

Varese News

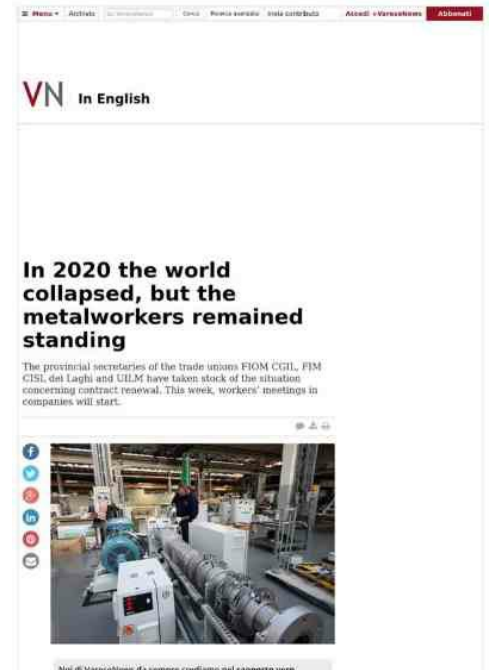
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Bellinzona

In 2020 the world collapsed, but the metalworkers remained standing

The provincial secretaries of the trade unions Fiom CGIL, Fim Cisl dei Laghi and Uilm have taken stock of the situation concerning contract renewal. This week, workers' meetings in companies will start.

In some respects, the renewal of the metalworkers' national collective agreement has been a sort of starting point for the renewal of the agreements still at an impasse, and has a strong political value. The latest agreement, which was signed last February by Fiom, Fim and Uilm, and by the industrial association Federmeccanica/Assistal, opens a new season in labour relations in this country. The provincial secretaries of the metalworkers' union, together with the company union representations at Leonardo Elicotteri in Vergiate, Whirlpool in Cassinetta di Biandronno, Riva Acciaio and **Quanta System**, explained the value of a contract that, in Varese Province, affects 42,000 workers employed in 4000 companies, a **system** that exports 50% of the value it produces. THE YEAR IN WHICH THE WORLD COLLAPSED Three trade union secretaries, Nino Cartosio, of Fiom CGIL, Caterina Valsecchi, of Fim Cisl dei Laghi, and Fabio Dell' Angelo, of Uilm, explained the details and new conditions of the context in which the renewal took place, and how the conditions sought by Confindustria, particularly the part concerning salary increases, were overturned. Cartosio said, "This contract has been renewed, despite the fact that the world collapsed in 2020. There's been a salary increase above the expected inflation rate, the whole part concerning professional classification has been rewritten and all the rights contained in the contract have been confirmed. This is a contract that keeps everything together." AN EPOCH-MAKING CONTRACT FOR FEMALE METALWORKERS According to Caterina Valsecchi, the provincial secretary of Fim Cisl dei Laghi, "The responsibility of the social partners has prevailed and they have produced an important renewal that covers wages, regulations and professional classification. The latter is, to say the least, a historic reform that innovates a framework that has been unchanged since 1973. In addition to this, there is also continuous professional training, because there is no doubt that we need people who have been properly prepared and trained. If companies want to have quality products, they must in turn improve quality by raising the bar." There is another point that the Fim Cisl secretary focused on; the condition of women is fully recognised in the contract. Valsecchi said, "Protecting women against gender-based violence has been recognised. This is an epoch-making acknowledgement in a category that sees a net predominance of men." However, Valsecchi does have a regret. "Not being able to obtain support for second-level bargaining." THIS CONTRACT REPRESENTS AN INJECTION OF TRUST According to Fabio Dell' Angelo, the secretary of Uilm Alta Lombardia, the renewal of this contract is the celebration of a victory that was by no means guaranteed. "We obtained it," Dell' Angelo explained, "despite the complication



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of the virus and the interference of the new Confindustria President, Bonomi , who limited us, but nevertheless, we achieved a great result, which confirms that the trade union still has an important role in defending workers' rights." The secretary of UILM continued, "We achieved this objective, even though there had been almost 100,000 casualties in 2020, 500,000 jobs lost in Italy, and 4 billion hours of redundancy granted. This contract represents an injection of trust and an acknowledgement of employees who have been working in difficult conditions during the pandemic, and it will relaunch domestic consumption." IT IS NOW TIME FOR THE WORKERS TO SPEAK Beginning this week, and continuing until 15 April , in every engineering company in the province, workers' meetings will be held to discuss the agreement that has been signed. This will require considerable additional effort to organise the extra meetings, in order to respect the social distancing norms. "The trade union is an organisation that lives on connections and relationships," said Nino Cartosio , the provincial secretary of FIOM CGIL . "So, concluding this agreement, despite COVID, wasn' t easy. In the next two months, we have to meet workers under conditions that protect health and respect the safety protocols signed with the companies. They' ll be tough months, but we can count on serious interlocutors in the companies, who have worked with us to achieve this end." Translated by Bignoli Mariachiara and Mentasti Sara Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook.