Mos maiorum” police operation against undocumented immigrants across the EU.

Fighting against unemployment

“The ECWM shared the current reality of unemployment in many European countries .. The shared reality shows how critical the situation is for many people, but also the small signs of hope that exists in our environments. Despite the current crisis in employment throughout Europe we believed that there is work for everyone. We recall that the priority of labour over capital (Laborem Exercens) “money must serve people, not the other way around”. Therefore it is necessary that people who have jobs are aware that work is something more than employment. The job created has to be decent .. and everyone has the right to a minimum income, independently of whether they have employment or not.” To reverse this situation it was proposed that members support the following actions:

- Programmes that address the creation of jobs.
- Programmes which end the current austerity measures in favour of public spending and investment which will lead to new and decent jobs.
- Decent jobs that will contribute to building full rather than precarious lives and will encourage people to contribute to society as a whole.
- Continue to promote the World Day for Decent Work on 7th October each year.

TTIP

“Considering all the aspects of this agreement between the US and the EU the seminar participants came to the conclusion that there should be a resounding No to these negotiations and

support given to the ‘Stop TTIP’ campaign.

This agreement will seriously affect social rights in the EU, consumer standards as well as safety and environmental health. Moreover, it will promote the accelerated privatisation of health and education services which should remain public. We fear the rights of working people .. for example the US has ratified only two of the eight ILO core standards. The ECWM rejects the creation of private arbitration as a method of resolving conflicts, since this is contrary to the principle of public law regulating international trade. In addition, free trade deepens the social divide because it does not set rules to protect the poorest and the most excluded, increasing inequalities worldwide. We say, no to an exclusion economy, an economy that kills.”

The “Mos maiorum” police operation

It was explained that between 13th & 26th



October a large police operation, approved by the Council of the European Union, to apprehend so

called irregular migrants was being undertaken. These migrants are, in most cases, people who escaped dangerous homelands and are searching for safe and dignified living conditions. As would be expected only a minority of these refugees, attempting to reach safety and shelter in Europe, have visas valid for entry into the EU. As the Vice President of the Greens/EFA group stated; this is the opposite of refugee protection.

“The ECWM, ...(hearing of the) Mos maiorum police operation against undocumented immigrants across the EU, .. express our strong disapproval of such inhuman measures that undermine the dignity of migrants and violate their most basic human rights. This macro operation [is aiming] to identify

immigrants based on their racial profile, which is totally illegal and dehumanising. This operation does nothing but confirm that the immigration policy of the EU is unfair & unsupportive because it allows 20,000 people to die each year. In this situation it should join the cry of Pope Francis in Lampedusa, "Shame!"

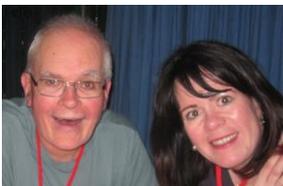
In this context we are scared and worried about the rise of right-wing parties which speak out openly against immigrants and release messages that criminalise others for being different. ..

As Christian workers, following the example of Jesus Christ, we are called to defend the dignity of every person, in every situation and to build a just, fraternal and sustainable society with all people of good will."

Lisbon, October 2014

Extract from the Declaration of the Review of Life Movements' Meeting

Jim Dearlove and Mary Foy were the MCW's delegates at the Review of Life



Movements' (R of L) Meeting in Madrid on 13th & 14th January 2015. Along with the MCW England there were representatives from Portugal, Spain

and France. These meetings take place every two years so that the R of L Movements (all members of the ECWM) can continue advancing in their "commitment as lay people reflecting on the social, political and economic realities in the light of Christian values". "During the meeting we prayed together, shared the social and ecclesial reality of our countries and the priorities of the work activists of our movements carry out. We identified during this meeting that:

- The poorest workers suffer the same precariousness in all countries.
- Inequality is a consequence of neoliberal policies implemented by

governments of different political persuasions.

- There is an increase in the working poor.
- Austerity policies have resulted in cuts in social provision and a weakening of the welfare state as well as the undermining of social and legal rights.
- Most young people (in Spain & Portugal) cannot find a job and many are forced to emigrate.
- Reforms of labour laws have caused an imbalance [of rights].
- Job losses have a dramatic effect on thousands of families.
- The culture of individualism is breaking collective struggles.

We also analysed the key themes of Pope Francis' speech to the European Parliament considering the impact on the "humanistic spirit" of Europe. We agreed on the need to jointly build democracy and we support a new policy focused on the effective recognition of the divine dignity of women and men.

As Church Movements we believe that a prophetic denunciation is necessary; to know and to accompany the reality experienced by workers in Europe; to denounce working conditions imposed on us; to continue taking steps to enable displaced people on the "fringes" (unemployed, precarious, poor) to be the priority of the whole church and above all, giving reason for our hope (1 Peter: 3-5).

We also discussed together our actions and coordination in the ECWM and World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW). We are convinced that building global justice, through promoting universal solidarity, are the key means to defending decent work and living "not as slaves but as brothers and sisters."

Madrid, January 2015

Review of Life Revisited

Back in 2012 at a Review of Life meeting one member brought 3



anonymous handwritten application letters for a manager's post. They knew a business owner in a specialised sector and despite advertising in reputable and local newspapers, there had not been many applications. This caused the owner to reflect on the much publicised lack of skills. There was also an element of "what were they thinking" writing letters like this for a manager's job. The letters were 'not well' written but none the less heart wrenching. One read something to the effect, I don't have any experience but I really want a job and ask you to give me a go as I will work hard to learn.

The group reflected on the lack of skills but also the inappropriateness of these three people in applying for this job. From the written word two of the three indicated how desperate they were and genuinely wanted to get paid work. It prompted the group to ask what had been their motivation to seek a role that perhaps, in their heart of hearts; they knew they could not be successful.

Another member of the group who had experience of Jobcentre Plus spoke about the agreed quotas that those receiving Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) made with their advisors to write after a certain number of jobs. On the fortnightly visit they had to show evidence of their letters and work that they had sought. She said that for some, even if suitable jobs were not advertised, the meeting of the quota remained paramount and you "just wrote off to anything so as to make up the numbers" and please the advisor.

The Review continued considering schooling, training, and government

schemes. How the role of Jobcentre Plus workers were changing was also discussed with evidence of an increasing harshness of criteria for claiming JSA, the primacy seemingly being given to moving people off the unemployment register rather than into paid employment and as in many walks of life, quotas or league tables transforming and overshadowing the real priorities of the 'job'. What was at stake here from our perspective was the undermining of the inherent value and worth of each human being that quantifiable figures were put before human need. It was a wide ranging Review ending with a reflection on the hidden layers of reality felt by employers, employees, and would-be employees and the great raft of demands made on them as well as the barriers between them. Each blamed different factors for their particular experience despite being linked in an inextricable way. The sign of hope for the group was that now one side at least, the potential employer who triggered their Review of Life, would be given a different side of the story to reveal a wider and very much complex perspective because of the presence of the group member.



jobcentreplus

Although the end of this particular Review the group revisited a number of similar issues especially as austerity measures became more severe and the view of those in receipt of benefits becoming more unforgiving. Yet, a few years later they were reminded of this specific meeting because of the publication of extracts from written evidence to a recent House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee on Sanctions. One edited extract (The Guardian, Society, 28th January 2015) read:

“My benefits were sanctioned for three months. That is an awfully long time to live without money. I had failed to apply for one specific (and, I felt, inappropriate) job handed to me by my adviser at the jobcentre. The fact that I had been for a job interview that week, had another lined up and had applied for at least 10 others was ignored. It was decided that I was not doing enough to find work and three months was deemed to be a suitable sentence. Three months for a first time offence. My mental health (which was already vulnerable after months of unemployed stagnation) deteriorated rapidly and challenging the decision was incredibly difficult. With some help, I did manage to apply for hardship payment and submit an appeal



against the sanctioning. ... The hardship payments were not enough to live on, or pay rent and I was

thoroughly destitute by the end of my benefit sanction. .. When my appeal was eventually heard, some seven to eight months later ... the judge found in my favour – that the period of the sanction was hugely unjust and out of proportion with my offence ... The judge decided a fairer length of time would have been two weeks.”

The group members have no way of knowing whether this, not applied for job, was appropriate or not nor is it known how the person involved felt about the outcome of the appeal although it appears that they felt some vindication. However, the group's view was that there remained a degree of harshness because there appeared to still be a case to answer just because one job had not been applied for. The group were also very disconcerted about the use of wording like 'judge' and 'sentence' equating this situation to someone involved in criminal activity! The revisiting of the Review added weight to the group's original thoughts

and understanding of what unemployed people had to face in their day to day job seeking. It felt to those present that looking for work is not always an easy task; rather it can be a daunting experience. What was evident here was the criminal undermining of people's dignity, self-esteem and self-respect.

The MCW Review felt that a pertinent reflection could be drawn from the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy, 'Economic Justice for All' 1986 Chapter II, paragraph 28: “The basis for all that the Church believes about the moral dimensions of economic life is its vision of the transcendent worth – the sacredness – of human beings. The dignity of the human person, realized in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured. All human beings, therefore, are ends to be served by the institutions that make up the economy, not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals. Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27).

Dates to Remember

International Women's Day

March 8th

World Day for Health & Safety at Work

April 28th

St Joseph the Worker / May Day

1st May

Designated World Day for Decent Work

October 7th

Feast of Christ the King

November 22nd

Extracts from the World Movement of Christian Workers' (WMCW) message on International Women's Day Celebrated on 8th March 2015



Women Building New Realities

In our still patriarchal society women, although discriminated against, keep struggling, building new realities and making a difference. They suffer social discrimination, oppression, family pressure but they persist in the struggle for a world in which all have a voice and everyone has a decent life.

Women as mothers, girlfriends, sisters, partners, godmothers, wives, aunts, grandmothers, cooks, laundresses, nurses, teachers and more – all roles carried out over lifetimes, involved and changing situations. ... This is despite the situation of many women in the world still being inequitable and discriminatory. Two-thirds of illiterate people in the world are women. Women constitute 60% of the workforce on the planet but they do not earn more than 10% of global income. Throughout the world only 1% of women own land. Domestic violence is the leading cause of death for women between the ages of 14 and 44.

The struggle for and solidarity with the rights of women in the workplace can be part of the foundation to find ways



towards creating a world of justice. In many countries women join with other movements and organisations to highlight and emphasise the importance of their struggle for a just world without violence being perpetrated against them.

Many women assume responsibility as heads of households and are therefore

the first to feel at first-hand the impact of systems that oppress and austerity policies which cause poverty and hardship. They face losing their children who are forced to leave home in the hope of finding paid work, many of whom will instead end up destitute or dying prematurely in this pursuit of a better life.

Women too work from morning to night in subhuman conditions. Whether in the fields, the informal economy or precarious employment they can be earning their own and their family's poverty whilst their health and safety is put at risk.

The WMCW supports organisations like ECOSOL (Social and Solidarity Economy) which offers training and support and the ILO (International Labour Organisation) which seeks ways, together with other organisations, to improve the quality of life particularly for domestic workers and those in the informal sector which are mostly composed of women.

We note that in recent years, some countries have made progress in improving the quality of life for women. But we must remember that, despite these advances, every second a woman, somewhere in the world, is a victim of violence or is killed. Mostly it is the partners of women who cannot accept their right to work or be independent or fight against their oppression.

Despite the progress made the WMCW, with regard to this gender issue, continues the struggle along with all its member movements in four continents and with sister organisations to find ways and viable solutions to the reality of every working woman.

World Movement of Christian Workers
February 2015



New Team at the International Secretariat of the World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW)

Marilea Damasio, a member of MTC Brazil and the newly elected **Secretary General of the WMCW** during the General Assembly in Haltern began her mandate On the January 1st 2015. (Pictured on the left of the photograph below.)

Ernst Bodenmüller, a member of the KAB Germany, was elected **Treasurer** and mandated by the General Assembly beginning his mandate on January 26th 2015. (Pictured second from left.)

Jean Michel (previous Treasurer) and Betina (previous Secretary General) will continue to work alongside the new team until June 2015.

The MCW wish every success and fulfillment to Marilea and Ernst in their newly appointed roles and pray for their strength and good health to accomplish their hopes, aspirations and actions whilst working for the WMCW.

For Jean Michel and Betina the MCW thank them for all their hard work, service and dedication to the WMCW over the years of their tenure.

The photograph below was taken during the visit of the new WMCW Bureau to the Vatican in January 2015. Pictured alongside Marilea and Ernst are, from left to right, Guy Boudaud, International Chaplain; Cardinal Peter Tuckson, Chair of The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; Charo Castello and Jean-Claude Tolbize, Co-Presidents WMCW.



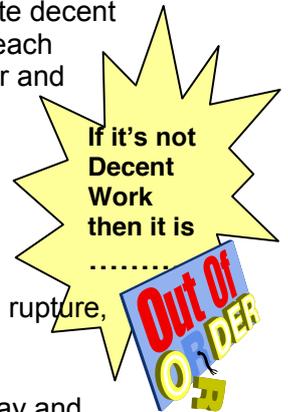
MCW's Prayer for Decent Work

This Prayer written by the English MCW is part of our preoccupation to promote decent work for all. It is presented here in a See, Judge, Act format so that following each section of the prayer there are questions for each of us and others, to consider and reflect on, to share and provoke further action in pursuing decent work for all.



Creator God you gave us a vision of work;
Fruitful and life-giving, a blessing on land and people.
But this vision of work became perverted,
separating workers and communities from the fruits of their labour.

- What happens in our daily lives which perpetuates this separation, this rupture, between decent work and unfair, unreasonable or unjust treatment?
- How can we be part of the solution to repair this separation?
 - God give us the vision and courage to make a difference this day and every day.



Liberating God you raised up Moses to lead the alienated workers of Egypt out of oppression into a promised land where there would be work for all and the fruits of labour would be shared with those who could not labour – the powerless ones.

- Who are the powerless ones in our lives, our communities, our countries, our continents, our world?
- How can we start to recognise and understand more clearly who they are and how we, with them, can begin to be liberated from oppression?
 - God give us the vision and courage to make a difference this day and every day.



Saving God you came among us as a craft worker,
with strong skilful hands and clear voice.

You called us to build the vision lost so long ago.

You died to build a world where all have access to work and its fruits,
Where the weak and frail are sustained by the strong and fit.

- What is Jesus' message and vision for us this day, in this age?
- How can we see and hear more clearly what His liberating message means for us in the here and now, over our deliberations together and when we are living out our lives day by day?
 - God give us the vision and courage to make a difference this day and every day.



Inspire our hands and minds as we struggle to realise your vision.

May we lead our world back to the vision and promise of decent work,
a blessing for all.

- Who do we encounter that can help us realise our vision?
- How can we engage with others to understand and join our voice in saying that Decent Work is not an option but a necessity?
 - God give us the vision and courage to make a difference this day and every day. Amen

'Hands off our right to strike' demand unions in global campaign

Stop Press: Information & Declaration received as MCW Review was going to press.



Global union federations and their affiliated unions around the world mounted an intensive campaign to defend the unalienable right to strike which is under attack from employer groups at the ILO (International Labour Organisation).

Using the slogan 'Sometimes you have to say No!: hands off our right to strike' the campaign began with an international day of action on February 18th 2015. The campaign will continue until the meeting of the ILO governing body on 12th March 2015. In support, The World Movement of Christian Workers issued the following statement:

Declaration on International Action Day for the Right to Strike 18 February 2015

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has called for a global day of action on February 18th against the position of one group of employers seeking to end the international legal recognition of the right to strike contained within the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention.

As Christian workers concerned about the constant attack on social and labour rights of individuals and families worldwide we remember the message of the Church on the right to strike and the role of trade unions: "Striking is one of the most difficult victories won by labour union associations. (...) *The Church's social doctrine recognizes the legitimacy of striking* "when it cannot be avoided, or at least when it is necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit", when every other method for the resolution of disputes has been ineffectual.

The Magisterium recognizes the fundamental role played by labour unions, whose existence is connected with the right to form associations or unions to defend the vital interests of workers employed in the various professions. Unions "grew up from the struggle of the workers — workers in general but especially the industrial workers — to protect their just rights vis-à-vis the entrepreneurs and the owners of the means of production". (Compendium of the social doctrine of the church, 304-305)

In recognition of the Magisterium of the Church, the World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW) strongly support this day of global action. At the same time we absolutely reject the criminalisation of the actions of men and women trade unionists in defending the rights of all workers.

Our faith in Jesus Christ makes us fight for a just, fraternal and sustainable society and we believe that the International Trade Union Movement continues to make a vital contribution to achieving universal justice in all parts of the world.

The views expressed by contributors of the MCW Review do not necessarily represent the views of the MCW.

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