Beat: Business

Half a million people demonstrate in Spain on a protesting May 1st

For living wages and stability

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USPA NEWS - More than 50,000 people in Madrid and 500,000 throughout Spain demonstrated this Sunday, May 1, in a day "of celebration, pride and vindication more international than ever," according to the union leaders who presided over the march in the capital.

Half a million people demonstrated this Sunday through the streets of Spain on a May 1st that was not just any May 1st. “We have recovered normality to be able to go out again after two very hard years for the whole of Spanish society and, particularly, for its working class,” stressed the general secretary of the Workers Commissions – one of the two main Spanish unions -, Unai Sordo.

The secretary general of the Workers Commissions (CCOO in its acronym in Spanish) sent a memory to the millions of workers around the world who demonstrated this Sunday and also sent a memory and a hug to the millions of citizens of the world who have not yet been able to access to the vaccine: "The world is still profoundly unfair," he said. “I want to send a memory to the working men and women of Ukraine and to all the people who are crushed by the economic powers,” he added. However, he highlighted that the celebration of this May 1st occurs at a time of great uncertainty about how the economic and employment variables will evolve in the near future. "We left behind a pandemic crisis, but we have entered a new risk of crisis and slowdown in the economy as a result of a criminal war and a disproportionate increase in prices," he stressed.

For his part, the general secretary of the General Union of Workers (UGT in its acronym in Spanish), the other great Spanish union, Pepe Álvarez, recalled that "we proudly celebrate the achievements and conquests we have achieved" in recent months. “Never in the history of the labor movement have we celebrated this day with so many agreements in such a short time. That has been thanks to the people who have not stopped claiming and demonstrating to get rights, he pointed out to the thousands of workers concentrated in Madrid.”

Rights such as those obtained by the labor reform, which “is a success today, with a little more than a month of life. Thanks to it, we have suddenly gone from temporary to indefinite contracts, from rubbish contracts to contracts with rights, from 4% of indefinite contracts to more than 30% of indefinite contracts; or a pension reform that is also an achievement, although CEOE says that it ruins the country. What ruins the country are the indecent profits of banks and electricity companies,” he stressed.

For Pepe Álvarez, “what the employers have to do is unblock the negotiation to approve the new Agreement for Employment and Collective Bargaining (AENC, in its acronym in Spanish) that increases wages. If it does not, the conflict in our country will be served and the unions will coordinate to bring the agreements to the streets and achieve, through struggle, break the position of the bosses. Without the possibility of reviewing wages according to prices, there will be no collective agreements. The salary review clause must be approved.”

In this sense, he mentioned a series of "model" agreements in the fight to improve people's rights, such as the Cadiz metal agreement or those of Cantabria, Catalonia, A Coruña and many agreements such as gas stations, Naturgy or Correos – two of the big Spanish companies -, who have fought for a public service that guarantees mail throughout the country.” In addition, “the dependency sector has to be the object of struggle and improvement of working conditions. They are the ones who have suffered the problems of COVID like no one else, and have worked for everyone; or the companions of the 'call center,' who suffer the attacks of the bosses and the misunderstanding of the clients.”

Demand a Workers Statute of the future

For the General Secretary of the UGT, this May 1st was also one of vindication. “It is essential to control the prices of energy products and those of basic necessity for the population of this country. The state has to have the ability to control them for the general good,” he said. But it was also a day of “claims for a 21st Century Workers' Statute. A Statute that speaks of the new productive realities and that regulates the causes and the price of dismissal; to ensure sufficient means for the Labor Inspectorate to enforce the laws; that

works for the work of youth, their training and their employability; and that places globalization at the center of people, not at the service of capital."

A 1st May of international solidarity

During his speech, Pepe Álvarez considered that this May 1st "is a day of international struggle that all workers on the planet share." In this sense, he pointed out that "today, our first memory is for the working people of Ukraine and their trade union organizations, who first suffered the persecution of the ultra-liberal government of Ukraine and now the bombs of Putin. But we also show our solidarity with the working people of Colombia or Guatemala, assassinated every other day; from the Persian Gulf (we are going to celebrate a World Cup on the blood of thousands of workers); with those of the Indian Ocean or those of Turkey."

"Groups that persecute us for defending working people," he said, "such as those on the extreme right, have to know that we are here and will continue to fight to improve living and working conditions, and we are not going to give up."

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