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PSI urges World Bank to revise strategy

PSI has urged the World Bank to substantially revise its proposed Private Sector Development (PSD) strategy. PSI has now signed a joint letter with other organisations urging the changes. The PSD strategy is to be reconsidered at the next meeting of the Bank's board of Executive Directors due late this month or early February. Affiliates that have influence over national governments are asked to intervene to ensure that executive directors do not endorse the strategy in its current form. Contact Mike.Waghorne@world-psi.org. Also see the article below.

Dangers of service apartheid

The latest edition of News and Notices for IMF and World Bank Watchers features a penetrating article about service apartheid. According to the article, the World Bank is now considering a renewed Private Sector Development (PSD) strategy. This was commissioned following criticism of the Bank's actions by the Metzler Commission Report to the US Congress. The Bank has ignored extensive criticism of the PSD that pointed to its undermining of democratic rights and rights to basic services. Part of the PSD involves a new, bigger generation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) involving easier entry of foreign firms into low-income countries. The Metzler Commission's attitude is indicated by the following quote from its report: "In poor countries without capital market access, poverty alleviation grants to subsidise user fees should be paid directly to the supplier...". The service apartheid article is based on several sources, including a recent paper on the PSD strategy by the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU). See www.challenglobalization.org.

Union guide for dealing with IFIs

The ICFTU has produced a guide to help unions in developing countries to deal with IMF and World Bank. Both institutions now recognise that unions have a legitimate role in consultations on programs in their countries. The ICFTU guide gives information on the consultation process with a view to union participation. The main danger is that by keeping out of the system, the unions risk allowing programs that totally ignore the rights of workers. This publication, called "Guide to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers" is available in French, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian from the ICFTU in Brussels

or can be downloaded from the ICFTU website <http://www.icftu.org>. The IMF and the WB have themselves published reference documents available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/index.htm>.

PSI acts on Colombia

Following a further four assassinations of members of PSI affiliate SINTRAEMSDES in Colombia, PSI has taken further action on three fronts. A support group is being set up for unions that are interested in working more consistently on the issue, PSI is working with other organisations to ensure that the ILO has maximum impact in promoting rights in Colombia, and a model letter to the Colombian President has been developed for use by affiliates. See www.world-psi.org.

Injustice at Justice

In a double-barrelled attack on federal workers this week, the Bush administration stripped some Justice Department workers of their unions and fired the neutral panel set up to resolve bargaining disputes. The Justice Department employees lost their voice at work when President Bush issued an executive order barring unions in five divisions there. Citing national security, Bush muzzled workers at the U.S. Attorney's offices, the U.S. National Central Bureau of Interpol, the National Drug Intelligence Centre and Office of Intelligence Policy and Review. "It is absurd for the President to assume that union-represented federal employees are any less concerned about terrorism than other Americans," said Carl Goldman, Executive Director of AFSCME Council 26, the PSI-affiliated union that represents Justice Department employees. "It is interesting to note that all of the high profile spies in recent years worked for federal security agencies which are prohibited by law from union representation," Goldman added. "This did not stop them from committing acts of treason. The administration is cynically using the tragedy of September 11 to engage in union busting," he said. See www.afscme.org.

PSI an ITS no longer

There were ten international trade secretariats, of which PSI was one. However, following discussions at the ITS conference last week, General Secretary Hans Engelberts has agreed with his counterparts that in future such organisations including PSI will be known, at least in English, as Global Union Federations. This more accurately describes the nature of the organisation and links with the term Global Unions that is already in use on the Internet and with the media.

Doha speech backs core labour standards

The Swedish trade minister gave a speech at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Qatar in November last year that is worth noting. Mr Leif Pagrotsky said: "Global justice must be another aim of a new round... Most of us as governments and members of the ILO, adopted the ILO core labour standards. Still, too many workers are deprived of these internationally recognised fundamental human rights. This is a global problem and it needs a global solution. The WTO must take its share of the responsibility. Concrete WTO support for the ILO is required. And I fail to see why this should be controversial to any country that is a member of both organisations." Supplied by Kommunal.

Surprise find at IMF

A recent paper that castigates the IMF and World Bank has been found in an IMF publication. The paper by Robert Wade of the London School of Economics, strongly criticises the institutions for failing to give attention to rising world income inequality. Wade's paper succinctly summarises the eight

possible measures of income inequality and concludes that there is now much more inequality than 20 years ago. Wade says that the notion that development means global integration is false. See www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2001/12/wade.htm.

Free education for all

Education International, the global union federation that represents teachers, has announced that it will be organising a global action week from 22 to 28 April. The theme is "Free Education for All". Previous global action weeks have been very successful. PSI supports the campaign. See www.ei-ie.org.

International Day of Action on Korea

The Korean Council of Trade Union (KCTU) has announced an international day of action on 22 January to demand the release of imprisoned trade unionists in Korea. The KCTU asks sympathetic organisations to raise the issue with Korean embassies and associate themselves with KCTU complaint to the ILO. Full details are at www.kctu.org/news/jan22action.htm.

ILO waves red card at child labour

The International Labour Organization (ILO) will launch its "Red Card to Child Labour" campaign this week to coincide with the start of the 2002 African Cup of Nations that begins Saturday (Jan. 19) in Bamako, Mali. The new campaign against the use of child labour is symbolized by the red card handed out by referees for serious violations of rules on the soccer field. The ILO aims to take its initiative worldwide to include the World Cup.

International Union Rights focuses on the public sector

The current issue of the magazine International Union Rights focuses on privatisation and the public sector. Several people associated with PSI are among the contributors, including Deputy General Secretary, Alan Leather. Mike Waghorne of PSI was guest advisor for the edition. The magazine is produced by the International Centre for Trade Union Rights (ICTUR) <http://www.ictur.org>.

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