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PSI at both Porto Alegre and New York

PSI is represented at both the World Social Forum (WSF) meeting in

Porto Alegre Brazil this month, as well as at the World Economic

Forum (WEF) held in New York. General Secretary Hans Engelberts is

at the WSF, along with several PSI headquarters and regional staff,

including Jocelio Drummond from the PSI Brazil sub-regional office.

President Bill Lucy is at the World Economic Forum along with others

from the US trade union centre AFL-CIO, and other union

organizations including the International Confederation of Free Trade

Unions (ICFTU). Issues such as the world recession, the growing

wealth gap, the Enron scandal and the Argentine crisis have loomed

large. PSI and union representatives at both forums have been

promoting good governance and trade union rights. For current

reports and profiles from both forums see

www.global-unions.org/wef-wsf.asp.

March 8 materials available

The PSI global campaign on pay equity now has further materials

available for March 8th International Women's Day. The PSI Website

now carries examples of posters, model media release and postcards

that can be downloaded by affiliates. See www.world-psi.org, or

contact nora.wintour@world-psi.org .

If it can be done in Colombia it can be done anywhere

PSI affiliate SINTRAEMCALI, the Colombian government and the Mayor

of the large Colombian city of Cali signed an agreement on 29th

January, which guarantees that the municipal public corporation,

EMCALI, will not be privatised. The agreement also meets the other

union demands including a commitment to no price increases in 2002,

an investigation into the embezzlement of funds by the company

management and the trial of those responsible. The agreement also

guarantees no reprisals against workers, plus back pay for the period

of the occupation. The Mayor will convene a public hearing to tell

citizens about the decisions. EMCALI provides water, electricity and

telecommunications services to the municipality. This result follows a

month long campaign, combining national action with international

solidarity. SINTRAEMCALI members occupied the Cali Municipal Centre

in December following a government decree ordering the privatisation

of the company. Civil society organisations supported workers in

carrying out demonstrations, protests and street festivals. UK affiliate Unison was a major campaign supporter. PSI issued an urgent action to all its affiliates. It also wrote to the Colombian government to call for the decree to be withdrawn and for a negotiated solution. A spokesperson for SINTRAEMCALI said yesterday: "Let this victory give courage to all those who desire peace and social justice. It is time to challenge the dictates of the rich and powerful. If it can be done in Colombia, one of the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists, it can be done anywhere." For the full text of this agreement see the PSI website at www.world-psi.org.

PSI cautions China unions on liberalisation

PSI Asia-Pacific Regional Secretary, Albert Ponniah, took part in a seminar in Beijing, China held late January to discuss the implications for unions on China's admission to the World Trade Organisation. The seminar included 18 representatives from the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), as well as people from global union federations and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Albert pointed to PSI concerns about loss of jobs and the impact on the poor resulting from privatisation of essential public services, especially in the health sector. China has recently passed new labour legislation that encourages unions to help in job creation, makes special provision for workers in state enterprises and encourages the participation of women in unions. Contact Albert at psiap@ppp.nasianet.net

Enron inquiry may not be objective

Up to 11 committees of the US Congress are now investigating the collapse of the energy multi-national enterprise, Enron. However there is some difficulty in accepting that their conclusions will be completely objective. A recent study released by the Centre for Responsive Politics has found that of the 248 Senators and Representatives serving on those committees, 212 have received campaign money from Enron or its accounting firm Arthur Andersen. See www.essential.org/monitor.

Digital divide narrows

PSI's Dain Bolwell took part in a seminar on using Information Technology (IT) in trade union development in Sweden last week. The LO-TCO seminar also heard from several other global unions on their digital divide strategies, as well as on uses of IT in support of global campaigns. LO-TCO affiliates also showed how they are using communication technologies to improve union development. Later, in the UK, Dain met with staff from the major UK affiliate, Unison, and with Computer Aid International to further PSI's implementation of its digital divide plan.

Canada puts ideology ahead of jobs and services

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), a PSI affiliate in Canada, is requesting that public sector trade unions write letters of protest. The British Columbia government recently announced draconian cuts in public sector expenditure amounting to around USD\$1.5 billion. These cuts are to compensate for the loss in State revenue due to the Liberal government's decision to cut personal income tax by 25%. These cuts will result in the loss of 11,700 jobs. The hardest hit ministries will be Water, Land and Air Protection, Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Energy and Mines and Forestry and Transportation. A model protest letter and more details are available at the PSI website under urgent actions (www.world-psi.org).

Slovenia signs on

PSI's Mike Waghorne reports that Slovenia is now the latest country to

sign up to the OECD Guidelines for multi-national enterprises (MNEs). Unions with members working for MNEs are especially urged to get a copy of the guidelines as they were drafted with PSI input. Contact mike.waghorne@world-psi.org.

Women and the informal economy

PSI's Nora Wintour (HQ) and Lakshmi Vaidhiyanathan, (Asia-Pacific) took part in a conference on Women in the Informal Economy Globally Organising (WIEGO) held at Ahmedabad, India in January. Over 130 people from informal economy, research, legal, statistical and trade union organizations attended. One feature was the successful work of the Durban Municipality in promoting the development of street vendors. It also reviewed work by the UN on revising world statistics to take into account the contribution of the informal economy. There were discussions on the importance of core labour rights and how to extend labour laws to informal economy workers. It was also agreed to ensure a good representation from organisations of informal workers at the ILO Conference in June where there will be a general discussion on the issue of informal work.

Call for input on older workers

The OECD has started a project on older workers and the challenges that an ageing society presents for public policy. It will, amongst other things, look at how to reverse the declining rate of labour market participation amongst older workers. The Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC), in which PSI has a significant role, will be part of this work. The project will involve study missions to Belgium, Canada, Japan, Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. PSI affiliates in a number of ministries and municipalities have expertise in these areas, and their input is encouraged. TUAC needs to know the names and contact details of any union people who wish to meet with the OECD mission to further this work. Affiliates are asked to forward their names and contact details through the relevant national centre.

Contact mike.waghorne@world-psi.org.

Uganda bans trade union meetings

In a worsening climate for workers in Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni has banned all trade union meetings indefinitely. This follows increased tensions and unrest in the country following Museveni's re-election victory.

Labour groups slam Malaysia over worker ban

Labour activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) staged a protest in front of the Malaysian Embassy last week that criticised the Malaysian government for treating Indonesian workers unfairly. They were protesting the Malaysian government's plan to stop the recruitment of Indonesians and to deport 450,000 Indonesian workers who may have breached visa rules. See: www.gn.apc.org/tapol.

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