

Speech of PAME-All Workers Militant Front, affiliated member of WFTU, at the NEHAWU Conference

Comrades, it is with great pleasure that we are today at the congress and thank you for that.

You give us the opportunity to thank you and the leadership of NEHAU, for its solid solidarity in the struggles of the workers of Greece. In fact, as my organization, PAME-All Workers Militant Front, had the honor to host the 16th Congress of WFTU in Greece, we would like to thank you for the successful hospitality of the 17th Congress of WFTU in South Africa, in which your action was essential.

This action of NEHAWU, its constant solidarity and action for the interests of the workers in South Africa and in all the world as well, was the reason why we gladly supported the election of our comrade Maik Makawubigia to be the President of the WFTU and we were honoured that he did the opening speech in our recent 4th Congress in Athens.

Dear Comrades,

I work in a hospital for young children, at a time when thousands of young children have reached in Greece as refugees, sent away by the wars and the imperialist interventions. At this time PAME last weekend organized a Two- day antiimperialist action of trade unions, with the participation of trade unions from Greece, Serbia, FYROM, Cyprus, Italy, Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Turkey against the NATO, the imperialist wars that create refugees.

The competitions of the multinational groups for profitability are the cause of both the wars and the privatization - commercialization of public services in a number of countries. The forces of PAME have organized dozens of strikes, hundreds of rallies, multiform initiatives, general and sectoral protests in recent years against the anti-people measures imposed by the businessmen and governments. Among these actions, several were against the privatization of public services and the liberalization of strategic sectors of the economy (energy, telecommunications, public transport, etc.) as well as against the further commercialization of Health.

The insufficient funding from the state for the healthcare, the pay cuts, the closure of clinics and hospitals, the under-staffing, the worsening of the labour relations and the hospitalization conditions is a commonplace in a number of countries, including the most developed ones, such as France, Sweden and many others. The goal is common for all capitalist states: the cost and the responsibility for health care

services to be shifted from the state to the patients so that the state can earn more for the competition and the investments of business groups.

For the capitalism, the health, the disease, the human pain, are merchandises, too. So, the government structures, the hospitals are getting deeper and deeper into the capitalist market, where the patient, the person in need, is considered to be a client and he is treated only if he has money. Infrastructure, Prevention measures and drugs that would save or improve the quality of lives of people, are not provided to those who need them, to respond to epidemics, such as AIDS or to reduce the rate of premature mortality. On the contrary, the multinationals deprive the people of all these so that they can earn even more.

The multinationals determine what we eat, the multinationals determine what kind of medicine, of healthcare we have, under what conditions we work. And that's because plutocracy keeps the keys of the economy. And as long as this keeps going, in every industry, in every country, it will be proven that the profits of the big businessmen are above health, above the lives of people. Because the capitalist profitability cannot coexist with the satisfaction of the popular needs. That's why it is important to strengthen even more the action against the capital in every industry and in every single workplace.

In this direction, the multinationals are taking advantage of the local governments to escalate their attack on the workers. A marked example, the so-called "left" government of SYRIZA in Greece, which just a couple of days ago, announced 15,000 lay-offs in public sector. A decision against which we responded with a National Strike in the Public Sector and we continue.

At the same time, multinationals are also using trade unions and trade unionists to cultivate the logic of frustration, fatalism, inaction. It is the forces of ITUC in Europe that sign cuts in salaries, in pensions, they accept the lay-offs, they accept as priority the interests of the multinationals and not the interests of the workers.

On the other hand, there are the class trade unions. In Greece, PAME's forces against the attack of multinationals, against the logic of fatalism and defeatism have organized more than 42 General Strikes over the last 8 years, hundreds of local and sectoral actions. In all these struggles we had the support and solidarity of the trade unions members and friends of the WFTU, we had the solid solidarity of NEHAWU, we had your multiform support and we are grateful for this.

As the attack of the capitalism is escalating, it is our task to strengthen the effort to defend workers' rights, to overthrow the capitalist exploitation. Only this struggle can give strength and prospect to today's workers.

In this direction, the successful 17th Congress of the WFTU, its decisions, the new big steps that it does, fill us with optimism.

At the same time, the dynamics of your Congress, your decisions, your discussion, the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution are a weapon and give hope to the workers.

We are certain that, being stronger in the following period, each one of us will struggle in our countries for the victory of the working class.

Long live the South African working class

Long live the solidarity among peoples

Long live the 100th Anniversary of the October Revolution that showed that our struggles can be victorious!

Olga Siantou

Nurse in a pediatric hospital in Athens, member of the Executive Secretary of PAME.