

# Second wave: the responsibility lies with the State

Via [Marabunta](#)

The confirmation of the second wave in Argentina and the region, with an infection rate at record levels, is growing strongly and is based on a health system with exhausted workers and with capacities at the limit, which foresees for the immediate future consequences that could be disastrous. The government proposes restrictions of circulation without palliative economic measures for the unemployed or precarious sector. With a deficient vaccination campaign, a health care system on the verge of collapse, and millions of workers immersed in poverty, it is essential to strengthen our capacity to organize ourselves to confront the misery that capitalism has in store for us.

The national government, which under the leadership of Ginés Gonzalez García had announced 10 million vaccinations by February, has only vaccinated less than half of them and only in the first dose. While refusing to discuss the release of patents, the laboratory which produces the active ingredient of the vaccine in Argentina, AstraZeneca, has already exported components to fractionate 40 million doses. Is it not time to declare this laboratory of public utility? In the choice between corporate care policies and the defense of the capitalist business, it is clear that the national government continues to defend the business of Hugo Sigman, owner of the laboratory in question.

The government bets on an acceleration of its vaccination campaign while restricting leisure activities, without considering restrictions on circulation and agglomeration for

productive and reproductive activities. It intends to let private activity reactivate the economy and hopes to improve its position in the run-up to this year's elections. Restrictions on the use of public transportation are impracticable without affecting business interests.

The necessary restrictions to the economic activity would imply that the State allocates budget to subsidies and compensations to be able to go through the pandemic storm. The Executive Branch has made it clear that it has no intention of doing so, since it would call into question the deficit reduction necessary for a new agreement with the IMF and the confidence of groups of financial speculators, or it would require higher taxes on large businessmen, reducing their record profits of the last few years. This policy has been evident since they made the debt the main management issue or raised the insufficient IFE last year, while poverty in the country has been reaching figures not seen since the years after the 2001 crisis. Also in the fact that, while we are discussing all this, the Minister of Economy of the Nation, Martin Guzman, is moving forward in the renegotiations of the debt with the IMF, a debt that the governing party itself called a "swindle".

But not everyone lost in this pandemic: there are companies that have multiplied their profits, sustained by a government that deployed multiple policies to guarantee the profits of the capitalist class, even at the cost of worsening our living conditions as workers.

## **Health**

The exclusive bet on vaccines is insufficient, among other things, due to the difficulties in accessing their purchase, deepened by our peripheral geopolitical position. In view of this, the government has decided to perpetuate our subordinate position by prioritizing the purchase of vaccines and public-private agreements over public production, which is developed

in parallel with a much lower allocation of resources than that invested in purchases from large pharmaceutical companies. Strong support for possible vaccines against Covid 19, which are being developed in organizations dependent on the country's public universities, could speed up their timelines and make them a real solution.

But in addition to the necessary vaccination, we need an active health policy with investment in health infrastructure, hospitals, diagnostic and treatment supplies to reduce symptoms, as well as the hiring and permanent employment of health workers with decent salaries. Health workers are exhausted and not only because of the pandemic contingencies, but also because of the accumulation of mistreatment by the national and provincial governments that do not increase our salaries or provide us with the necessary supplies to carry out our work. It is urgent to develop policies to face the consequences of the pandemic as well as the health consequences not directly associated with COVID-19 but which derive from the saturation of the system (chronic non-communicable diseases, pregnant women, children, reproductive and non-reproductive sexual health), which is increasing the mortality rate.

### **For Trotta and Vizzoti, contagion does not occur at work**

More than 500 health workers, more than 15 education workers, a young worker of the Río Santiago Shipyard, front-line workers in canteens... The list of comrades is growing rapidly. But by all the media, official and opposition, the discourse implemented is that the contagions do not occur in the classrooms, nor in the factories, nor in the stores or in the transport. According to government officials, contagions occur only in private life, in social gatherings, and the responsibility for this is individual and personal. We know that the personal is political and we want to discuss this idea.

This discourse is not casual. When the spread of the pandemic got out of hand and reached the highest figures last year, the national government abandoned the premise of informing the development of the policies it was carrying out, transferring the responsibility almost entirely to the provincial governments, CABA and above all to the population, unusually equalizing the responsibilities of those who make the decisions with those of the others. Thus, the indiscriminate opening of workplaces and the recent opening of schools, are elements that show not only the negligence but the criminal incompetence with which they have been managing. As expected, and as we denounced at the time, school attendance in the midst of the second wave of COVID-19 could only cause dramatic consequences such as those we are suffering.

We cannot allow this discourse to endorse the indiscriminate continuation of productive and reproductive activities without consideration for the lives of the workers involved and their families. When state and private employers are not held responsible for the sanitary conditions in the workplace, our health is at stake. As an example, it is enough to remember the deaths of workers at Coto and Ledesma, where protocols were ignored and isolation leaves did not exist; those of hundreds of health workers, overloaded, without adequate protection elements and even without leaves for risky situations. Even considering strict compliance with protocols, daily exposure in workplaces and public transportation imply a significant risk. In the case of classrooms, the record of more than a thousand infections since the beginning of classes is reason enough to think about face-to-face classes limited in time or geographically, while preparing real conditions for the sustainability of the virtual mode, which in 2020 left out thousands and thousands of students.

Moreover, health policy cannot focus solely on individual responsibilities. Of course they are relevant, but they cannot be the reason to exclude the State from its responsibility in

other health measures, economic compensation, and employer responsibility for working conditions. The focus on individual responsibility covers the subjects and social fabrics. Daily experience in workplaces and neighborhoods shows that popular organization can play a key role in these circumstances. That essential fabric around the canteens, the primary health care centers, around the really essential workplaces, allows workers and their community to sustain health care, cover food and nutrition needs, press for care measures in workplaces, guarantee means of transportation, confront male violence, avoid unnecessary agglomerations. In the same way that non-essential sectors are forced to work, there is a whole range of essential workers who are not recognized as such, and a potential network of care that can be glimpsed and foreshadowed in each neighborhood that we can and must deploy, with organization and awareness. The State must recognize the essential role of social organizations in the popular response to the health and social crisis deepened by the pandemic. Together with health workers, these organizations were the real front line in alleviating the accelerated deterioration of our living conditions.

### **Organizing is urgent. The CGT must get out of the way**

Against the state and employer's idleness, and the passivity and co-government of the union leaderships, we bet on the organization from the grassroots. As workers, we need to promote assemblies and commissions by workplace to discuss and organize our health conditions. In a context of rising contagions, it is imperative that we fight to perform our tasks remotely in all possible cases, and to achieve mass vaccination for workers who must continue in the workplace. We cannot stop claiming for salary increase and recomposition, in view of the continuous fall of our incomes. The vaccination policy must be for the whole population in order to have a real epidemiological action!

We know and denounce the characteristics of a State that seeks

to prioritize profits over our lives. Our bet is for collective self-care, from all territories. We bet on assemblies in workplaces to organize our health conditions. To the participation and creation of community health in the neighborhoods. To the creation of feminist networks to take care of us from patriarchal and state violence that is intensifying in the pandemic.

Capitalism is not prepared to resolve a crisis of the magnitude we are going through. Pharmaceutical patents and business are protected at the expense of the health and integrity of the different peoples of the world. The social, economic, health and environmental crisis is advancing and the recipes tested have only extended the miseries of the pandemic and the economic crisis, because a humanitarian solution to the crisis is not within the reach of the possibilities. The guarantee of survival and improvements in living conditions depend exclusively on our ability to organize ourselves and confront the voracity of capitalism and the complicity of governments with these interests.

Neither individual responsibility nor bosses' idleness: collective self-care and popular control of our working conditions. Free the patents!