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magazine



Employment at the centre of concerns

DOSSIER
Aids and employment:
danger!

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*Picture
Meeting of the G8
in Évian*

PORTRAIT

How did you come to find yourself in the trade union movement?

I am here as a representative of the “*Federación nacional de trabajadores independientes*” of Peru, an organization that has been in existence for 12 years. But before that I was into agriculture, coffee-growing. Investing in the defence of workers is primordial. Since the great change in the system and the advent of globalisation, large numbers of peasants have left the countryside for the cities. This was done mainly in the hope of finding work, which would enable them provide for their families. Alas, a good number of them have been disillu-

CORINA LARIOS IS PERUVIAN. BEING VERY DYNAMIC, SHE IS FIGHTING FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE ANDEAN REGION AT THE LEVEL OF THE COMUANDE “COORDINADORA DE MUJERES TRABAJADORES ANDINAS” AND IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE “FEDERACIÓN NACIONAL DE TRABAJADORES INDEPENDIENTES” OF PERU AND OF THE CATP “CENTRAL AUTÓNOMA DE TRABAJADORES DEL PERÚ”. EVEN THOUGH LATIN AMERICA IS IN THE MIDDLE OF A CRISIS, SHE VOWS TO CARRY ON HER STRUGGLE IN THE INTEREST OF THE LARGER MAJORITY. THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW WAS HELD IN TER NOOD, BELGIUM, DURING A SEMINAR ON GENDER AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROJECTS LAST SPRING.

Corina Larios

sioned for a long time. It is the same with the cooperatives. In the past, there were many of them in Peru. Today, most of them have had to close down.

What are the consequences?

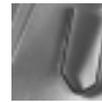
Only one, but a serious one: an increase in poverty! I am still convinced that the government of Peru missed out on big opportunities. But corruption, especially, plays a big role, particularly in the cultivation and sale of coffee. None of the successive governments we have had to date has carried out a sound socio-economic study of the reality. The situation is very serious. The majority of workers can no longer decently meet their needs because there is no work. Worse still, they cannot afford school fees for their children. This really infuriates me! Our youth will no longer study.

And without education...

Poverty increases once again! Thousands of street children work in the informal sector. Sometimes they are compelled to steal to eat. Women and children live in extreme poverty. It is for this reason that trade unions must mobilise themselves, all the federations and the affiliated groups. But it is very diffi-



Continued on page 23



Economy at the service of the human being!

While we are writing this article, the World Trade Organisation is holding its 5th Ministerial Conference in Cancun, Mexico. Once again the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) is sceptical about the neo-liberal policy of this organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. A recent event in the United States went to show that this policy has its limits. On 14 August, a major power breakdown put over fifty million North Americans without electricity. The most powerful country in the world was powerless against a problem with electric power!

Apart from the burlesque aspect of such a breakdown, we are again confronted with the issue of privatisation of public facilities. In the late 1990s, the electric power sector was deregulated in the United States. This was attended by a merciless price war between private electric power companies and by an unbridled race for the highest possible profits, in some cases to the detriment of the safety standards for this kind of service. The result of this race is known: the system has deteriorated.

The WCL is convinced that most public facilities like electric power, water, education and several others more should remain in the hands of the government. The General Agreement on Trade in Services is pursuing a generalisation of the system, however. As an unfortunate result, the service is no longer guaranteed. In the industrial countries the services sector accounts for 60% of the economic activity. So, the one who controls this sector stands a good chance of making a maximum of money. The total water, education and health care market is good for around 6,500 quintillion dollars. The private companies have understood this very well. Not only the quality of the service, but also the access to it is in jeopardy. Just think of Argentina. This rich country, proclaimed the best student of the IMF on account of its grim privatisation policy, is now going through a crisis with innumerable bank-

ruptcies! It is high time the international financial institutions took the welfare of the populations to heart and stopped using the human being as a mere cog at the service of the economy!



Willy Thys
Secretary General

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The G8 Summit, what outcome?

IT WAS JUST BEFORE SUMMER,
ON 1st to 3rd JUNE 2003
THAT THE VERY SELECTIVE
MEMBERS OF G8 CLUB MET FOR
THEIR TRADITIONAL SUMMIT.
THIS YEAR, IT CAME OFF IN
EVIAN, FRANCE, UNDER THE
CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE FRENCH
PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC.

BACKGROUND

This year's meeting was the twenty-eighth time that Heads of State and governments of the richest countries in the world have met. It all started in 1975. The then French President, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, took the initiative of bringing together the leaders of Germany, the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom and Italy to discuss world affairs! Canada joined the club in 1976 thus making it the G7. Finally, in 1998, Russia was accepted as an official member (it had been invited as an observer since 1990). Regarding the President of the European Commission, he is a permanent guest. According to "*Le Monde diplomatique*", in 2000, the G7 countries accounted for 12% of the world population, 45% of production and 60% of global military expenditure. Therefore the conclusion is that even if the members of the club do not make up an official world government, decisions taken during these meetings have a real impact on the entire world.

AT THE CENTRE OF GLOBALISATION

Of course, globalisation is once again at the centre of the discussions. According to Gustave Massiah, President of the Centre for Developmental Research and Information (CDRI) in the May 2003 edition of "*Le Monde diplomatique*", the club "*plays an active role in the imposition of a creed in the management of the neo-liberal stage of globalisation*". He goes on to say that "*in order to impose its policies, the G8 relies on the international financial institutions, International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, in which they hold majority capital shares. It steadfastly builds the institutional framework of neo-liberal globalisation, whose overriding component is the World Trade Organisation (WTO)*". What is more alarming, "economic power, though less obvious, is no longer subordinated to governments, and even less go to the G8."



Who heads the G8?



THE ALTER GLOBALISATION MOVEMENT AND THE RIOTERS

Like each time that a meeting of this type has taken place, and this since 1999 in Seattle, the alter globalisation movement is mobilising itself to register its displeasure to the powerful countries. They are winning more and more sympathisers and one cannot but be proud of the increasing success of the Porto Alegre World Social Forum (which will take place in 2004 in Mumbai, India). Alas for three times already, and yet again this year, a small number of "rioters" disrupted the peaceful demonstration organised and eclipsed those who think that another world is possible. It is essential, in spite of all, that public opinion becomes aware that these rioters have nothing to do with the alter globalisation process.

THE SOCIAL AGENDA OF JACQUES CHIRAC

On 25th April, President Jacques Chirac held a meeting with the major trade union executives of the entire world. The agreement signed between Chirac and the unions was simple: the Evian Summit should do all in its power to increase growth and employment, build solidarity between the countries of the North and those of the South... Meanwhile, at the end of the summit, hopes and aspirations were dashed. According to the TUAC (see *Labor* 2003-02), it seems as though the determination of the French President to establish a social agenda for globalisation had been more or less blotted out under the effect of external pressures in order to normalise relations between France and the United States after the painful diplomatic row over the war in Iraq. Though the conclusions of the summit promise to give more prominence to health and NEPAD, (development programme for Africa) the impact that the G8 summit will have on development is sketchy. The position of the World Confederation of Labour is rather clear on this issue: if the financial effort that these countries make in respect of arms were channelled into development, peace would reign supreme.

THE SOLUTION IS NOT TRADE!

With respect to economic growth, once again, the conclusions of the summit are rather sketchy, even if the leaders of the powerful countries are convinced that growth will pick up. Let us however be serious, as far as the World Confederation of Labour is concerned, liberalisation of markets and trade is far from being the solution to ensuring social development. Meanwhile this is the position of the advocates of globalisation from the neo-liberal perspective. Economic growth can be translated into a social development only through a concrete distribution mechanism of the wealth generated. On the other hand, and the WCL stated this long ago, with the deterioration of the economy, and thereby social conditions, social injustice will automatically increase.



Dialogue is taking shape!

SECURITY, A REAL CHALLENGE

According to the TUAC, the real challenges of the summit were undoubtedly the security and the re-establishment of dialogue among the European leaders and the United States; since half of the declarations and the action plan dwelt on security and weapons of mass destruction.

Despite all these, according to the TUAC, the positive points that characterised the Evian summit should not be forgotten. First of all, it was the first time; the leaders of the most populous countries that do not belong to the G8 club were invited during the first day of the meeting. Then, continues TUAC, the positions of the trade unions and civil society seem to have gained more importance than before in the eyes of the G8 leaders. The declaration of the trade union movement was even published on the Internet site of the G8 as an official document! Let us hope that this is not dust being thrown into our eyes and that we will see concrete results very soon, for till date, the solutions put forward by the G8 especially with respect to development, are far from convincing the civil society stakeholders.

MD

THE WCL AND THE G8

The World Confederation of Labour was present during the meeting between Jacques Chirac and the trade union movement of 25th of last April. Luc Cortebeek, vice-president of the WCL and president of the CSC/Belgium, thus insisted on the need, for the WTO, to take account of the social dimension of globalisation. He also laid emphasis on the fact that it is essential to place the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on equal footing with the international financial institutions.



The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)

BACKGROUND OF THE GATS NEGOTIATION PROCEDURE

Spring of 2002: WTO member-countries submit to the organisation the list of applications received from third countries dealing with liberalisation of sectors as well as removal of laws that constitute trade barriers.

End of 2002: Each State examines the applications received from other countries.

January 2003: Within Europe, the European Commission proposes a list of sectors that Europe intends to liberalise.

After March 2003: The WTO processes the applications received from the entire world.

End of 2004: New Agreement.

By the end of 2004, the WTO, the World Trade Organisation, will submit a new GATS agreement. In order to better understand the consequences that this agreement may entail, let us re-visit its origins.

BACKGROUND

The first general agreement on trade in services was signed in 1994. It is an agreement which is global in scope and which introduced something new. It is in fact the first time that an agreement of this kind was dealing with trade in services. Until then, this kind of negotiation almost exclusively resulted in General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

WHY SO MUCH INTEREST IN PRIVATE ENTERPRISES?

The answer is simple. In the industrialised countries, 60% of the entire economic activities are services. Private enterprises quickly understood that controlling these services would enable them to make a lot of money. At the global level, estimates in the total value of the market for water, education and health are put at 6 500 trillion US dollars. A market mainly controlled by the public sector, or at least governed by it. Private enterprises hope to control this market in the hope of seeing their turnovers increase, and thereby a huge increase in their profits.

SIGNING THIS AGREEMENT AND WHAT IT ENTAILS

All negotiations concerning the GATS are conducted at the World Trade Organisation. The WTO is made up of 140 member countries that each have a representative and a vote. It is how-

ever clear that the role of the industrialised countries cannot be over emphasised. In short, the mission of the WTO consists of ensuring the follow-up and existing agreements on the free international trade and see to it that they are well applied. In the case of the GATS, one needs to read between the lines. First of all, the agreement deals not only with the financial services, professional services and communications but also with the essential services like education, water, or better still health care. It also affects culture, the environment and the distribution of goods. It is clear that nothing has been left out. But more importantly the agreement provides that "agreements concluded can not be challenged anyhow".

Simply put, if after a period of trial, it becomes obvious that the entire opening up of the markets has disastrous consequences, the governments of the country concerned shall, before instituting market protection measures, compensate the countries whose enterprises will no longer have access to the market! Moreover, the WTO has "disputes settlement committees" responsible for intervening "when a country deems that the obstacles to trade instituted by another country are at variance with the WTO treaties and disturb its own enterprises. Such a dispute is referred to the WTO diplomats for mediation". This therefore means that trade experts give their views on environmental protection, employment or even public health! According to the World Confederation of Labour, there is the need to be vigilant. First of all, it is important to follow the ILO (International Labour Organisation) Conventions regarding the relationship between free international trade and the fundamental rights of workers. Also, the WCL is of the opinion that the GATS should be allowed to take over the services from private enterprises should it become obvious that privatisation has serious consequences on man and his environment.



Beware of the consequences of the GATS

Source: *All you have ever wanted to know about the GATS*, Ronald Janssens (available on the WCL website: www.cmt-wcl.org).



Bangladesh: Wealth and Poverty

In Southern Asia, Bangladesh, at first glance, looks every bit a prosperous country. The soil is very fertile and since 1991 the country has had a democratic government. We also discover nonetheless that the country is in the throes of economic crisis and that shantytowns have flourished. Many workers live in difficult conditions and it is in this regard that the BSSF (*Bangladesh Sanjukta Sramik Federation*) and the WCL have decided to take action.

Agriculture is the main activity in Bangladesh. In total, this sector employs not less than 68% of the working population, which mainly grows rice, wheat, jute, ... The country, on the other hand, suffers from a lack of fresh capital. This explains why the productivity of Bangladesh's fields remains one of the lowest internationally.

Apart from agriculture, the country earns income from industry mainly dominated by the clothes and textile sector. The negative consequences of globalisation and the post September 11 economic crisis have however occasioned heavy losses. Several businesses are laying-off workers or compelled to close their doors. This results particularly in increased unemployment and also a rise in the price of foodstuffs, petroleum, gas, electricity and water.

Of the 11 million inhabitants of the capital, 3 million live in shantytowns. The authorities are no longer able to provide certain basic services like potable water. The local people, nonetheless, have, with the help of a local NGO and with support from the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), succeeded in creating 88 "water points".

UNIONS JOIN FORCES

Unions such as the BSSF, a member of the WCL, have also borne the brunt of globalisation. As a result of structural changes and the close down of mining companies and factories, the union's membership has fallen. The trade union movement has moreover lost some influence as a pressure group. In fact, because laws on

unions are not applied in practice, employers no longer consider unions as partners who are a force to reckon with. The four-party "democratic" government coalition led by the **Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)** has already violated agreements several times.

It is for this reason that the national trade unions of Bangladesh came together to form the SKOP (*Sramik – Karmachari Oikya Parishad*). For a start, the trade union organizations intend to group together the workers of Bangladesh with the aim of guaranteeing their social and economic benefits as well as their political rights. Educational campaigns are also organized to broaden the knowledge of workers and to sensitise them on their rights. To this end, the BSSF receives among others, the support of the WSM (World Solidarity – Belgium) and of the BATU-SAARC (the coordination point of the "International Labour Standards" department of the WCL for Asia). The BSSF has, in collaboration with the WSM, set up the Support Centre, which executes development, research and assistance programmes.

In addition, the SMP, the "women's" department of the BSSF, has been very active and women trade unionists can increase their knowledge through the Skill Development Program, and the department offers basic training to about a hundred illiterate members.

The BSSF at the moment comprises 13 federations in different sectors and the organization has almost 256 000 members, some of whom are dues-paying whilst others are not.



THE COUNTRY

Capital: Dacca

Population: 137.4 million inhabitants

Population density: 755 inhabitants/km²

Life expectancy: ±60 years

Inhabitants living below the poverty line: 35.6%

Percentage of literate adults: 41%

Percentage of population benefiting from modern health facilities: 53%

Percentage of population using appropriate water points: 97%



*President Lula with
CLAT executives*



*Poverty becoming firmly
established in Venezuela*



CFTUI Congress in India

● THE CARIBBEAN First edition of the INFOR CARAÏBE news bulletin

A wind of change is blowing over the CTC (*Conseil des Travailleurs des Caraïbes*), the Caribbean trade union affiliated to the WCL and CLAT, our regional organisation in Latin America! The first edition of the INFOR CARAÏBE news bulletin appeared at the beginning of June 2003. Through this medium, the CTC will inform all interested parties on topics of the struggles, protests and the achievements of workers and their organisations. In addition to very brief and synoptic articles, this news bulletin also contains a programme of activities of

the CTC and UTAL in Venezuela. Advice: in the first edition, Eduardo García Moure (Secretary General of CLAT and Vice-President of the WCL in charge of Latin America) wrote an article devoted to the international trade union movement. Feel free to send your editorial contributions, comments or questions concerning INFOR CARAÏBE to ctccaribe@yahoo.es or carisform@hotmail.com. The news bulletin will be published in Spanish, English and French.

● ASIA UNICEF launches a project for Girl Child Education in Pakistan

At least seven million young girls of school-going age have never had any training in Pakistan. This is a pathetic state of affairs when one considers the fact that they also could contribute to the economic development of the country. UNICEF is aware of the problem and intends to launch a project in collaboration with the Pakistani government and people of Pakistan, within the framework of the EFA (Education For All) objectives. In the long run, this project should enable all Pakistani children —and especially young girls— to

have basic education. The COT (Central Organisation of Teachers), being part of the APTUC (All Pakistan Trade Union Congress) and affiliated to the World Confederation of Teachers of the WCL (WCT), is particularly interested in this initiative. The organisation will actively participate in order to increase awareness about this problem at the national level. Furthermore, UNICEF will pool the necessary funds in order to improve the educational infrastructure and the working conditions of education staff.

● EUROPE Concern over pension reforms in France

The months of May and June in France were characterised by several strikes in the public services. Workers in the transport, public transport and post, garbage collectors, teachers... took to the streets in protest against the proposed pension reforms of the central right Raffarin government. This reform means that henceforth public sector workers would have to work for forty years instead of 37.5 years to be able to enjoy full pension, like the private sector workers. Pension contributions have also been increased and at a later stage, all workers would have to work for 42 years to qualify for full pension. The public services trade unions have rejected the proposal and called for a strike. According to the Prime Minister, the reform is necessary in order to guarantee long-term payments of pensions and

ensure the viability of the system. The debate on the pensions is however not limited to France but is an important topic of discussion in the European Union as a whole. At the end of May, the majority of the European officials of the European Union in Brussels went on strike to protest against possible changes in their retirement system.

The British Prime Minister Blair has already congratulated Raffarin for his courageous decision and declared, “all governments must strive to harmonise their public services and the social gains in line with the dictates of modern society”. He however fell short of specifying to what extent the desirata of workers of retirement age had to be taken into account.



Forty-two million people worldwide are infected with HIV. All the regions are affected, though some more severely than others. In 2002, 400 000 people died of HIV in South Africa. Aids has to do with health care. This fact remains a fundamental starting point. However, aids also has numerous social and economic effects. In some countries the disease causes a

shortage of available labour. In other —or the same— places aids is a source of discrimination in the recruitment process. A recent ILO report goes to show that women are a growing risk group. In some sectors aids also causes problems in the field of occupational safety. That is why the workers' movement and the institutions concerned by employment have taken the

issue to heart. Trade unions, companies, the International Labour Organisation, NGOs and governments have already taken countless initiatives. Aids requires a lot of energy. Rightly so. But this must not be at the cost of other diseases for which there is less interest because they affect the workers (e.g. the effects of asbestos) or the developing countries (malaria).

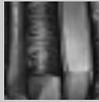
SUMMARY

The employment virus

Zambia: no jobs for aids patients

Prevention as healing is not yet possible

Dossier for the WCL
Draw up by the
InfoSud-Belgium
Agency



The employment virus

AIDS IS NOT A HEALTH PROBLEM, AT LEAST NOT JUST A HEALTH PROBLEM. IT IS ALSO A HUMAN, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUE AND A LEGAL MATTER AS IT GIVES RISE TO DISCRIMINATION.

According to the World Health Organisation, 42 million people worldwide are infected with HIV. This epidemic is enormously demanding on the health sector. In 2002, five million people got infected. In the same year, 3.1 million people died of aids. The rate of prevalence (number of cases of the disease among the population) is 8.8 in

the sub-Saharan countries and 1.2 worldwide. The whole world is affected, though some regions more severely than others. Unfortunately, Africa remains the main victim.

In the sub-Saharan countries the epidemic keeps spreading. The number of people infected in 2002 has been estimated at 3.5 million. 2.4 million Africans died of the disease, 200 000 of whom in South Africa according to the agency IPS. In Asia 7.2 million people are infected with HIV¹.

The epidemic is spreading fast over new regions, particularly in Eastern Europe and the Central Asian republics. In 2002, an estimated 250 000 people got infected in those regions, causing the total number of HIV-infected people in the region to rise to 1.2 million. In Uzbekistan, for instance, the increase in the number of HIV-infected people in the first half of 2002 equalled almost the increase in the past decade. The main transmitter (homosexuality, heterosexuality or injections) differs from region to region.

Aids was initially considered a public health issue. Some people tried to turn it into a moral issue. Gradually, however, other aspects of the epidemic were accentuated: the human, social and economic consequences, and the resulting discrimination.

FROM A SOCIAL POINT OF VIEW, A CAUSE OF POVERTY

Aids concerns demography in the first place. The disease shortens the life expectancy. In Burundi, for instance, "life expectancy is expected to shorten by ten years by 2010" according to Consolate Nduwarugura, social worker and coordinator of the international NGO Society for Women against Aids. This development has consequences.

On the one hand, there is the loss of income for the infected people. Indeed, they are unfit to work while the medical expenses rise. The ILO has observed that this phenomenon affects the children. They are taken from school to work and to compensate for the loss of income of the sick person. The problem grows even worse if this sick person was working in the so-called informal sector, where in general social security is nonexistent.

On the other, there is a change in the population pyramid in the most severely affected countries. Particularly the age bracket of young adults (between 20 and 49) is affected. This will result in a weak representation of economically active population over 25 for the benefit of the youths. This can disrupt families or result in the discontinuation of agricultural activities, youths moving to the poor urban districts in search of insecure jobs.



FROM AN ECONOMIC POINT OF VIEW, AN OBSTACLE

The first economic consequence is the fact that companies in some sectors are having difficulties in finding enough workforce. This is the case in the continents where the epidemic is widespread. “*The employers are worried because the disease has an economic impact*”, Clem Sunter of the mining company Anglo-American (South Africa) told the IPS. In South Africa Coca-Cola announced last March a drop in sales in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, where 33.5% of the population is carrier of HIV.

The ILO has observed that the disease affects both the quantity and the quality of the workforce. “*Many HIV-infected workers are experienced and skilled workers, doing either manual or intellectual work. [...] The loss of skilled workers and the entry of orphans in the labour market risk lowering the average age of the workforce and the average level of experience and skill. This will jeopardise the training and quality of the human resources, as the epidemic will also affect education: less teachers, bigger classes, more youths who fail in school*”².

As a matter of fact, the whole development dynamics is being challenged. Because it is hard to find permanent and skilled workers in places where aids is doing its destructive work, the production is

in danger. This has a negative effect on the economic growth (*see box*). Moreover, there are the additional expenses for health care and, where it exists, for the social security. This weighs heavily on the state budget.

The workers, too, suffer from the effects of the spreading of the aids virus, of course. Some occupations are affected more than others, even if the workplace as such is not a risk place according to UNAIDS.

One thinks spontaneously of the medical professions and of occupations in which there is contact with blood or human organs, of people who remove hospital waste, for instance. Also prostitution comes to mind: because prostitutes are dependent on their customers, they cannot always impose the necessary precautions.

But other professions are affected as well, among them the teachers. It is not a matter of passing a value judgment, but in some countries there are teachers who deliver young girls a certificate on payment in kind.

According to the ILO, also “*intermediary and high executives*” are affected: “*Their geographic mobility, the fact that they are separated from their families, and their high incomes allow them to have occasional sexual relations*”. Also among police officers, particularly among those working in districts populat-



4% LESS GROWTH

In July 2002, UNAIDS published new information on the devastating effects of aids in Africa. According to Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS, “*HIV/aids has undone the progress of decades in the development field*”. In the most heavily affected countries the economic growth has fallen by 4% and the productivity by 50%. In Zambia, for instance, two out of three deaths of executives are attributable to the virus. The prevalence rate amounts to 50-60% among the military in countries where the epidemic has made havoc for ten years. In Kenya three out of four deaths among police officers are owing to the disease. In southern Africa the number of public servants dying of or affected by the disease is so high that the functioning of vital sectors such as health care, social services or the administration of justice is in jeopardy. Agriculture is not spared either. In Burkina Faso “*an estimated one out of five farming families has reduced its activity or left the farm because of aids*”. According to Dr Piot, there is still hope despite the cruel reality of aids in Africa, because “*some countries have successfully combated the epidemic thanks to state-financed and state-supported aids programmes*”.

Denise Williams
InfoSud-Syfia



PERCENTAGE OF SEROPOSITIVE WOMEN

Worldwide	50%		
Sub-Saharan Africa	58%	Eastern Europe and Asia	27%
North Africa and Middle East	55%	Western Europe	25%
Caribbean	50%	East Asia and Pacific	24%
South and Southeast Asia	36%	North America	20%
Latin America	30%	Australia and New Zealand	7%

Source : UNAIDS, *AIDS Epidemic Update*, December 2002.

ed by migrants, displaced persons, refugees, etc, the rate of infection is above average.

Generally speaking, all groups of workers exercising a trade or profession that separates them from their families run great risks. Particularly workers who stay temporarily in cities where they visit prostitutes, are infected and transmit the virus through sexual contacts with their wives, who in turn transmit it to their children.

DISCRIMINATION

The consequences of aids in terms of discrimination may be less known but are therefore not less

real. First, there are the consequences resulting from the spreading of the disease as such. In sub-Saharan Africa the infection ratio for men and women is 5:6, which makes a huge difference at the continental level. In the age bracket from 15 to 24, the risk of women getting infected is twice as big as for men, the WHO and UNAIDS found in December 2002. The number of seropositive women is on the increase. This is not the case everywhere, however, as appears from the table below. In Mexico, for instance, “*the ratio between seropositive men and infected women is 8:1*”, according to Luis Manuel Arellano of Censida.

But not only nature is a factor: in many cases also human behaviour is at the root of discrimination. “*Discrimination against HIV/aids patients, particularly against women, is a constantly growing problem, writes the ILO. The discrimination can take a variety of shapes such as dismissal without medical examination, term of notice or hearing, demotion, refusal of health insurance benefits, wage decrease and harassment*”³. According to the ILO this occurs in a lot of countries such as the United States, Uganda, India, France, Jamaica, Hungary... Though aids affects Africa in the first place, the disease is a global issue for the workers.

1 UNAIDS, *AIDS Epidemic Update*, December 2002

2 ILO, *The labour market and employment implications of the HIV/AIDS epidemic*, document of the Governing Body, March 2001, Geneva

3 ILO, *Time for Equality at Work, Report 2003 on the follow-up on the Declaration on the fundamental principles and rights at work*, Geneva, p. 34-25 —see also dossier p. 13.

ONE OF MANY CASES

Zambia: no jobs for aids patients

"We know for sure that we will die in three to five years' time. This is no reason to wait quietly for death at home. We want to work and to be treated. But how can we have ourselves treated if we get no job because of our disease?", Evans, a young qualified business administrator, wonders anxiously. He has been looking for a job in Lusaka for weeks... Also Daniel Banda has applied with numerous private companies already. He has grown bitter. *"There is no article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that says that seropositive people must not work. If someone is entitled to social protection, it's us..."* 19% of the Zambians between 15 and 49 are seropositive, among them many unemployed who have now joined issue with the managers. They blame them for having introduced *"sneak and useless"* tracing tests. *"The managers know how the disease is transmitted. They know only too well that they run no risk whatsoever employing us"*, says outraged Daniel, a young executive secretary. *"As far as I am concerned, they've even nothing to fear at all for their reputation; I'm still fat and nobody can see I've aids"*, he adds bitterly. The Zambian labour code is very clear: no test to trace HIV prior to the employment...

UNLAWFUL SECRET TESTS

Nevertheless, such tests are being carried out. Blood is drawn from the applicants at the hospital, with the knowledge of the doctors and officially under the cloak either of

being able to issue a certificate that the applicants are physically fit for the job, or of verifying the blood group. The doctor, however, informs the manager secretly whether the applicant is seropositive or not... *"What's beating all is that those doctors condemn us while being in many cases responsible for our disease"*, says a 24-year-old civil engineer. *"I've never had sexual relations as I'm infertile from birth. I'm seropositive because a doctor used a used needle to treat me. Now I've no job because they want to punish me for my alleged sexual libertinism!"*, he says in anger.

"The fact of submitting someone to a medical examination without his or her permission is an infringement of the right to privacy", says a high official of the Zambian Ministry of Employment and Social Security. In the meantime, some employers defend their way of acting. *"Let's have no illusions. Companies are in pursuit of profits. They make use of skilled and healthy labour in doing so. I don't see why we should employ seropositive people..."*, says a bank manager from the mining town of Kitwe. *"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is out of date as regards labour laws. It should be amended and mention that each person has a right to work, except if he or she is seropositive"*, he says without any irony.

The recognition of the rights of the seropositive unemployed may come from themselves. Many of them are angry and feel humiliated



by this form of discrimination. They have constituted the NGO Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS, established in the Lusaka Salvation Army district. *"The seropositives point out the cases of discrimination. We always intervene"*, says the Secretary General of the organisation. The organisation even hopes to organise before long information seminars for managers.

Bethuel Kasamwa Tuseko
InfoSud-Syfia



Prevention as healing is not yet possible

AIDS IS NOT (YET) CURABLE. PREVENTION IS THEREFORE NECESSARY. INFORM PEOPLE AND TACKLE THE MECHANISMS.

“Prevention is better than cure”: this saying must exist in every language. It is all the more true when there is no cure, as is the case with aids. So, only prevention can slow down the epidemic. According to a report of a UNAIDS working party, published in May 2003, *“less than one out of five people exposed to the risk of HIV infection has access to preventive programmes. By 2005, 3.8 billion more ought to be spent on prevention”*.

The report mentions two ways to force back the epidemic: on the one hand, individuals should decide about their behaviour, on the other, the general mechanisms should be dealt with.

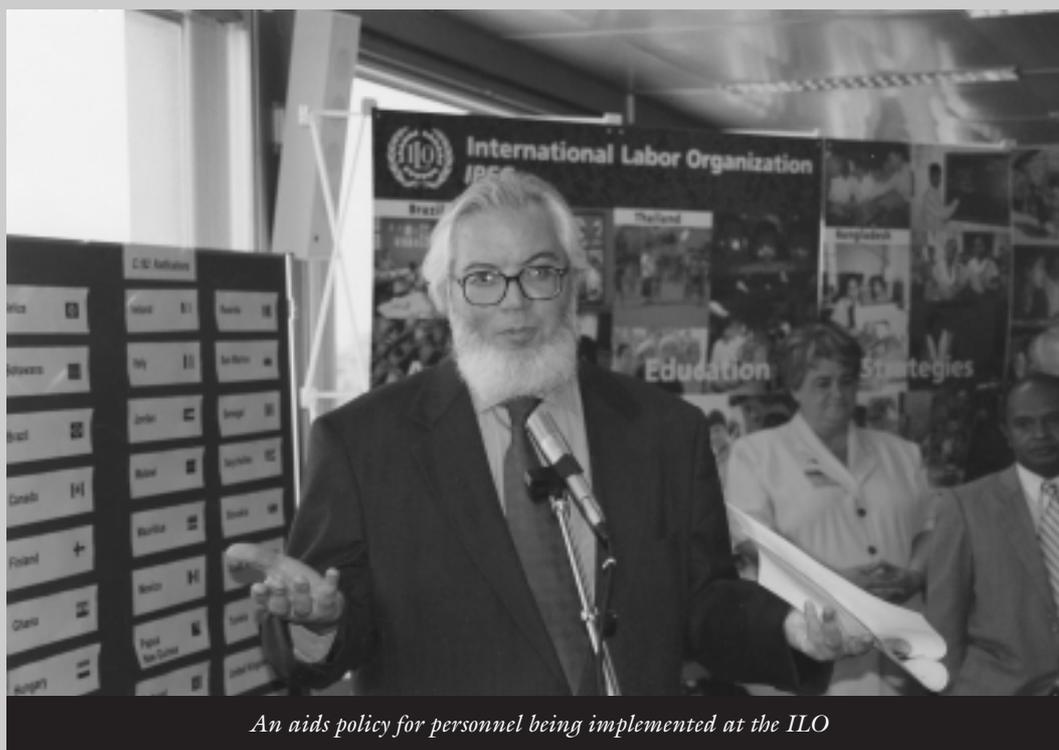
As regards the individual people, it is more and more acknowledged that the risks resulting from behaviour should be dealt with rather than the freedom of choice in sexual behaviour (homosexuality, num-

ber of partners...). This supposes a correct and widespread information (see the box *Good to know...*), but also the effective accessibility of the necessary material means (preservatives). In this context, for instance, UNAIDS has published a detailed information guide on HIV/aids for United Nations officials (see p. 16).

This concern brings us to the second method. The aids epidemic is a global problem as regards both prevention and treatment of the patients, and it requires not just money. According to Peter Piot, director of UNAIDS, *“it is necessary to work on a just and fair system that gives access to life-saving preventive measures and to medicines for aids and other essential medicines. The Doha declaration of the World Trade Organisation, which recognises the right of states to protect public health and to guarantee every individual’s access to medicines went in that direction; the controversies that emerged afterwards require a fast solution so to promote the right of peoples worldwide to a healthy and dignified life”* (*Libération*, 29 May 2003). The World Trade Organisation is taking the aids issue to heart, through the debate on licenses and generic medicines among other things.

It is still difficult to make prevention and treatment accessible in the





An aids policy for personnel being implemented at the ILO

most seriously affected countries. But some progress has already been made. In 2003, for instance, a tritherapy centre for HIV/aids will have to be opened in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, according to special adviser Bernard Leclerc. This should make the treatment of HIV/aids-infected people cheaper as a result of the constant fall in prices of medicines (IRIN, December 11, 2002).

In 2001 Cipla, the Indian producer of generic medicines, already proposed selling its treatment of aids at \$350 per year and per patient to *Doctors Without Borders* and at \$600 to governments. At that moment the treatment of a patient with brand medicines cost \$10,400. Pending free treatment?

PRACTICAL DOCUMENT

Also the ILO has tackled the problem for a long time already. Its

GOOD TO KNOW...

Prevention remains the best protection in the struggle against aids. Information remains essential but is often lacking.

Aids means *acquired immunodeficiency syndrome*. It is caused by a virus, the HIV, which affects the white blood corpuscles and weakens the immunity system.

When the HIV infects a cell of the human body, it can stay inactive for years. The bearer is than infected with the virus. He can transmit it, but he is no aids patient. After a given time the virus becomes active and the disease, to this day incurable, sets in.

Aids can be transmitted in four ways: sexual relations without protection; infection by blood or human tissue that bears the virus; infected syringes or similar devices; transmission from mother to child during pregnancy.

In theory aids can also be transmitted by the contact between the open wounds of two injured people one of whom is infected. This risk is minimal, however. Homosexuality between men is an aggravating factor because anal sexual contact (without protection) holds the greatest risks.

Aids is not transmitted by sharing food, insect bites, kissing (except if there is a wound), coughing, using a public phone booth, swimming in a pool... Workplaces hold no risk of aids, except for professions in health care, processing of hospital wastes or contacts with blood...

Source: UNAIDS (see biography p. 16).



MORE INFO...

ILO (www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids)

- *The labour market and employment implications of the HIV/AIDS epidemic*, document of the Governing Body, March 2001, Geneva.
- *Time for Equality at Work, Rapport 2003 on the follow-up to the Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work*, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2003.
- *An ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work*, Geneva, 2001 (exists in English, French, Spanish, Japanese, Russian and Thai). Around 40 pages, dependent on the language.

UNAIDS (www.unaids.org)

- *AIDS Epidemic Update*, December 2002 (annual publication).
- *Access to HIV Prevention: Closing the Gap: the first analysis of the gap between the need for HIV prevention and the actual efforts*. This report provides recommendations with regard to the access to information and services that can help save lives and change the course of the worldwide epidemic.
- *AIDS and HIV Infection Information for United Nations Employees and Their Families*, Geneva, 2000.

WHO

- The website <http://www.who.int/search/en/> (type "aids") gives access to several documents.

Others

- *SIDA : la Sale Infection qui Décourage l'Afrique* (The dirty infection dejecting Africa), volume of articles published by the agency Syfia International, Ed. Publibook, Paris, 2002 (divided into three chapters: *Sida connaît pas* (Aids makes no distinction), *Vivre avec* (Live with it), *Vrais et faux remèdes* (True and false remedies).

action programme rests on the principle that "*aids is a workplace issue not only because it affects labour and productivity, but also because the workplace has a vital role to play in the wider struggle to limit the spread and effects of the epidemic*". In this respect, the ILO adopted in 2001 a code of conduct that must serve as a guide to train workers' representatives in developing a HIV/aids policy at the workplace. It contains principles such as non-discrimination, confidentiality, preventive programmes... intended for governments, employers and workers.

With regard to companies the ILO takes over the recommendations of UNAIDS, according to which companies must not exclude aids

patients, but must provide information, take preventive measures and ensure treatment at the workplace. These measures have been applied in Botswana and Zimbabwe, and they prove to be effective in the struggle against the further spread of the epidemic.

In southern Africa companies like the *Anglo-American Company* have conducted information and advise campaigns for the workers. Others like the mining company *Goldfields* and the brewery *SAB Miller* provide their workers who are bearers of the virus with medicines (IPS, March 19, 2003). The International Employers' Organisation published in 2002 the "*Employers' Handbook on HIV/ AIDS – A Guide for Action*".

The ILO document is also interesting for trade unions because they can demand actions from the companies and take part in the national social dialogue where the policies are made.

On the initiative of its Director General, Juan Somavia, the ILO is pursuing within the organisation a human resources policy in the matter of aids.

Besides the code of conduct, the ILO programme to combat aids comprises five aspects: research and definition of a policy, advice to governments, employers' and workers' organisations, decentralised technical meetings, education and training programmes, and spread of information.

A direct or indirect effect? In view of the seriousness of the aids issue in Africa, the DOAWTU, the African regional organisation of the WCL, expressed "*its concern about the fact that the NEPAD projects (an international aid programme for Africa) make practically no mention of the aids epidemic in the continent*".

Pending a genuine treatment for aids victims, general conscientisation is indeed the first, indispensable step in an effective struggle against the spread of aids.



The three new assistance centres of Trade Action: Capacity Building, Informal Economy and Multinationals

The Capacity Building project of the WCL seeks to, through a solid training of trade union leaders, ensure the smooth operation of Trade Action worldwide and improve coordination. This project, which is spread over four years, also aims at optimising services offered to trade federations that are members of the confederation. Trade Action of the WCL, regional organizations (DOAWTU, BATU and CLAT), international trade organizations as well as regional federations have joined forces to support trade union leaders and make them real trainers in “basic trade union issues”, “trade union capacities” or “Communication & Advertising”.

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME MOVES INTO TOP GEAR

Since the last session, the first modules of courses on “Didactic Aptitudes” have been organized in Latin America and Africa. Small groups comprising about ten trainees at a time met in Venezuela, Buenos Aires, Costa Rica, Togo and Cameroon for a week’s training. Various trade union leaders of local Trade Action and CLAT or Odsta variously met the participants. In Togo, the Minister of Public Affairs and Employment even attended the opening ceremony.

The Project Coordinator, Eric Aarts, was also present to assess the whole exercise and lend a hand where necessary. He considered the content of the training and placed emphasis on the importance of complementary activities. The participants took an active part in the training. The trainers strayed here and there from items on the programme to train the participants in areas they needed most. Attention was particularly focused on the practical preparation of a training outline. Concrete proposals were in addition made as regards the interpretation of supplementary activities. In Togo and Costa Rica, trainees worked in national teams, and this facilitated the creation of groups. The trainees even made proposals for setting up a gigantic network that would allow for the exchange of information on complementary activities.

At the end of the training, the participants had the option of joining one of the following specialist trainings: “basic trade union themes” or “trade union capacities”. These will start in September and October.

ASSISTANCE CENTRE FOR UNION RELATIONS WITH MULTINATIONALS

Several trade unions have had to confront multinationals. It is however difficult for them to serve the interests of members employed by such businesses because of lack of information. What is more, union activities at this level are often uncoordinated.

In order to contribute to improving this situation, the “Multinationals” project was incorporated into the programme of action of the WCL Trade Action for 2002-2005. At the end of a period of consultation, the WCL set up an assistance centre with support from Jan Voets as Project Officer. Jan Voets devotes himself to widening a network that aims at providing information to WCL organizations in confrontation with multinationals. Accordingly, the project officer gathers information on working conditions in both senses of the word and on labour relations. In addition, Jan Voets will encourage the formulation of international codes of conduct and monitor compliance with these codes. The project officer will also have to assist with procedures for formal complaints and will organize solidarity actions. The assistance centre also serves as the centre for the coordination of collective trade union actions.

A NETWORK OF 105 SPECIALISTS IS BEING ESTABLISHED...

In order to effectively execute all these tasks, the assistance centre must naturally have a wide network. The WCL intends to establish this network by extensively training trade union leaders. This training seeks to make participants capable of defending workers’ rights within one, indeed several multinationals. What is more, the trainees being trained somewhat form the

WCL TRADE ACTION IN THE COMING YEARS WILL IMPLEMENT A PROGRAMME OF ACTION BUILT AROUND THREE CENTRAL CONCERNS: CAPACITY BUILDING, MULTINATIONALS AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY. SINCE THIS DATE, THE FIRST SESSIONS OF CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING HAVE TAKEN PLACE. A BRIEF ASSESSMENT AS WELL AS A PRESENTATION OF PROJECTS ON MULTINATIONALS AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY IS PRESENTED BELOW.



Educational sessions in Costa Rica

“Post office box” indispensable to the reception of information that the assistance centre sends to the base and vice-versa. The trainees will see to it that the stand of trade unions in relating with multinationals is appropriate and will also stimulate the introduction and practical application of codes of ethics, without forgetting to undertake activities on multinationals in their own organizations.

In the years 2002 and 2003, in 7 sub-regions (2 in Asia, 2 in Africa and 3 in Latin America), 15 trade union leaders will in each case undergo a five-day training. The WCL, on its part, takes charge of the practical organization of trainings in conjunction with the representatives of Trade Action in the region. At the end of the process, the WCL Multinationals Network will have no less than 105 assistance centres worldwide as members!

THE INFORMAL ECONOMY: MORE THAN EVER A FIELD OF ENGAGEMENT FOR TRADE UNIONS

The Informal Economy is the target of the third large-scale project of the action plan of Trade Action. Globally, it can be estimated that on the African continent, between 60 and 90% of workers are in the informal economy. In Latin America, the figure is between 50% and 60%, in Asia between 45 and 85%. For the most part, it is women and children who are found in this sector, victims of high insecurity, benefiting little or not at all from social protection. On the basis of the results of a study, the WCL formulated a plan to improve the position of these workers.

FROM COLLABORATIVE TRAINING... TO CONCRETE ACTION

The organizations active in the informal economy are in great need of support. The “Informal Economy” programme of Trade Action, led by Wim De Groof, the coordinator, intends to increase knowledge in the field by training local (regional) experts and creating assistance centres.

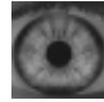
In practice, this implies that the trade federations in Latin America, Asia and Africa must each send 2 trainees to the WCL training programme. The trainees must play a functional role in their organizations and will be responsible for increasing participation in the informal economy programme organized in their region. Two training sessions are scheduled per continent, making a total of 96 participants.

During the WCL training, a lot of time and attention will be devoted to the creation of models of collaboration. To this end, the WCL has prepared teaching materials using information from the ILO. The project coordinator, Wim De Groof, follows up on the activities of the assistance centres and informs them of developments in the informal economy. In the end, the “Informal Economy” assistance centres ought to be admitted into national/regional trade federations and confederations.

TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL REGULATION

The training project also seeks to establish international agreements offering greater social protection to labour employed in the informal economy. The follow-up activities that the WCL will undertake jointly with IEOI (International Workers’ Education Institute of the ACV-CSC, Belgium) and World Solidarity are specifically moving in this direction. To this end, the contacts that the “Human Rights and International Labour Standards” department of the WCL has with the ILO (International Labour Organisation in Geneva) could not have come at a better time.

For the trainees, the end of seminars does not in any way mean the end of the race. Using the training received, the trainees will in fact submit a concrete project proposal. We will definitely have the opportunity to come back to this process in our review.



91st edition of the International Labour Conference

BRIEF REMINDER

The International Labour Conference is composed in a tripartite way: governments, employers and workers. Every year since 1919, it has brought together the representatives of its member states —currently 175— in a joint action to ensure lasting world peace through better living and working conditions worldwide. Between two Conference sessions it is the Governing Body that guides the ILO's actions. This Body is composed of 28 government members, 14 workers' members (Basile Mahan Gahé, President of the WCL, is one of them by the way) and 14 employers' members. The role of the Conference consists basically in adopting the international labour standards and in seeing to their application. Each member state is represented by a delegation composed of two government delegates, one employers' delegate and one workers' delegate, assisted by advisers. The employers' and workers' delegates are nominated in consultation with the most representative national employers' and workers' organisations.

A SPECIAL SESSION ON THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, CURRENT AFFAIRS OBLIGE

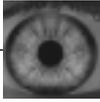
The Conference was chaired by Mr. Michael Christopher Wamalwa, Vice President and Minister of Labour of the Republic of Kenya. Three vice presidents assisted him: Mr. Bryan Noakes (employers) from Australia, Mr. Tomasz Wojcik (workers) from Poland and Mr. Muzahem Al Muhaisin (governments), Minister of Labour of Jordan.

One of the striking events of the 91st Geneva Conference was no doubt the special session of Thursday 12 June on the occupied Arab territories. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict could indeed not be passed over in silence. The position of the World Confederation of Labour to this issue is very clear. WCL Secretary General Willy Thys reminded of it in his address: "*The WCL reiterates its rejection of any violence, regardless its origin. We condemn the suicide attacks as well as the assassinations committed in all 'legality' by*

THE 91ST INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE ASSEMBLED IN GENEVA FROM 3 TO 19 JUNE 2003. THIS YEAR'S DEBATES WERE FOCUSED ON THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY THROUGH WORK.



The WCL, active during the 91st ILC



a State. The WCL remains convinced that the main cause of the violence and the suffering of the Palestinian workers and people is the permanent infringement of United Nations resolutions that provide for the right of the Palestinian people to a territory and its own sovereign State.”

THE COMMITTEES, PLACES OF DEBATES

But let us go to the various committees that market this great tripartite meeting. This year's debates were centred on four main topics: seafarers' identity, human resources (Myriam Luz Triana, of the CGTD from Colombia, was Vice President), employment relations and occupational safety and health (Habiba Zahi, of the CDT from Morocco, also obtained the office of Vice President). We must add here, of course, the Committee on the Application of the Standards, in which Luc Cortebeek, President of the ACV-CSC and Vice President of the WCL for Western Europe, was elected spokesman for the workers' group. In the same Committee, further, Rekson Silaban, for some months the new President of the SBSI from Indonesia, was elected Vice President.

SEAFARERS, OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ...

As far as the Seafarers' Identity Committee is concerned, a new Convention replaces now Convention 108, adopted in 1958. According to the ILO, the new text establishes a more stringent identification system so “better to protect seafarers against terrorism and to make sure that they can enjoy the freedom of movement necessary for their welfare and occupational activities [...]”.

As for occupational safety and health, the results are more complex. According to the ILO, over two mil-

lion people a year die of employment-related causes. It added that every year 270 million industrial accidents and 160 cases of occupational disease were recorded. This situation was intolerable and required a response, it said. So, the workers', employers' and government delegates arrived at an agreement on an overall strategy. A plan of action on two essential pillars would be the spearhead of this strategy. The first pillar provides for “the introduction of a preventive safety and health culture”, the second tends to develop an “integrated” instrument that would place safety and health among the primary concerns of the member states. It is, of course, up to the Governing Body to decide whether such an instrument will be developed or not. In the affirmative, the starting date would be the Conference 2005.

FIELD OF APPLICATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT RELATION

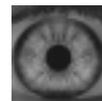
The Employment Relation Committee met for a general discussion. Andrée Debrulle, of the research department of the ACV-CSC from Belgium, had warned us that the debates would be very technical but that the political stakes were very high (see *Labor* 2003-02). At the end of many days of proceedings, the Committee asked to ILO to prepare a Recommendation on this issue. The adopted text advocates flexibility and points out “the dynamic nature of the employment relation, which will have to adapt to the new challenges of the employment market”. It also includes the demand to pay attention to the “disguised” employment relation (in which the employee is deliberately not treated as such).

HUMAN RESOURCES

As regards the valorisation of human resources and training, the debates were centred on the revision of Recommendation 150, which dates back from 1975 and had become completely obsolete. During the ILC 2000, a general discussion had been organised to see if Convention and Recommendation 150 should be updated. The conclusion was that the Convention remained valid but the Recommendation needed rewriting. New elements came out during this year's committee, among them the recognition of the right to training for all, the recognition that training can be a subject for collective bargaining and that the public authorities must support such bargaining, and the demand from the public authorities to reduce the inequalities in the matter of adult participation in edu-

PLENARY SESSION

Like every year, a plenary Conference session was organised to discuss the report of the Director General, entitled this year “Working out of poverty”. WCL Secretary General Willy Thys seized this opportunity to speak on this sensitive issue: “The World Confederation of Labour is convinced that it is necessary today to create decent jobs that offer each and everyone the dignity they are intrinsically entitled to. We believe that the world governance of the world of work must be changed to obtain an international perspective that takes account of the creation of decent jobs as the fundamental basis for the struggle against poverty and social exclusion. In our view, the world of work must be the subject of a study and a differentiated treatment in view of the importance of employment as a key factor of the well-being of all men and women.”



cation and training... The debates will continue in 2004.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE, 25 CASES BUT WHAT WITH COLOMBIA?

This year's Committee on the Application of the Standards dealt with 25 particular cases. The Committee decided to send "direct contact" missions to Guatemala (Convention 98 on collective bargaining —incidentally, at the very moment we are writing these lines, the Deputy Secretary General of the CGTG, Rigoberto Dueñas Morales, is still in prison and the threats against Alvarez Tzoc and other trade unions have started again), to the United Arab Emirates (Convention 29 on forced labour), to Venezuela (Convention 87 on the freedom of association) and to Cuba (Convention 87). In the case of Cuba, the government was most unwilling to receive this contact mission.

The introduction of special paragraphs was gained in the cases of Cameroon (Convention 87), Libya and Zimbabwe (Convention 87), and Mauritania (Convention 29 on forced labour). In this last case, Samoury Ould Beye, Secretary General of the *Confédération libre des Travailleurs de Mauritanie* (CLTM), affiliated to the WCL, reaffirmed in his intervention that forced labour was a reality in his country. He said that the authorities had failed to take the necessary measures to respect the human dignity. Introduction of special paragraphs for continuous default: Belarus (Convention 87) and Myanmar (Conventions 87 and 29). On the latter country a special session was organised on Saturday 7 June. On that occasion, Necie Lucero, Secretary General of the BATU (Asian regional organisation of the WCL), stated that forced labour did exist in that country and that it was coordinated by military officers. "*Agricultural workers are forced to work a number of days without being paid, and this under threat*", she added.

Much to our disappointment we learned that neither a special paragraph nor a fact-finding mission were obtained in the case of Colombia. Luc Cortebeek, Vice President of the WCL and spokesman for the workers' group in this Committee, expressed his concern about the "*practice of two-speed standards*". At the Governing Body session of 20 June last, the workers' representatives reminded that the demand for a fact-finding mission had been introduced every year since

SOMAVIA SATISFIED

Juan Somavia, Director General of the International Labour Office (ILO), expressed his satisfaction at the results of the Conference: "*Whether in the matter of facing immediate threats like occupational security or in the matter of longer-term challenges like poverty worldwide, the ILO showed that it was adapted, efficient and well-founded in its way to seize the march of the world.*" He added that he drew "*great comfort from seeing that decent employment is recognised as an aim in itself, but also as a means to achieve important goals, particularly the eradication of poverty. This demonstrates that the work of the ILO is completely adapted to the political challenges currently facing a large number of countries*". Juan Somavia was re-elected Director General last March and got the support of the World Confederation of Labour.

1998, to no effect. Another vote was held this year. Despite the existent impunity and the persistent violations, the large majority of the governments and all the employers turned down this demand that would highlight, in our opinion, the serious freedom of association violations exposed in this complaint, among which dozens of assassinations of trade union leaders, and obstacles to the exercise of the right to strike.



Over 175 countries represented at the moment !



PRESS REVIEW

BURKINA FASO, DISMISSED WORKERS GIVEN PROVISIONS

The Ministry of Welfare and National Solidarity gave provisions to former workers of the Oumarou Kanazoé Enterprise and the National Printing Press on June 12, 2003.

Since their “sacking” from the Oumarou Kanazoé Enterprise and the National Printing Press, the former workers of the firms mentioned above and their widows and orphans “have been in the doldrums”. In effect, for Aline Soubeiga, representative of the former workers of Oumarou Kanazoé, since the death of their husbands and fathers, the widows and orphans have really been living in abject poverty. This is because their dead loved-ones did not have their names in the books of the social security office. She added that in addition, the retrenchment or death benefits, which were due them had not been received by many of them to date.

“Moreover, measures are being taken to help their children with education materials for the next school re-opening”, promised Lamizana, the Minister. The gesture and promise of assistance moved the representative of the former workers of Oumar Kanazoé to say this: “it is an understatement to say our employer who is so generous in different circumstances and times seeks nothing but our death. Unfortunately for him, he did not reckon with kind souls like you Madam Minister and your colleagues” [...].

Gabriel Sama, *Dismissed workers of Oumarou Kanazoé Enterprise and the National Printing Press receive provisions in allafrika.com (Africa online)*, June 2003.

CHILDREN WITHIN GLOBALISATION!

A study by the ILO on voluntary work codes adopted by multinational companies concluded that the latter tend to be selective in incorporating key ILO standards. Particularly, less than half of the codes studied in the inventory of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development included a clause on Child Labour [...]. The issue here is who is responsible for children’s rights in our now globalised and interdependent world. Is it the State that purely bears this responsibility, as traditional practice dictates, or do multinationals also bear this responsibility? A central principle underlying human rights treaties states that States are mainly held principally responsible for guaranteeing rights for all; States are the ultimate guarantors of human rights and—in the case of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child—of children’s rights [...].

CRIN Newsletter, *Information Network on Children’s Rights*, Issue 17, May 2003.

FRANCE: WHAT HAPPENS TO ATHLETES AT THE END OF THEIR CAREER?

The length of a sports career varies according to the discipline but it is generally rather short, sometimes even cut short by a fatal injury. When therefore the time comes for the athlete to leave his gear in the changing-room for good, it is good for him to have an answer to the question “*and now, what am I going to do?*” For not all big athletes are international footballers or Formula One drivers. Being a kayak-canoeing, acrobatic skiing or rowing champion does not necessarily open the door to that golden future that the popular press revels in. Jean-Francois Roland knows this too well. He is one person who in fact decided to end his sports career at the age of 25. “*I had qualified as an engineer and I had just come 4th at the Barcelona 1992 Olympic games. I did not want to compromise my professional life in order to live out my passion for rowing*”. He finally ended his career in 2000 after winning bronze at Atlanta and earning the title of world champion at the Sydney Olympic Games. He owes this record of achievements to a **Professional Insertion Agreement (PIA)**, which allowed him to combine work and sports. “*I could never have continued without this little-known facility*”. For eight years, Jean-Francois, engineer with the French Electricity Board (EDF) and top-level athlete, works part-time in the year. The work is adjusted to suit constraints, training requirements and competitions. Yet he receives full salary! [...].

M.G., *What life after sports?...* in *Le Monde Initiatives*, June 2003.

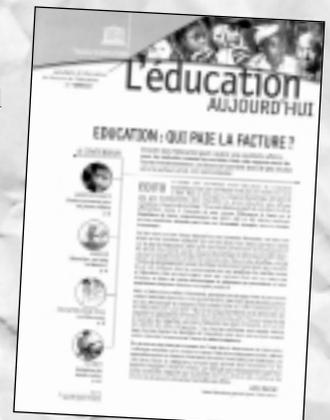
BOOKS AND DEBATES



INVESTING IN EDUCATION

UNESCO’s Education Section newsletter of April-June 2003 devotes a special dossier to investing in education. A UNESCO-OECD study reveals that economic growth is closely linked to investing in education. The dossier explains in clear terms to us that investing in education does not only meet a moral imperative but is also a necessity. Serge Péano, program specialist at UNESCO’s International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP), explains: “*Education is basic to the development of societies. Up to date there is no alternative development model for illiterate people*”. This dossier based on solid data will certainly enlighten the many readers interested in the subject of education.

Education Today, newsletter of the education section of UNESCO, nr 5, April-June 2003.



PORTRAIT

cult. This peasant workforce knows the lands very well and love to work, but cannot do so. We have to add also that for those employed, the conditions are very difficult. The labour force employed in the coffee industry is very poorly paid, and delays in payment are very frequent.

Do you think that an Organisation like the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has a role to play in bringing aid to Peru and South America?

Of course! By denouncing the government for example. They can kick against the terrible working conditions, the informal sector, and child labour. At the international level, the ILO has the power to call for and demand that Toledo's government take up its responsibilities.

You belong to the COMUANDE, an organisation that is concerned about the condition of women in the Andean Region. How really serious is their situation?

First of all, it is important to point out that a very large number of women work in the informal sector. Why? Simply because there is no work in the "formal" sector.

And no class is spared. I have seen teachers making dresses at home and going out in the evenings to hawk these clothes illegally in the streets. I am convinced that the labour unions can come to the assistance of these women and all workers.

Let's talk about COMUANDE

COMUANDE, the "*Coordinadora de Mujeres Trabajadoras Andinas*" is the body that brings together female workers in the Andean Region. The defined aim of COMUANDE is clear: create a platform for the coordination and exchange of experiences between representatives of workers in the Andean Region. It maps out a strategy that seeks to increase and enhance the participation of women in the trade union, social and political arenas. It seeks to give greater impetus to the struggles and demands of women workers in a world that is more and more in the grips of globalisation.

How can this objective be concretely achieved?

There are several areas where the struggle must be pursued. It is important to promote equal treatment of men and women, a situa-

tion that is far from the reality today. We must find again the demands of women on the agenda of trade union organizations. Training is obviously crucial just as unity on the women's front. Of course the struggle to get governments to comply with ILO conventions is an everyday thing.

You are taking part in an international seminar, what are you gaining from it?

A great deal. This seminar (Gender Analysis and the management of socio-economic projects) is an unexpected opportunity. We are exchanging our experiences with people who come from all the continents. We are thus learning a lot. But beyond that, this gives us confidence and proves to us that solidarity is not an empty word and that nobody can take it away from us!

Interview conducted by MD

TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES

trade union activities

Trade Union Freedom in the export processing zones

With trade union freedom not being guaranteed in the export processing zones (EPZs), it is the duty of the trade union movement to do all in its capacity to reverse the trend. It can be said that the World Confederation of Labour wasted not time. Already during the international seminar (IIEO) on the topic, organised in Utal in Venezuela, the participants did propose an action plan for the period 2003-2005. However, let us first of all re-visit the definition of these famous “zones”.

It was in 1979 that the WCL defined EPZs as follows: “an export processing zone is a space determined geographically and legally, for the production of goods and services, where the raw materials come from outside. This isolated economic activity provides, especially the multi-national enterprises, with several economic tax and social advantages and imposes serious injustices on the local labour market”. According to the WCL, “this system in the majority of cases, has very little effect on the development of the country where it is established”.

According to the results of the seminar, in spite of the laudable objectives, such as the promotion of foreign investment or the creation of new jobs for the unemployed, the EPZs exist especially to reduce production costs by relying on cheap labour and thus positions themselves better as far as competition is concerned.

WHAT ABOUT TRADE UNION FREEDOM?

In order to guarantee trade union freedom it is essential not only to ratify but also to apply the Conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In this respect, the WCL raised its voice for a modern and reinforced standard setting system of the ILO. (A brochure on this topic is available upon request from the WCL). At the national level, there are restrictive laws in numerous countries (controlling the autonomy of workers, problem of officially recognizing trade union organizations...). The situation is complex and trade unions, in order to have efficient means of action, need to develop long-term strategies.



The conclusions of the seminar, which are still relevant today, are clear: the original objective to establish export processing zones as poles of development has not been achieved except in a few cases. The EPZs have rather dismantled part of our national economic structures. Furthermore, given that the majority of the industries concerned are technologically poor, costs can only be reduced on labour.

There are those who will argue that EPZs create jobs. The WCL obviously is not disputing this. On the contrary, the Confederation is convinced that the problems and the social costs they entail are enormous and limit the development possibilities of the populations, not to mention that the enterprises operating within the EPZs fail to pay taxes for their infrastructure and thus, do not generate additional resources for the host countries. Finally it is essential that the right to organize in the enterprises be observed and respected, in order that workers can participate fully in social dialogue and improve their living and working conditions.

MD

What is trade union freedom about in the export processing zones?

Source: “Trade union freedom in export processing zones. A challenge for the trade union movement”, an ILO publication.