

Asia/Pacific News - N° 3 , 2003

PSI defends the public sector at World Water Forum

PSI had a strong presence at the World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan, 16-23 March. Among the participants from the region were PSI affiliates from Japan, Bangladesh, Fiji, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. PSI denounced the private sector's desire to put corporate interests first, ignoring the central role of public water systems. PSI released a new report that exposes the high cost of relying on private water multinationals: Financing water for the world – an alternative to guaranteed profits can be downloaded from the Reports section of www.psiru.org. For further information contact David.Boys@world-psi.org.

March 8th 2003 International Women's Day

PSI affiliates in the region celebrated International Women's Day on 8th March.

In New Zealand, the NZPSA has launched its Pay and Employment Equity Agenda. The NZPSA is currently developing a pay and employment equity policy and bargaining strategy and are aiming for a five-year time span for achieving agreed goals in pay and employment equity. They are holding pay equity seminars throughout the year www.psa.org.nz.

In Bangladesh, trade unions, national centres and women's groups held a march in Dhaka and other cities. They demanded steps to eliminate violence against women and sexual harassment, and in favour of ratification of ILO Convention 183 (maternity protection) and employment creation for women. In Sri Lanka, the Public Services United Nurses union distributed folders and pamphlets to the public.

In Thailand, PSI affiliates held a colourful and musical rally in Bangkok. They demanded protection for informal workers, more employment opportunities for women, and an end to gender bias.

For more on International Women's Day, see the upcoming April issue of PSI Women.

Wage-freeze fight in Papua New Guinea

“The Government's wage freeze on all public servants' wages and salaries will be fought in the halls of Parliament, as the issue could not be solved through the normal industrial-relations process”, Public Employees Association (PSI Affiliate) President Napoleon Liosi said during a meeting in Port Moresby held on 27 February to update civil servants on the 1999 to 2001 consumer price index negotiations and their fight against the wage freeze policy. He said the freezing of public servants' wages was one of the Government's main policy directions. “We chose to meet the political government 'head on' because the wage freeze policy came out as part of a public policy. When the Government passed through Parliament its 2003 budget, one of the major policy statements was to freeze wages.” He said the PEA and other unions would continue to question government policies that affected the public and the workforce. “These institutions have one common task, that is to continue to make a difference in this country and we only can make a difference in the life of our country by being players, not spectators,” he said.

PSI General Secretary attends meetings in Korea and Japan
PSI General Secretary Hans Engelberts, together with a delegation of the Nordic Civil Service Unions, participated on 22 March in an International Symposium to mark the first anniversary of the Korean Government Employees' Union. He also participated in a rally and a march though the city of Seoul on 23 March.

Hans Engelberts also participated in activities in Japan from 25 to 27 March as part of the public sector unions campaign against the draft bill on public service reform. Apart from speaking at rallies, he met Japanese politicians and the Head of the Japanese Personnel Authority.

Indonesia Government, employers and workers join forces in fighting HIV/AIDS

On 25 February government, employers and workers organizations declared a tripartite commitment to curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS through workplace prevention programmes. They agreed to use the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS that covers the recognition of HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue, non-discrimination in employment, gender equality, a healthy work environment, social dialogue, no screening for purposes of exclusion from employment or work processes, confidentiality, continuation of employment, prevention and care and support.

"Prevention programs are crucial for curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS, but first we all need to have proper knowledge of HIV/AIDS and the awareness of the problem," said manpower minister Jacob Nuwa Wea, one of the signatories to the tripartite commitment.

The commitment was declared in a seminar, Action against HIV/AIDS in the World of Work, which was organized jointly by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Action to Stop AIDS (ASA) Indonesia and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Mar'ie Muhammad, chairman of the Indonesian Red Cross, said in the seminar, "As we in Indonesia are close to economic recovery, we should be aware of a new impending crisis. AIDS will damage our economy unless we take immediate steps."

Trade union rights evaluation in South Asia

In March, the PSI conducted an evaluation of the LONorway sponsored Trade Union Rights Network project which covers four countries in South East Asia and is reaching the end of the second phase. The evaluation team, consisting of two external evaluators, the project coordinator and a PSI representative, visited affiliates in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. The project focuses on

raising awareness about the absence of collective bargaining rights in the public sector within this sub region and
developing a network within the unions with the skills to report the consequent workplace violations that occur and develop campaigns in support of this right.

The team met with a wide range of union leaders and members who are participating in the project, observed activities and discussed the issues with national centres and other human rights groups. The evaluation will provide the basis for submitting an application for a third phase to LONorway.

Indian workers fight anti-people policies

Public sector employees and government workers held a massive rally in New Delhi on 26 February, demanding total reversal of the government's "anti-people" policies and declaring they would go on a countrywide general strike before 9 May 2003. Thousands of labour union activists, from AITUC, INTUC, CITU, HMS, UTUC (LS), AICCTU, TUCC and insurance employees, defence and state government employees, who had come from all over the country, began their 'March to Parliament' shouting slogans, Stop

privatisation, Stop liberalisation, Abolish contract labour, Scrap anti-labour policies, Security for all, Remove unemployment. The protestors were, however, stopped well before they could reach the Parliament. Through a declaration read out by trade union leaders at the meeting, the workers demanded among other things a halt to privatisation of profit-making potentially viable public sectors, no change in the labour laws to favour the employer, removal of all ceilings on bonuses, extension of social security to workers in the unorganised sector and enactment of a comprehensive legislation for agriculture workers.

Australian librarians take action

Members of the Community and Public Sector Union (PSI Affiliate) from the State Library of Victoria were among the more than 150 State Library workers who marched to Parliament House on 26 February to demand wage justice from the State government.

Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) State Library delegate Jill Sparrow said "The 3 per cent pay offer doesn't address the parity issue. We are asking the government for 6 per cent because that is what we need to begin to bring us into line with other librarians in the state."

The dispute has been running since December and CPSU members are determined to win their struggle for wage justice Ms Sparrow said. For more information see: www.cpsu.org

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