

**ANTI-UNION DISCRIMINATION WITHIN
BAYER PHILIPPINES**

In 2003, the WCL filed a complaint on the procedures established by the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. This complaint was aimed at supporting the EUBP (Employees Union of Bayer Philippines, affiliated to the FFW and BATU) and at denouncing the multinational's anti-union acts against the EUBP and its workers, as well as its non-observance of the collective agreement. As a matter of fact, the members of the EUBP –official trade union within the company- would have been harassed by Bayer Philippines, which may be trying to weaken this union organisation. The union's President would have even been transferred to another section and then unfairly dismissed. The implementation of these corporate measures is the result of the workers' struggle for the enforcement of their collective agreement, which the company has tried to violate. According to the information provided by the EUBP, the company's attitude has not changed, despite the Philippine Court's ruling in favour of the trade union. The WCL will continue supporting these workers.

WORLD CONGRESS ON CHILD LABOUR

Within the framework of the World Congress on Child Labour –held in Florence- three working children who participate in the activities of the WCL affiliates in Colombia (CGTD), Sri-Lanka



(NWC) and Togo (CSTT) were invited to come to Europe in order to talk about the terrible situation they face in their countries. The WCL would like to highlight that, as an international trade union movement committed to the protection and defence of workers' rights, it has waged a long-lasting fight for the eradication of child labour, in coordination with its affiliates. Although the ceaseless struggle against child labour will only bear fruit in the long term, the WCL thinks that the

immediate eradication of its worst forms is possible now. That is why this international organisation has launched a relentless campaign for the ratification of Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour and its enforcement. « *For the WCL, the eradication of child labour must be part of a global strategy for sustainable development. This strategy must include actions such as: to fight against poverty, to enforce fundamental human rights, to generate decent jobs for adults, to foster the 'education for all' initiative and to put social issues at the very core of economic policies*» said Willy Thys, WCL's Secretary General, on the eve of the Congress. We hope that the World Congress on Child Labor will raise awareness on this blight among the international community.

**CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DAY FOR
SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK**

Thousands of people celebrated the World Day for Safety and Health at Work on April 28th. The ILO participated in this celebration in order to focus international attention on the need to promote a new « safety culture » aimed at putting an end to the endless list of work-related accidents and illnesses, which today affect 6,000 workers. The International Labour Organisation has capitalised on its two main strengths – tripartism and social dialogue- for the observance of this day that brings together workers, employers and governments in order to raise awareness on issues related to safety and health at work. According to Juan Somavia, Director General of the ILO, « *A safety culture must be nurtured through partnership and dialogue – governments, employers and workers, within the framework of rights, responsibilities and duties, finding common ground, creating safety and healthy work places. I strongly believe that this is one of the most fertile areas for reaching consensus in the world of work*». The WCL agrees with this point of view and hopes that the necessary actions will be taken in order to significantly reduce the number of occupational accidents.

**ONGOING ANTI-UNION
REPRESSION IN GUATEMALA**

On 25 February 2004, Brother Victoriano Zacarías Mindez -Executive Secretary of the General Confederation of Workers of Guatemala- as well as other 32 trade unionist were arbitrarily arrested. Their arrest is a consequence of the

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support given by the union leaders to the Confederation of Drivers of Heavy Goods Vehicles in its struggle against a Guatemalan Municipal measure on the restriction of heavy goods vehicles traffic and its banning in eight main roads of the capital city. This measure compels drivers to look for other roads in order to carry out their work and to drive at night, thus putting in danger their physical integrity and even their lives, given the insecurity that characterises Guatemalan roads. The workers have repeatedly tried to foster dialogue with the Municipality, but all their efforts have been in vain. They even submitted several proposals to the Municipality, but no form of compromise was possible. Given that the workers' decision to take specific actions to make their voice heard, the government decided to put them under arrest and to charge them with terrorism! Another case that calls our attention is that of Brother Rigoberto Dueñas, who has been wrongfully detained since June 2003. Peasant leader of Fedecampo, Deputy Secretary General of the CGTG, and well-known for his struggle against doubtful privileges, as well as the leverage, corruption and impunity characterising the IGSS (Guatemalan Institute for Social Security), he was arrested and charged with fraud.

The World Confederation of Labour strongly denounces these anti-union acts that highlight the criminalisation of social action, and urges the Guatemalan Government to take the necessary measures to release these union leaders.

«A JOB TO WIN»

Within the framework of its campaign «A job to win», the Israeli Workers Advice Centre (WAC) invited several European trade union organisations (including the Belgian ACV-CSC) to meet its representatives so as to analyse the discrimination faced by the Arab and Palestinian construction workers who live in the Occupied Territories and try to work in the capital city. Guy Bonnewijn (from the Wood and Construction International Trade Federation) and Faustina Van Aperen (WCL/ISF) represented the Belgian ACV-CSC programme on international solidarity with Palestinian workers in an intensive program which lasted from 25 April to 1 May. This programme included some on-site missions and meetings with the representatives of several institutions, such as: the Israeli Government (Departments of finance, labour and industry), professors from the Tel Aviv University, NGOs fighting against the institutionalisation of social injustice in Israel, lawyers, employers, and union leaders from Histadrut (Israel), as well as the GUPW and PFTUG (Palestine). The trade union representatives unanimously agreed to say that the social situation of Arab and Palestinian workers is intolerable and dramatic: they are discriminated against in the education, work and social security sectors mainly in Nazareth and western Jerusalem –given that most of the companies created are almost exclusively located in the Jewish area. Last but not least, the government has authorised employers and recruitment agencies in Tel Aviv to massively import cheap labour force from China, Romania and the Philippines, in a country that compares itself to Switzerland in terms of foreign workers treatment. However, the difference is huge: there exist a national average unemployment rate of 10 to 12 %, a social law that strongly protects employers and excludes non-Jewish workers, and a «wall» that prevents thousands of Palestinian workers from going to work. The non-

observance of fundamental human and social standards (minimum wage, work hours, access to social security, houses unfit for human habitation, and slavish working conditions) fosters illegality among the workers who enter the country. Thanks to this mission, the European trade unionists committed themselves to supporting those who fight for the promotion of peace and social security in Israel within the framework of the Labour Day (1 May). They also congratulated the WAC which, against all odds, has successfully rekindled hope among Arab and Palestinian workers, by organising them, providing them with legal counselling, and offering them a job. Its campaign «a job to win» is an inspiring example of courage and hope that must be supported and followed by all!

NEW PUBLICATIONS OF THE WCL

Debt Manual

The WCL has just published the “Debt Manual”, in which it explains the origin of the foreign debt and its socio-political context. The manual also includes a survey on the proposals that have been advanced to alleviate the debt, which is weighing on 80% of the world population. It further formulates objections to the functioning of the international financial institutions and makes it clear that structural changes are necessary. In conclusion, it proposes alternatives for refunding the debt while promoting sustainable development.

Child Labour

Within the framework of the World Congress on Child Labour, the World Confederation of Labor has decided to publish a booklet on the struggle against child labour. This document also provides some figures regarding child labour worldwide, information on the ILO Conventions that protect children, and a description of the actions taken by the WCL and its affiliates.

These documents are available in English, French or Spanish. To order them, contact the WCL Press and Information Department: info@cmt-wcl. Please mention clearly your name and address, the language and the number of copies you wish to receive.

Schedule of activities

- 09-13 May: World Congress on Child Labor, Florence - Italy
- 11-12 May: Forum of the Economic Commission for Europe: «Competing in a changing Europe», Geneva – Switzerland
- 11-13 May: 112th TUAC plenary session and related OECD meetings, Paris – France
- 11-15 May: WMCW International Seminar, Quebec – Canada
- 14-22 May: WFBW Seminar and Congress, Sofia – Bulgaria
- 17-20 May: CONSAWU Congress, Johannesburg – South Africa
- 21-23 May: European Seminar «Trade unions and workers in the informal economy», Sofia - Bulgaria
- 01-17 June: 92nd International Labor Conference, Geneva – Switzerland.



VENEZUELA: CONGRESS OF AGRICULTURE WORKERS

On June 13 to 19 will take place in Venezuela the Congress of the Latin American Federation of Agriculture Workers (FELTRA), affiliated to World Federation of Agriculture, Food, Hotel and Allied Workers (WFAFW). In this Congress the delegates will discuss, among other topics, the FELTRA Action Plan for the livestock sector. Another topic will be FELTRA's functioning and constitution as well as the election of the Executive Board for the term 2004-2008.

Prior to the Congress, FELTRA will organise a seminar on the following core topics: sovereignty and food security, reforms on the rural sector, negligence in the sector, extreme poverty in the agriculture; environment and natural resources, exploitation of women, youth and children, among others.

WFAFW will take the opportunity to organise a meeting of its Executive Board. The agenda of this meeting includes topics as WFAFW Action Plan and participation in the Programme for strengthening Trade Action of WCL.

CAMEROON: REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR AFRICAN MINERS

On April 26 to 30, Pan-African Federation of Industry Workers (PFIW), along with the World Federation of Industry Workers (WFIW) and with the support of the

Secretary-General, Bros. Piet NELISSEN and Italo RODOMONTI, and the president of the International Solidarity Fund for miners.

The seminar dwelled on labour-related topics of the mining sector in Africa, especially hygiene and safety in the working areas. Other topics were the development of the sector in the framework of globalisation, social dialogue, solidarity as an important factor for PFIW and DOAWTU Trade Action in the national organisations.

The seminar strives to train and raise awareness among current trade union leaders. During the last three decades, Africa has been suffering a development standstill due to the problem of debt, flawed political choices, and depletion of financing sources. Finally, this event was aimed at strengthening trade union solidarity among national organisations that are active in the mining sector, through the development of strategies to strengthen national organisations and to create an information network of this sector in different countries.

A WFBW DELEGATION VISITS CAMBODIA, INDONESIA AND BANGLADESH

The preparations for the next WFBW Congress are well under way. In this regard, a delegation of this Federation, composed of its president Jackie Jackers, Bert van de Spek and Piet Nelissen, travelled to Cambodia, Indonesia and Bangladesh.



International Solidarity Fund for miners, organised a regional seminar for African miners in Douala (Cameroon). Around twenty leaders of organisations affiliated to PFIW participated in the various meetings. Other attendants were PFIW Secretary General, Bro. Romuald K. NUWOKPE, ODSTA Executive Secretary for Trade Action, Bro. Joseph TOE, WFIW Executive Secretary and

The Cambodian Construction Worker Trade Unions Federation (C CTUF) was created merely a few years ago. Thanks to its founder, Bro. Rath Rot Mony, this Federation has earned its place in the trade union movement, which in this country is embryonic at best. There is only one autonomous, strong and independent federation in the textile sector (C CAWDAU).

The grassroots level of C CTUF is composed of professionals of the construction sector who were hired for the restoration of the world-renowned Angkor temple, in Wath Siem Reap. Around six thousand people are working currently on this assignment. Such projects are financed by countries like France, Japan and Germany, and are supervised by UNESCO. For now, Bro. Mony is planning to create a Confederation with several trade unions of the tourism and transport sectors.

The Indonesian island of BATAM is experiencing an economic boom. It is important to highlight that being near a country as Singapore plays a very important role in the economic development. The employers, however, are still disrespectful towards trade unions and workers: labour contracts are denied, lay-offs are common practice, and the topics of safety and legal prescriptions in this



regard are often ignored. A good example is Hup Seng construction site. A Taiwanese employer works with sub-contractors who show little regard towards legal regulations. Additionally, although the authorities agreed with the trade union F KUI (SBSI) in the case of the 46 unfair lay-offs in the construction site, the attitude of the employers has not changed. In a conversation with one of the directors of the company, the WFBW delegation expressed its solidarity with the workers and tried to persuade the employers to negotiating with the trade unions to reach a socially fair solution.

In Bangladesh, one of the poorest and most overpopulated countries in the world, the trade union movement is barely in its infancy. Trade unions must struggle to be recognised by the government and the employers. The working conditions are dismal, the salaries are abysmally low and the social security is non-existent. Therefore, the trade union calls for urgent international solidarity and it requests support and information to train its officials and grassroots members, and to solve the conflict with public authorities and employers.

BANGLADESH: FIRST REGIONAL SEMINAR ON CONSTRUCTION AND WOODWORKERS

Recently, the World Federation of Building and Woodworkers Unions (WFBW) organised its first regional seminar in Bangladesh. Thanks to the co-operation and support of the confederation BSSF and its federation of building and woodworkers (BSBWFF), the event ran perfectly. The president of the WFBW, Bro. Jackie Jackers, its Secretary-General, Bro. Bert van der Spek, and Executive Secretary, Bro. Piet Nelissen, attended this event.

An expert with the The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Dr. Abdul Hye Mondal, spoke of "Current Trends on The Area of Social Dialogue." The president of BSSF, Bro. Md. Mukhlesur Arman, dwelled on "Social Dialogue and Informal Economy." Bro. Jan Voets, from the Trade Action project of WCL and collaborator of ACV-CSC Construction and Industry, spoke of "Social Dialogue in Multinational Corporation in the Building Sector."

In the second part of the seminar the main topic was "national balances". The delegations from the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, India and Bangladesh had a chance to present their analyses of the situation of the building and woodworkers in their countries.



They also dwelled on their problems and priorities for the future.

Although there is social dialogue in these countries, the federations have little or no contact with the employers or the authorities. Additionally, the reports highlight that the members and leaders of the trade unions need urgently

better education and training. In many of these countries, communication lacks the necessary technology and know-how. The most difficult task is organising the vulnerable workers in the informal sectors of building and wood. The subcontractors do not offer any labour contract, pay wages well under legal standards and disregard regulations on safety, health, etc.

At the end of the seminar, the participants exchanged opinions on the future of the WFBW and the idea of creating a new world organisation along with the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW). The participants concluded that the globalisation demands further cooperation among the federations as well as a more aggressive trade union movement. Furthermore, pluralism, identity and the role of the regional organisations cannot simply vanish. The debate on this topic will be further elaborated during the world seminar, prior to the WFBW Congress (mid-May in Bulgaria).

INFORMAL ECONOMY: TOWARDS A NETWORK OF LOCAL PARTNERS

It is all about the organisation. A great number of people who are active in the informal economy have only themselves to count on. No organisation is able to defend them or offer them any kind of protection. The trade union movement has an important role to play and a great challenge to face. Many examples in the world show that only with a few small changes, most trade unions would be able to adapt their structures to the needs of the workers of the informal economy. It is true, that may be far in the future, but the WCL is striving decisively to reach that goal. Moreover, it is important to highlight that trade unions should not be the only stakeholders responsible for helping the workers in the informal economy. Sometimes, more effective actions can be developed through cooperatives, mutual-aid societies and with the collaboration of local communities in a direct and concrete way. With its VERBA Informal Economy project, WCL aims at creating a network of local partners, with the objective of fighting against enslaving living and working conditions most workers in the informal economy have to bear.