

Successful Italian General Strike supported by EPSU

(May 7) The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) salutes the success of the Strike called by the CGIL yesterday in Italy and followed by its Italian affiliate FP CGIL.

The aim of the strike was, once again, to call for a change in economic policy. This is, for the trade unions, the only way to solve the current crisis and stop our country's decline.

The CGIL declares that Berlusconi and his cohorts are incapable of responding to the country's needs. The Italian government has impoverished the country economically. Their policies on education and culture have brought shame to Italian society.

Berlusconi's government wriggles out of its responsibilities to combat unemployment and to oppose the employers' preference for short-term contracts and casual labour. It uses immigrants as scapegoats, feeding a fear of difference. With its xenophobic and racist measures it offends people's dignity and Italy's reputation internationally.

The CGIL proposes a detailed set of policies to get Italy out of this crisis. Its programme covers employment and development, the return of a standard employment contract based on the rules of democracy and worker representation, and a fairer tax system. It contains measures to set the country on a path of growth, and to give confidence to young Italians and immigrants. The programme of reforms tackles today's problems in order to build a better future.

The proposals of trade unions also address the condition of migrant workers, and in particular it demands: a law to regularise the status of migrants already in Italy - in order to combat the illegal and degrading activities forced upon them. Immigration must be seen as a resource for development! A reform of citizenship - CGIL demands not only a positive and more effective management of the flow of migrants, but also programmes to help them settle and integrate, through a reform

of citizenship. This is especially needed for children born in Italy, in order to overcome discrimination. As a start, immigrants should have the right to vote in local government elections. Finally, the suspension of the effects of the Bossi-Fini law when people lose their jobs because a business shuts down - it is completely unacceptable that immigrant workers (more than 2,300,000), who have been working in Italy for years, who send their children to school to build their future in this country, should lose their residence permits when they lose their jobs, becoming undocumented migrants who can be threatened and blackmailed by anyone, always risking expulsion.

EPSU finds the demands of the CGIL just and decent and it supports them. EPSU also stands up for the rights of everyone.

We hope that the success of this General strike will bring winds of change in Italy.

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