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Brazil is united to battle abusive credit card interest rates

The fight for a reduction in credit card interest rates, that was started on May 09 by UGT, went through another important chapter on October 16, with the national launching of a campaign.

The protest simultaneously took place in Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, Roraima, Manaus, Minas Gerais, Pernambuco and other States that are represented by UGT.



An important act took place in Sao Paulo, in front of the Central Bank, at Paulista Avenue, and gathered dozens of protestors, trade union leaders and workers who tried to bring together the largest number of signatures to take a petition to president Dilma Rousseff, demanding that credit cards companies are to reduce the interest rates in revolving credit, that over the years has damaged the working class and undermined the purchasing power of the population.

Ricardo Patah, president of UGT and president of the Commerce Workers Union of Sao Paulo, summarized the issue of credit card interest rates as a true robbery to the popular economy and a profiteering practice approved by the Central Bank. "It is not a coincidence that we are making this protest in front of the Central Bank building, since it's the staff of Mr. Guido Mantega that has the power to change this degrading situation we are living in".

According to Laerte Teixeira da Costa, vice-president of UGT, it is unacceptable that an emerging country that is fighting to improve the income distribution and fighting for a poverty eradication, might allow that its financial agents practice interest rates that reach 600% per year. "If financing companies don't lower these rates, the government should cap these exorbitant credit card rates", he concluded.

Being the only trade union central that brought up this issue and raised the concept of reducing the interest rate of credit card revolving credit as a way to guarantee the salary dignity of the working class, UGT, from now on, begins a new level with actions at a national level to demand that the federal government take a position in favor of the population and request immediate changes.

To Patah, since UGT began this campaign, many discussions regarding this issue started, that can be verified in the fact that newspapers already spread the news that there was the first reduction in credit card revolving rate. "There was a 2,62% decrease, which is quite shy if compared to the nearly 16% that these companies charge every month out of the population", explains the president of UGT. (*Fábio Ramalho – UGT Newsroom*) (*Picture Fabio Mendes*)

70 years of CLT

We will not be absent

A heritage of our people is about to celebrate 70 years. That is CLT (**Consolidation of Labor Laws**), created by Getúlio Vargas through a decree signed on May 01, 1943.

The rights that are guaranteed in this legislation are huge: employment card, social security, transportation stipend, vacancies, night shift bonus, minimum wage, paternity leave, Christmas bonus, government severance indemnity fund, PIS, among others.



Paulo Paim, Senator, Rio Grande do Sul

These achievements were not reached with no effort. They were hardly acquired, through a fight of our people that lasted years. It was and it continues to be a matter of justice. That is why we should be alert, doubling our vigilance.

Once again there comes a time to cope with a process to soften CLT and the articles that deal with social rights in the Constitution, following the example of the attempt made in 2011.

Several proposals follow legal channels under the congress, such as the Law Project 951/11, that creates the Simple Labour; the Law Project 4.330/04, that deals with outsourcing work, and the Law Project 1.463/2011, that creates a new labour code. The National Association of Magistrates (Anamatra) considers these texts "an enormous regression on labour rights in Brazil and an insult to the Federal Constitution".

In Brasilia, a new proposal that creates two new forms of hiring is also being created, the forms are: the eventual and per hour worked. In reality, and I respect contrary opinions, this will turn into a regression, giving room for not fulfilling the CLT and social rights of the Constitution.

Recent statements of the president of TST (Superior Labour Court), João Oreste Dalazen, are also an alert, he defended a reform in the labour rights and softening the CLT.

Brazil is going through the most important cycle of social and economic development in its history. Now, let us face it, we cannot soften laws every time there is an international economic crisis. Workers and retired workers cannot be called once again to pay the bill.

We will not be absent. If we must write our horizons with the borders of the stars, we will do so with the same faith and passion that life gave us.

UGT launches campaign against pesticides

In a fight against the abusive use of chemical products in agriculture, UGT launches the National Campaign Against the Indiscriminate Use of Pesticides and invites the civil society to be part of this fight. Pesticides kill! It's time we banned this evil out of the menu of the Brazilian workers. Come and be a part of this initiative! November 13, 9:00 A.M., at the Excelsior Hotel, let's warn the population on which kind of products reach the table of the population and what is behind the agribusiness model adopted in Brazil.

Brazil is listed as the top consumer of pesticides in the world, according to official data of the National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa). Since 2009, more than a billion liters of pesticide are thrown in the Brazilian harvests! We consume 5 thousand liter of poison per year! A fifth of the world consumption is in Brazil.

This campaign is only the beginning of many others that should be done. We are going to guide producers, supervise the use and dose. We will inform the consumers the products that reach the tables. The problems is not only restricted to pesticides. It is a lot wider. It comes from the lack of quality in labour. UGT in defense of a new agriculture policy.

In defense of trade unions

Threats to the union organization of liberal professionals is the topic of a seminar in Curitiba

Canindé Pegado, secretary general of UGT, was in Curitiba on October 05, and participated in the seminar "Threats to the trade union organization of liberal professionals". This meeting was organized by **CNPL - National Confederation of Liberal Professionals** and gathered dozens of trade union leaders from liberal professionals in several Brazilian states.



The new chart of professional classes elaborated by the Labour and Employment Ministry was in the agenda. The seminar was attended by UGT representatives and representatives from other trade union centrals, directors of CNPL and former members of the Labour and Employment Ministry.

While talking to unionists, **Pegado** reminded that UGT has been discussing with affiliated trade unions, federations and confederations that are affiliated with the central, an alternative measure to the chart presented by MLE.

He emphasized that, the way this new chart was presented by the Ministry, it is almost an insult to the trade union movement. "If implanted, this new chart will undermine the organized liberal classes, establishing them into another group of trade union organizations", Pegado recalled.

The **Secretary General of UGT** reminded the audience that, while promoting a wide debate with liberal trade union bases, the trade union central is at the forefront of important decisions for the trade union movement. "There were several meetings with trade union leaders and we already structured an alternative chart, but, we are still open to all trade union leaders so that we can debate and improve even more this proposal that belongs to workers, from the base", said Canindé.

The launching of this chart of the Ministry of Labour and Employment comes in an inappropriate time, without the participation of the parties that are really interested on this subject, recalled the president of SINTEC - Trade Union of Industrial Technicians of Paraná (affiliated with UGT), Solomar Rockembach, who is also the national secretary of UGT's Department of Liberal Professions, but this must necessarily go through a wide federative and confederative discussion so that we might create a modern framework of the professional activities in Brazil, including some classes and even excluding others", said Rockembach. *(UGT Paraná)*

Creation of trade unions will have tougher rules

In order to hamper the uncontrolled opening of trade unions in Brazil, the Ministry of Labour and Employment will increase the demands imposed to release trade union records. The possibility of demanding a minimum quota of workers to approve the creation of a trade union institution is being analyzed, as well as a digital certification of a legal representative and documental proofs that the founders are really part of the class that they intend to represent.

These requirements should be stated in a new rule that substitutes the controversial Decree 186, 2008, which legitimacy is being discussed under the Federal Supreme Court (STF). The goal of the government is preventing trade unions from spreading deliberately in Brazil, which would lead to a decrease in the power of negotiation. Over the last five years, 1.378 trade unions were created. Currently, there are 14.464 trade union institutions, out of which 9.957 are employee trade unions and 4.737 are employers organizations. The rest, is composed of federations and confederations.

The decree 186, however, stimulated this movement to give room to the possibility of several trade unions that represent the same class coexist, in the same city. The Brazilian legislation prevents the creation of more than one trade union organization from a sector in the same place. The new decree should correct this problem. Its effectiveness, however, still depends on an update of the chart of professional classes. (...) *(Valor, 08.10.2012)*

Teacher's Day

União Geral dos Trabalhadores – UGT UGT fully supports the statements of Guy Ryder, ILO Secretary General, who, on Teacher's Day, requested measures to turn teaching into an attractive profession once again.

The economic crisis has severely affected working conditions and the salaries of many teachers, said the ILO Secretary General, Guy Ryder, through a statement on the eve of the World Teacher's Day.

Ryder said that the lack of teachers has led to an increase in the number of students per class at the same time in which the financing for support service and school supplies decrease. An "urgent action to promote a social dialogue and develop efficient policies to attract teaching professionals" is necessary.



"Everything has contributed to a deterioration of the teachers position", he said. "Unfortunately, teaching is a profession under siege."

Ryder also reported the recruiting of "non certified or non qualified teachers to reduce the deficit". He asked for an "initial and continuous qualified education" to guarantee that teachers are to have an adequate education for such a demanding profession.

"People do not realize that teaching is an attractive profession, and actually many teachers drop their jobs", he said.

Urgent measures are necessary.

Ryder insisted that an "urgent action", to promote an efficient social dialogue, improve the teachers position and develop policies and strategies to attract and stimulate teaching professionals, is necessary.

He added that, in many countries, there are still limitations to freedom of association and right to collective bargain for teachers.

Another priority that he mentioned was the need to "promote gender equality", not only to ensure the equality of opportunity and treatment for teachers, but also to provide "positive models" for students.

Ryder said that education is "one of the pillars of economic growth and social sustainable development."

"Children that go to school have a better chance of avoiding child labour. Once they grow up and have kids, they are better prepared to take care of them. Children of educated parents have access to more adequate caring and food", said Ryder. (*ILO News, 03.10.2012*)

Brazilian teachers are among the less remunerated

Brazilian teachers in Elementary School have one of the worst salaries of their class all over the world and also earn an income lower than the national per capita income. That is what studies made by economists show. They were made by agencies of UN, World Bank and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Economists objected, through a study made by the UBS bank in 2011, that an Elementary School teacher in Sao Paulo earns an average of US\$ 10,6 thousand per year. This amount is only 10% of a teacher performing the same job in Switzerland, where the average salary of this class in Zurich is US\$ 104,6 thousand per year.

In a list of 73 cities, only 17 of them have salaries that are lower than in Sao Paulo, among them Nairobi (Kenya), Lima (Peru), Mumbai (India) and Cairo (Egypt). Practically all over Europe, United States and Japan, salaries are at least five times higher than the salaries of Elementary School teachers in Sao Paulo. (*O Estado de S.Paulo, 15.10.2012*)

United for a culture of healthy work

The Commerce Workers Union of Sao Paulo and UGT participated in the XIX Fisp International Fair of Safety and Security, from October 3 to 5, at the Centro de Exposições Imigrantes.

With a booth at the event, the Commerce Workers Union and UGT received the visit of trade union leaders that are technical of security at work in several states, students, workers of CIPA (Internal Commission for the Prevention of Accidents), risk inspectors, employers security workers, among others.



"Companies have to invest more on the security and health of workers. There is a great financing and social impact of accidents at work to the state. These expenses with workers could be directed to the improvement of the quality of life of society. But, unfortunately, that is not what happens, since these expenses are redirected to serve victims due to lack of security requirements in several work areas", said **Ricardo Patah, president of the Commerce Workers Union of Sao Paulo and UGT.**

To **Cleonice Caetano, director of the Commerce Workers Union and national secretary of UGT's Health and Security at Work**, the participation of institutions in the event is extremely important to aware companies and workers on issues that are related to health and security in the workplace.

Role of the Trade Union Movement in Health and Security at Work

UGT's State branch of Espírito Santo (UGT-ES) held, on September 25, the 1st Technical Meeting on the Role of Trade Union Movement in Health and Security at Work.



The event, that took place at the auditorium of **UGT-ES**, gathered workers, accident prevention workers and trade union leaders that will act as permanent channels and negotiators between employers and employees, through a mediation of the union, to make relationships more democratic and enable workers to act as effective and real actors in this process that detects the health risks that are present in the workplace, and that also have conditions and availability to negotiate improvement alternatives, in search of a better labour quality.

The lecture was given by the **Secretary General of UGT's National Trade Union of Retired Workers (Sindiapi)** and by **Natal Leo**, a member of the Labour and Employment Ministry Workgroup on Professional Qualification.

The meeting began with the president of UGT-ES, **Ari George Floriano de Siqueira**, who emphasized the importance of these technicians to workers, that many times are discriminated by workers and bosses. "If a work is well done, companies believe they don't need a technician anymore. Let us participate in these actions to advance in the issue of health and security. We are all workers working for the same cause", said Ari.



"The União Geral dos Trabalhadores reaffirms its historic commitments to the working class, while seeking to expand its methods of action, with ethics, courage and the certainty that Brazil can be better and more just. " Ricard Patah – UGT's President]

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