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PSI quality public services campaign call
PSI is calling for help from affiliates and others to begin work on its global Quality Public Services (QPS) campaign. A reference group of experienced people is sought to take part in consultations via the Extranet. PSI also needs someone to help research a campaign-related set of standards or indicators for quality public services. This can be on a secondment or a fee-for-service (consultancy) basis. Also, PSI is compiling information about campaigns run by affiliates. Any relevant campaign material is welcomed. See the PSI Website for more details, or contact ros.harvey@world-psi.org.

Hidden cache could save the planet
About US\$8 trillion (8,000,000,000,000) is estimated to be hidden in tax havens around the world. If this cache could be identified, then an annual tax on it of only 1% would provide 40 times the current budget for all United Nations development programs. Over 4 years, it would provide more than the US\$300 billion that environmental researchers at Cambridge University report is required to save the planet. See 21 Ways that Neoliberalism is Radically Redistributing Worldwide, at www.communitycauldron.com/sri/sri.

Postal privatisation does not deliver
There have been big problems since the US Postal Service stopped direct parcel deliveries to 23 European countries, and instead made Consignia, the privatised UK postal service, its agent for Europe. According to a lengthy report, many interviews with US expatriates in Europe reveal "astronomic" fees, "interminable journeys" and "uncertainty as to whether parcels will reach their destinations at all." Consignia routinely charges an extra handling fee to process packages through customs. Often the average US\$16 fee is paid, but the parcel does not arrive. The US Postal Service has given Consignia a series of deadlines to improve its performance and wants it to reduce its fees. See www.iht.com.

AIDS conference shock
The 14th International AIDS Conference was held in Barcelona, Spain, last week. One shock at the Conference were results from UN surveys in China

that show 2 out every 3 people in China do not know how AIDS is transmitted, and do not know how it can be prevented. According to the UN, the number of HIV cases in China increased by 67% in the first 6 months of 2001. Progress on new types of vaccines and treatment for HIV were described as "promising", but even getting treatment to most sufferers remains a major issue. See www.aids2002.org.

PSI tells Colombia stop death targeting

PSI has protested to the government of Colombia to try to prevent the assassination of members of its affiliate SINTRAEMCALI. The major newspaper *El País*, has published an article suggesting that the union has links with terrorist organisations. In Colombia, to say that somebody has guerrilla links is to mark them out as a target for paramilitary assassination. Despite SINTRAEMCALI's denials of any link with guerrillas, *El País* has pushed the accusation without providing any evidence. Since the union's successful campaign to reverse privatisation plans for its utility employer, EMCALI, two of its members have already been killed - by paramilitaries. Luis Hernández, President of SINTRAEMCALI, said this month "these methods contribute to the criminalisation of social protest, which in the last year has left 170 trade union leaders assassinated." Héctor Galindo, former PSI sub-regional Secretary for the Andean region, said that this was a continuation of the State's policy to de-legitimise unions and the workers' movement in general. "To make these claims is to declare the death penalty on the leaders of SINTRAEMCALI", he said. The UK-based NGO, War on Want, has launched an urgent solidarity campaign on the issue. See www.waronwant.org, or contact nora.wintour@world-psi.org.

Labour standards and economic reality

PSI Research Officer, Alice Carl, took part in a workshop called Globalisation with Social Progress -the economic, social and political dividends of international labour standards in Brussels on 10-11 July. The workshop was arranged by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, (FES). The discussion centred on a draft report written by Werner Sengenberger who has long experience in labour standards and other ILO issues. The paper marked a change in the current debate around labour standards. The objective of the discussion - and the report - was to come up with solid reasons in favour of labour standards, based on economic realities. As a result of the workshop, a revised paper should be ready in October in time for meetings with the World Bank. Contact alice.carl@world-psi.org.

South African municipal workers mobilise

Major PSI affiliate, the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), is continuing its strike over wages and services. The union has mobilised considerable community support and solidarity commitments from other unions. SAMWU is also supported by the trade union centre, COSATU that has been broadcasting several media releases every day that the action continues. Whilst SAMWU wants a lift in the minimum wage for its members to about US\$220 per month, some municipal council heads have been revealed as earning more than 20 times this amount. SAMWU also wants better municipal services and an end to privatisation of water supplies as in Johannesburg. The strike action includes daily demonstrations, pickets and sit-ins. See www.cosatu.org.

PSI protests Chile switch on equity study

PSI has written to Chilean President Ricardo Lagos to protest withdrawal of funding for a major report on equal opportunities in the public sector. Production of the report is strongly supported by the Co-ordinating

Committee for Women in the Public Sector, a group that includes PSI affiliates. The PSI protest reminds President Lagos of his government's commitment to equal opportunities indicated by its ratification of ILO Conventions 100 and 111. Contact nora.wintour@world-psi.org.

A strike for the public

Local government members of UNISON, GMB and the TGWU voted decisively to strike on 17 July. The unions are affiliates of PSI. UNISON is the largest union in the UK. Under UK labour law, a vote on strike action must be taken by secret ballot. The strike covered all members who work for local government. The unions argue that low pay - especially for jobs dominated by women - has made it hard to recruit and retain trained staff. As such it was a strike for the public, so that better services can be provided. UNISON also says that it was the largest ever strike by women in the history of the UK. See www.unison.org.uk.

Cherries and cream in Argentina

A fascinating insight into the minds of big health funds is available at www.invertir.com. An article now on the site says that private health funds will soon start wooing the upper income segment of those in union-sponsored health plans. A representative of Price Waterhouse Coopers is quoted as saying, "that market of around 4 million will be the cherry on the cake" for the private insurers. The article further says that 4 big foreign companies are poised to move in on the Argentina health market. They will implement payment schemes that transfer risk to the service provider. Ultimately, he says, there will be 4 or 5 major players, with other insurers catering to niches like "the cream of the market". However a possible "complication" is a resurgence of public hospitals. The complication is that they provide free medical care.

Ukraine health protest

Pickets in front of the Parliament are one tactic used by striking health staff in the Ukraine. In a country where salaries for doctors are about US\$40 per month, and for nurses about US\$30 per month, the government has said it will look at a report on the issue in October. On 11 July the government said it would move to make some medical treatments free to all citizens. The Prime Minister also said on the same day that paying salaries to health staff is of "very serious state importance". Budget discussions are now continuing. Contact PSI sub-regional Secretary, Vasyl Shilov, email: shilov@uprotel.net.ua.

Solidarity action in a global economy

A new book, Protecting Worker Solidarity Action - a critique of international labour law, says that workers need more legal protection to encourage international actions. The author, Paul Germanotta, says that international action in support of the objectives of the labour movement is essential in a global economy. He spells out how this can be done. The book can be ordered from the Institute of Employment Rights (www.ier.org.uk).

[En News 14-02.pdf \(23k\)](#)

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