

For a sliding scale of wages across Europe! Coordinate the struggle of all European workers!

Statement of the International Marxist Tendency



All over Europe we have massive price increases that threaten the living standard of working people. The magnificent demonstrations and strikes of the last few months in Slovenia are expressing the same concerns and problems that workers have to face throughout Europe and the world. “Stop inflaciji!” (“Stop Inflation!”) was one of the main slogans. Workers’ wages simply cannot keep pace with rising prices, especially the price of food, housing, heating and fuel.

The policy of the trade union leaders, which is generally that “wage moderation” would help resist the massive delocalisation of businesses, has been proven bankrupt and has led to stagnating and even falling real wages in all countries. The introduction of the Euro has led to a general rise in prices to European “standards”, while wages are still very un-

even from country to country. This has cynically been used by the capitalist class in all countries to undermine the rights and conquests of the workers in order to raise profits at home while threatening the workers with the blackmail of delocalisation. The inevitable result has been declining living standards for workers in all countries.

The Maastricht treaty was consciously used by the capitalist class as a tool to slash social spending, attack the pension system and justify an orgy of privatisations. Usually with the complicity of the Labour leaders these policies were presented as necessary sacrifices “to join Europe”.

The EU labour legislation (last but not least the recent “Lisbon treaty”) has been used as a Trojan horse to undermine progressive labour legislation in all countries, helping to introduce

and extend casual labour and “flexible” working hours. Racist immigration and asylum laws have been passed to divide the workers and play one section against the others. As a result, casual labour is spreading like an epidemic and the number of people who have a job but live below the poverty line is increasing year by year.

At the same time we have seen the explosion of the profits of the banks and corporate business. In the last 20 years a massive redistribution of wealth has taken place in all countries. Huge profits have been literally squeezed out of the workers with a massive increase in exploitation and pressure on the workforce. The portion of GDP that goes to wages has been nearly halved to the advantage of profit and speculation. Top managers now earn an average 40 times (!) more than normal workers.

www.marxist.com

And all this has developed in a boom period! What can workers expect now that we are facing the most severe international economic crisis for decades? Capitalists will try to throw all the weight of this crisis onto the working masses. Already in the past years the capitalists have refused to increase wages in real terms. Every year they have demanded wage “moderation”. They have attacked the system of collective bargaining, public pensions and social security.

Under the conditions of economic crisis capital will increase the pressure even more. Wage cuts, the destruction of jobs, factory closures and delocalisations will be on the agenda. Cosy trade union relations based on the principles of “social partnership” have been counterproductive in the past, but would be criminal in this context. Social partnership today means the complete subordination of the interests of the working class to those of capital. The hopes of many trade union leaders that one could relaunch the system of social partnership at an all-EU level is a reactionary utopia and we have to reject it..

If we want to defend our living standards and our rights then we need fighting trade unions. The experience of the last years shows that the only way to achieve this is for the workers themselves to take back control over their own organisations. Shop stewards’ committees (democratically elected and subject to recall) should be organised in every branch of industry and services, regardless of trade union affiliation of the workers involved and should be coordinated on an European level.

Trade unionists all over Europe need to work out a common strategy and programme and launch a general coordinated mobilisation in each country. What we need here is to fight to gain back what has been lost, starting with significant wage increases and protect purchasing power through the introduction of a sliding scale of wages. Higher wages should be matched by improved job and security conditions. This should be a first step towards achieving the same rights and wages for all European workers. It is our task to take this struggle home to our trade unions and our workplaces.

Capitalism shows once again its real face. This system only works thanks to the increasing exploitation of our labour force. Capitalism, they say, cannot work with too many rules and constrictions, “the market will regulate itself”. All history shows that this is not so. Every improvement has been achieved through struggle. So why should we accept a system that does not guarantee a humane existence for millions of workers? Without our permission this system could not work. Not a single light bulb shines, not a wheel turns, not a telephone rings without the permission of the working class. If we stand united, the working class has an immense power. The struggle in defence of our living standard can only be the starting point for a struggle towards the transformation of society. It is our labour that allows this system to run. So why shouldn’t we also decide how and what has to be produced and how this society should be run? This would be possible if we challenge the right of

a handful of capitalists to decide our own destinies and take control of the means of production.

We fight for:

- ✪ Substantial wage increase to take back what has been lost in the last years!
- ✪ For a national minimum wage in each country of at least two thirds of the average wage, as a first step towards a European minimum wage.
- ✪ For a sliding scale of wages to defend our living standards!
- ✪ Repeal all EU directives that introduce or support casualisation of labour!
- ✪ No to the Lisbon Treaty!
- ✪ Scrap all racist immigration and asylum policies!
- ✪ No to “social partnership”!
- ✪ For fighting and democratic trade unions!
- ✪ Organise shop stewards’ committees (democratically elected and subject to recall) in every branch of industry, coordinated on a European level.
- ✪ For the re-nationalisation of what has been privatised for the profit of a few capitalists, and the public ownership under democratic workers’ control and management of pension and health systems, transport, telecommunications, the production and distribution of energy, banking, insurance and credit, and of all major industries.
- ✪ No to the Bosses’ European Union. For a Socialist united states of Europe!

The **International Marxist Tendency** aims to organise workers and youth that fight for a Marxist programme within the trade unions and the mass organisations of the labour movement. If you are interested in putting forward or discussing these ideas, **contact us!**

www.marxist.com - editor@marxist.com

Austria – www.derfunke.at • Belgium – www.vonk.org • Denmark – www.marxist.dk
 France – www.lariposte.com • Germany – www.derfunke.de • Greece – www.marxismos.com
 Italy – www.marxismo.net • Poland – www.socjalizm.org • Spain – www.elmilitante.org
 Sweden – www.socialisten.se • Switzerland – www.derfunke.ch • UK – www.socialist.net
 Yugoslavia – <http://crvenikriticar.blogspot.com>