

Chile

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In August, the General Council considered the situation which was developing in Chile where the democratically elected government of Popular Unity under the leadership of President Allende who were pursuing progressive policies were being actively opposed and sabotaged by right wing elements. In the economic field the opposition have been promoting strikes the most damaging being a prolonged stoppage by lorry, taxi and bus owners which had resulted in reduced productivity on a national scale, increased unemployment, and disruption of distribution resulting in acute shortages of the necessities of life.

The official reason for the strike given at the beginning was protest against a shortage of spare parts and the government's refusal to authorise higher charges. But right from the outset it was clear that the strike was a political move, the transport owners expressing their lack of confidence in the government.

In his determination to safeguard the government's ability to pursue policies which would advance the interests of the ordinary people of Chile, President Allende made concessions to the opposition even including into his government some military elements, for example. But the basic conflict of interests and policies persisted and the struggle continues. It is a struggle between a democratically elected government bent on establishing greater social justice and progress through normal parliamentary procedures and extremist elements clinging to obsolete attitudes who seek to satisfy their selfish interests by antidemocratic and illegal means.

The General Council were aware that the genuine difficulties of the legal government in Chile would continue and that the situation would remain fluid for some time to come. In the circumstances the General Council agreed that it would be appropriate to express the support of the British trade union movement for the legal government of Chile and for the Chilean trade unions in their resistance to attempts to overthrow that government. The expression of this support was formally conveyed to the Chilean diplomatic representative in London, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the ICFTU, and the Labour Party.