



VIII NATIONAL CONGRESS OF FP CGIL Viterbo, February 14th-16th, 2006

FINAL POLICY DOCUMENT

The VIII Congress of FP CGIL, held in Viterbo last February 14th-16th, approved the report by its Secretary General, Carlo Podda. The report provides an update to and a supplement for the Congress debate, relying upon the assumptions of the Confederation, as amended by FP CGIL. It also provides the category with indications on future targets, thus making an integral part of the present document. The Congress also approved the contribution made by CGIL Secretary General Guglielmo Epifani, as well as those by other speakers and participants, and highlighted the following:

A World without Violence: the Targets of Peace, Rights and Solidarity

Widespread violence and insecurity, restriction of democratic liberties and legality: these are the results of the liberalist policies and a global disorder in a world which, since the 1990s, has hardly been able to find a new political balance. All this has become even worse with the war, first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq.

Victims of terrorist attacks add daily to the tens of thousands of war casualties. After New York, from Madrid to London, from Casablanca to Sharm-el-Sheik, from Istanbul to Bombay, from Jakarta to Bali, a blind and unacceptable terrorism has been striking everywhere across the world.

Italy's participation into the Iraqi war is an insult to our Constitution, which should immediately be halted with the withdrawal of our troops.

Putting an end to the military occupation of Iraq is essential to prevent violence and political instability from spreading even further.

The alleged clash of civilisations has endangered and pushed away any prospects of peace and dialogue among peoples and cultures, and has lent a voice and a political arena to fundamentalism and extremism, thus worsening and enlarging the crisis to the entire Middle-East. Fundamentalism and extremism kindle hatred for the other and undermine every project aimed at reducing disparities and asserting rights across the world.

Given this background, the birth of a Palestinian State becomes even more necessary and urgent, with, at the same time, a strong commitment to Israel's safety and security.

The European Union alike can and must play a fundamental role for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Far from reaching effective results, the defensive measures taken by governments have substantially restricted democratic liberties.

This is not the way to the target of a development respectful of human rights and of the delicate environmental balance, namely as regards non-renewable natural resources, which should instead be supported by the democratic participation of peoples, the latter being the only way of running counter the predominance of liberalist globalisation.

Strengthening Europe's Social and Political Model

The overwhelming power of the market can only be counterchecked by a different model of development, capable of striking a balance between economic growth and the rights of male and female workers and citizens.

In this direction, Europe boasts an age-old history, which might represent today a true alternative to the neo-liberalist model.

The protection of the European social model, and its enlargement to all EU member countries, represents a wealth of common values and rights which should shape Community policies, in order to provide the enlarged Europe with an equality- and solidarity-based development.

At the same time, once released from the liberalist obsession of competition, Europe can regain a major role on the international arena, pointing to the benefits of an economic model based upon the well-being of its citizens and the value of multicultural dialogue.

The draft directive on services in the internal market does not follow this direction. Without a prior definition at Community level of general interest services and general economic interest, and the relevant harmonisation of European male and female citizens' rights, the directive risks marginalizing the public sector, when it comes to the management of services fundamental for the equal treatment and rights of people, and this to the benefit of the private sector. At the same time, the directive also risks being a useless and deceptive attempt at resisting global market competition, resulting in services from the GATS agreements, whose impact would in any case worsen income and working conditions for European male and female workers.

There is a need for the Parliament and other European institutions to pay heed to the requests that thousands of citizens and workers have been addressing to them, last but not least on Tuesday 14th February, in the impressive Strasbourg demonstration.

This is the only way of bridging the gap between the Europe of EU institutions and the Europe of citizens. This gap has become explicit after the French and Dutch votes to the referendum against the ratification of the European constitutional treaty.

Italy Needs a Radical Change.

The shambles provoked over the last five years by the Berlusconi government is under everybody's eyes.

There is no single sector of our society that is not suffering from deep degradation.

The constitutional reform, whose enactment should be prevented by means of a referendum, is a clear sign of the centre-right coalition's contempt for the function of institutions and the balance of powers – which is the foundation of every democracy – , and for the equality of rights and equity, the latter being the foundation of social cohesion.

The media have been gagged.

Reform after reform, the judiciary has been truly dismantled, with a view to putting it at the service of the executive, impairing its effectiveness, and even delegitimizing it, by reducing it to a mere ancillary function. This is more than clear after the bill on self-defence has been passed, as well as a number of decriminalization and deregulation acts, ranging from Law 30, to the reform of inspection services, up to the delegation of environmental responsibilities, which of course destroys environmental standards and releases polluters and other players from their responsibilities.

All this fosters illegality, which has strongly re-emerged even in the public administration, as well as a sense of impunity on the part of organised crime.

There is a need to resume a determined struggle against mafia in all its forms, at political, institutional, economic, financial and social levels, since it plays a decisive role for the development, namely of the regions of Southern Italy.

Greatest civil achievements have been jeopardized, such as the freedom and dignity of women, which have been downtrodden, first of all by the law on assisted reproduction, and then by attacks against law 194 and the role of advisory services as places of health promotion and woman's self-determination.

Alongside with this, a sort of parochialism has regained ground, and worryingly undermines the lay State, as an essential principle upon which rests the dignity of every human being, regardless of sex, opinion or religious belief, as enshrined by our Constitution.

A logic of repression and crackdown has shaped the centre-right governmental action on such complicated social emergencies as immigration, mental illness and drug addiction.

Suffice it to mention the recent measure taken on drug addiction: all of a sudden, without good reason, different substances are put on an equal footing; the doors of a jail system - already about to collapse - are opened to thousands of people; and public and private players working in the field of drug addicts treatment and assistance are unjustifiably placed on an equal footing.

The private interests of the Prime Minister have even pointed to the economic sectors to be fostered, whereas the entire economic and productive system of the country has fallen into a serious crisis, under the impact of international competition. Speculative business has prevailed over investments in productive areas, research and innovation, thus exposing the whole country to international discredit.

It is however on the social side that the damage is outstanding: education, social protection, taxation and the labour market have all been targeted by counter-reforms which have drastically worsened the conditions of people and households, with many of them living today just above the poverty line.

As a result of cutbacks in services and public administration, and the reduced budget allocated to local governments, the quantity of services universally provided to citizens has decreased. In some industries, many services have closed down, others have progressively been privatised, with growing job uncertainty in the services industry. This has often matched with a lowering quality of services and extra costs for users and citizens.

A strong commitment is needed for the centre-right coalition to be defeated in the next general elections, and a new centre-left government be voted, who is the bearer of a socially-advanced programme, which should rest upon the aspirations of labourers. All this, for our country to regain confidence, and for male and female workers and pensioners to be compensated for the heaviest burden they have been bearing as a result of this shambles.

Labour at the Core of the new Project for the Country

Centrality of work means first and foremost bringing back dignity, social recognition and value to labour.

This objective cannot be attained without setting back the necessary conditions for dialogue and bargaining with social partners, first of all the union.

The dialogue will be necessary in order to have an impact on the strategic choices of the future government. It will be possible to come to an agreement providing that this will be dealing with the priority issue of designing a new economic policy allowing for the reduction of inequalities, the redistribution of wealth and ruling out any implementation of a two-speed policy.

Increasing the incomes of workers and pensioners: this is first of all a social justice operation, but is also necessary to boost the economy, as well as support innovation and product research for a better quality development.

This cannot be achieved only by means of national labour contracts, which by themselves could not ensure the same level of protection to all workers. Therefore, it is necessary to promote an exchange on a series of measures in the fields of public policies, taxation, welfare services, wage policies, etc.

An agreement for employment development and labour protection should in any case be validated and supported by a rigorous and participatory democratic pathway involving workers, and cannot but start from a deep correction of the tax system, this being the main leverage to guarantee a completely equitable system. Re-introducing progressive taxation and fiscal drag, relieving the tax pressure on labour and, at the same time, taxing unearned income, property, fortunes and inheritance, and cracking down on tax evasion: these are the necessary measures to increase tax revenues without squeezing workers.

The increase in tax revenues is a central target to strengthen the second pillar of an effective redistribution policy: i.e. re-launching the place and the role of the public sector, as a factor of growth and qualified development of both the economy and society as a whole.

To this end, the willingness of significant investment should therefore be clear. As regards namely common assets – water, the environment, health, education and security -, public ownership and management should be ensured. As a matter of fact, they cannot be submitted to market rules, as they are closely related to inalienable and fundamental rights of people. Generally speaking, a strong presence of public services makes citizenship rights and communities' social cohesion truly effective, is a growth factor and a collective development guarantee, as well as a curb to illegality.

This role can be all the more significant as the principle of separation of public administration from politics is applied. Over the last few years, instead, politics has shaped most public administrations according to its own interests.

To this end, adequate policies will be needed to reverse the trend towards the privatisation of public services, which over the last few years has been so pushed forward that the civil service has been dismissed by public administrations themselves, thus downplaying the very noble meaning of politics.

When outsourcing services to private players, Public Administrations shall constantly monitor the quality of the services provided, as well as make cost-effective choices.

At the same time, an effort should be made to innovate and improve the quality of public administrations and services, for them to be more accessible and meet citizens' requirements.

Under such a regulated local welfare system, the role of the third sector too can be improved and enhanced, regaining its initial mission of integrating public welfare services.

All these goals cannot be achieved without costs for the public finance.

As a matter of fact, there is a need to spread welfare benefits to the greatest number of citizens, and enhance civil service.

Precariousness, as heavily fostered by law 30 which needs to be repealed, has spread throughout the whole labour market, but it has become unsustainably sizable namely in public services. This trend needs to be reversed, by putting an end to the indiscriminate freeze on hiring, by stabilizing progressively the workers who serve for fixed terms in institutions, and implementing a serious employment policy in public administrations, by means of support legislation and adequate contractual policies.

It is however also necessary to encourage and enhance civil and public service, by renewing without delays national labour contracts as soon as they naturally expire, and fixing binding time-frames for them to come into effect.

The struggle for a renewed and different presence of the public sector means a higher responsibility for the Union, and calls for the highest level of commitment in order to take up the challenge of efficiency.

Our category will do the utmost to strengthen its contractual policy: alongside with denouncing the so many things that do not work, we will strive for a strong, widespread and visible union action aiming at re-organising services, following the lead of ILO bargaining.

The defence of the quality of services and labour protection should go hand in hand, otherwise the risk being of falling back into a corporatism-based and defensive attitude.

In its contractual approach, the category should also put forward and contribute to the qualitative and quantitative growth of "local social bargaining".

Local bargaining plays a crucial role in qualifying public action, for development policies to make sense, to build inclusive welfare, bring about true integration between social and health policies, foster the role and quality of the third sector, and promote a new network for citizenship rights.

Local bargaining will be effective if it adequately matches the supply and demand of social services, thus avoiding having to choose between maintaining a service (or welfare provision) and recognizing workers' rights, or having to juxtapose rights with one another.

The Contractual Model

Clearly enough, the issue at stake is the design of a new and different project of society, whereby the centrality of work expresses itself also in a strong and consistent role played by contractual policies.

First and foremost, the central role of national labour contracts should be strongly reasserted, both to countercheck the possible temptation of a change in legislation, as was the case of the measure taken for fire-fighters - which we ask to repeal - and for their general function of regulating rights and protections, which have been heavily attacked by the centre-right coalition's policies, as well as for their role of wage regulator and wealth re-distributor and finally with a view to strengthening industrial relations.

For all these reasons, our category strongly opposes whatever operation aiming at developing regional-based contracts.

The reinforced national quality of contracts, namely in public sectors, might enable second-level bargaining to grow stronger and establish a link between the management of contractual funds and work- and service-organisation, training and career development, health and safety at work, the development of on-site contractual policies for the inclusion of the different types of male and female workers resulting from outsourcing processes.

Last but not least, the Congress debate has strongly pointed to the need of resuming the initiative for the development of ad-hoc sectoral contracts, in pursuit of the reconstruction of the entire productive cycle and of equal treatment for all workers. This is a complex and difficult issue which cannot be left aside, and on which the category is called upon to renew its commitment.

Law 146, and its subsequent amendments, need to be thoroughly revised, for the right to strike to be fully recognised, albeit in full respect of services users.

Representation and Union Democracy

This has been the focus of the Confederation Congress debate, and the next CGIL congress is called upon to foster an internal exchange and draw unity-based conclusions.

The experience gained by FP CGIL shows that participation and democracy can be invoked if supported by clear-cut rules.

For this very reason, the amendment to Assumption n. 9, as submitted by FP CGIL, continues to be an advanced and viable suggestion, for the labour as a whole to benefit from a law regulating representation, representativeness and union democracy.

Unity with Cisl and Uil

In order to make public policies stronger, widen protections, and confer a greater and more effective power upon workers, Union action too needs to become stronger. This is why the proposal contained in the report to make a further effort to establish renewed and deeper unity with Cisl and Uil takes on special importance. This can only be pursued opening up a wide-ranging and passionate dialogue, relying upon the significant experience gained over the last few years, the original capability of controlling representation and industrial relations, and the positive results obtained in terms of contracts.

The CGIL Congress

The choice of resting upon a unity-based document to launch the Congress debate was adequate and significant. As a matter of fact, it has highlighted the need for the country to be provided with an alternative to the economic and social policies of the last few years.

The unity of public sector, which is not to be taken for granted, but has been pursued by the whole category with a consistent and painstaking work, testifies to the fact that it is possible to bring together the proposal and policy integrations on the one hand and a passionate search for mediations and shared pathways, on the other.

Following this approach, and making its contribution to this end, FP CGIL will work for the CGIL general congress to be able to establish substantial unity, allowing the Confederation to become a reference point in the very delicate stage that will follow immediately after general elections.

Unity is the pre-requisite for CGIL to develop a meaningful project for Italy, capable of designing new policies, creating a consensus, as well as strengthening CGIL proposals and struggles.

It is this very big unanimous support to the project that can mark the identity and union action of the Confederation and will allow for the adequate, consistent and credible development of economic, industrial and contractual policies.

It is CGIL unity that will help the country face the future schedule, and even its most difficult stages, if CGIL is able to keep its cultural and political profile, as well as its independence, unchanged and stick to them as appropriately.

This unity will be enhanced even further by the shared and explicit need to enlarge participation and participatory democracy, to fully involve workers and search for their aware consensus.