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Released but not invited

The President of the Korean Association of Government Employees' Work Councils, Cha Bong-Chun, was released after two days' detention on 28 December in Seoul. However President Cha and six other leaders of the KAGEWC remain under threat of prosecution in relation to the continuing campaign for basic labour rights for government employees in Korea. This follows a rally in November at which PSI General Secretary Hans Engelberts gave his solidarity speech to the KAGEWC. At the time of President Cha's arrest, negotiations with the government over rights of government employees were in progress. However the key party to these negotiations, the KAGEWC, was not invited. The KAGEWC will launch itself as a trade union on 24 March 2002.

PSI meets with Guyana PM

A high-level PSI mission to Guyana met with the Prime Minister on two occasions last month in order to press the need for better industrial relations. The PSI delegation included President Bill Lucy, General Secretary Hans Engelberts, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Cam Duncan and Jo Goddard. Patrick Yarde from the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) also attended. The meetings received extensive national publicity, and a commitment from the President that the matter would be reviewed following a report of the meetings. At a media conference in Georgetown on 11 December, Bill Lucy said that the decision by the government to withdraw the check-off system for the GPSU was perceived as an attempt to hobble the union. He also said that the meeting with the government had been "frank", and that public sector unions must be able to adequately represent their members. PSI representatives also took part in a race relations seminar organised by the GPSU. At the seminar, Hans Engelberts, the Guyana Minister for the Public Service (Dr Jennifer Westford), and the Minister for Labour (Dr Dale Bisnauth) supported GPSU moves for unity and equality in a multi-ethnic environment.

ITS General Conference

The next Global Unions (or ITS) General Conference will be held in Prague on 10-11 January. Key issues include a proposal to create a think tank on

multi-national enterprise issues, evaluating the outcome of the WTO Doha summit, and the issue of informal work for the 2002 ILO Conference.

IT seminar in Stockholm

The Swedish LO -TCO centre will be running a seminar this month on information technology (IT) and trade unions. The seminar, to be held near Stockholm on 21 -22 January, aims to share experiences of IT in trade union work with particular emphasis on development projects. Contact toni.mast@lotcobistand.org.

IMF and tax evasion bring down Argentina

Reports from Argentine affiliates indicate that trade unions can be proud of their actions in the current crisis. Beatriz Liliana Weisemberg of UPCN in Santa Fe says that unions have been active in helping families in poverty and in promoting democratic means to find solutions. Whilst the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its austerity prescriptions have been widely condemned by international observers, PSI World News notes that Argentina ran deficit budgets from 1991-1997, despite high economic growth rates. Widespread tax evasion continues as an underlying cause of its massive (USD 132 billion) public debt.

Indonesia out of ideas on jobs

According to Indonesian news reports, the world's fourth largest country says it is running out of ideas on job creation. It is estimated that there are now 40 million Indonesians unemployed and a further 3 million people seek jobs for the first time each year. The government has announced that one of its major strategies in solving unemployment will be exporting human labour. This means that unskilled workers, especially domestic servants, will be encouraged to seek jobs overseas. Currently nearly half a million Indonesians are employed in other countries. Exploitation by agents and employers is common. The Labour Minister, Jacob Nuwa Wea also said in his 22 December speech that the education system must deliver better vocational skills to Indonesians, and that the informal business sector should be encouraged. At present many street vendors are viewed harshly by provincial administrators. The government also announced in December that the minimum wage would be significantly increased - to the equivalent of USD 56 per month. See www.gn.apc.org/tapol.

South Africa Festival for AIDS

The South African trade union centre, COSATU, has been working in partnership with affiliates, performing artists, AIDS activists, insurance groups and the Department of Health in a program to help support the victims of HIV-AIDS. The program has included visits to orphanages and resource centres as well as three major music festivals. The latest festival was held on 29 December at Capetown. Proceeds from the festivals were given to the support centres. See www.cosatu.org.za.

Congress preparations

The 2002 5-yearly PSI Congress will be held in Ottawa, Canada 2-6 September. This is the 27th meeting of Congress, PSI's supreme constitutional body. Whilst Congress is several months away, preparations by PSI's Canadian affiliates and PSI itself are well-advanced. Special notices have already been sent to all affiliates to ensure attendance and voting rights. PSI staff, including General Secretary Hans Engelberts, will meet with Canadian counterparts in Ottawa next month. PSI's Focus magazine will outline the issues facing Congress in its April edition, and report on Congress outcomes in October-November. The Congress Standing Orders Committee

will meet in March, and there will be an extraordinary meeting of the Executive Board in June. The two major issues before Congress are the 5-year Program of Action, and the adoption of a gender-equity constitution.

Not even a cook with him

Canadian affiliate, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), has worked with its education counterpart in the Province of British Columbia to help produce a new major book on labour studies. The book, *Youth, Unions and You* is a comprehensive resource guide for teachers in secondary schools to use in educating students about the labour movement in Canada, and in the world. Appropriately it focuses on issues for the future as well as the past. PSI World News especially liked the quote from Brecht in the book (page 9): "Caesar beat the Gauls. Did he not even have a cook with him?" Contact diane_wood@bcgeu.bc.ca.

Positively Public

As part of its continuing better public services campaign, UK affiliate UNISON has produced a Positively Public pack. The pack contains a new 34-page guide to campaigning, an artwork clipsheet and stickers. It also features separate briefing materials on: The Positively Public campaign; Seven reasons why public-private partnerships do not improve public services; Contracting out and the 2-tier workforce; Improving our public services; and Working with organizations. Contact l.richards@unison.org.uk.

Pay Equity 8 March

PSI will promote a pay equity theme for International Women's Day on 8 March this year. For further information see the next edition of PSI Women or contact nora.wintour@world-psi.org.

E Trade unions

A new facility to help trade union workers on Websites was launched in Spain on 20 December. The facility is a Website that offers advice, contacts and answers to questions about creating and using union websites as well as information on the Internet. It is based on a successful on-line help desk pioneered by the Dutch FNV trade union centre, and supported by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the global union UNI. The site, available in 4 languages, can be found at www.e-tradeunions.org.

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