

## World News - N° 5 , 2002

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Core labour standards: pension fund breakthrough  
The California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS), the largest public pension fund in the US, recently announced a new policy for its investments in emerging market countries. The new policy includes the ILO core labour standards on freedom of association, collective bargaining, freedom from discrimination, from forced labour and from child labour. It also includes political stability (which includes elements of democratisation and human rights), and transparency including freedom of the press, as factors used to determine which countries to invest in. CalPERS has more than USD\$150 billion in assets. Hans Engelberts, PSI General Secretary said in Geneva last week: "PSI congratulates CalPERS for this progressive action. We especially congratulate our US affiliates SEIU and AFSCME who understand the importance of applying social standards to the investment of workers' retirement saving". PSI started discussions with US affiliates more than two years ago on this strategy. Since that point, the union trustees on the CalPERS board made considerable effort to ensure the adoption of the new policy. The PSI Pensions Program unites those unions that represent public pension funds. Contact [david.boys@world-psi.org](mailto:david.boys@world-psi.org).

PSI meets with Korean labour attaché  
PSI General Secretary, Hans Engelberts and Rights Officer Nora Wintour met with Yi Sung Ki, the labour attaché at the Korean Permanent Mission in Geneva on 27th February. PSI expressed concern over the Korean government's determination to privatise key public services and over its industrial relations policy. Earlier the government had sent a large deployment of riot police to the areas where workers' had staged sit ins. It had issued 37 arrest warrants to public sector trade union leaders. PSI said this could only escalate existing tensions rather than result in constructive dialogue. Mr Yi said that the Korean government had taken the decision to privatise these sectors many years ago and that they were determined to proceed. However, he conceded that it was important to improve industrial relations as the decision taken that morning to negotiate with the railway

trade unions showed. Hans Engelberts also stated that it was urgent that there be a review of the labour legislation in Korea, in particular the existing definitions of essential services which are so broad as to be meaningless. PSI also protested directly to President Kim Dae Jung on the issue and will be part of the ICFTU delegation to Korea later this month.

#### PSI presses on ILO Conventions

PSI has associated itself with a complaint to the ILO on trade union rights in Japan. The complaint, submitted by the Japanese trade union centre JTUC-Rengo and its Public Sector Liaison Council (PSLC) on 26 February, outlines how the public services system infringes Conventions 87 and 98 in respect of freedom of association. Changes to the public service system endorsed by Cabinet last December have exacerbated the situation and were made without any consultation with the PSLC. In a letter to the ILO, PSI General Secretary Hans Engelberts pressed for the matter to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee on Freedom of Association scheduled for November. Contact [satok@jichiro.gr.jp](mailto:satok@jichiro.gr.jp).

#### Pay equity report backs campaign need

A report on public sector pay equity to be published tomorrow points to widening wage inequalities between men and women due to globalisation. Based on a survey of affiliates in developed and developing countries, the report outlines strategies used by unions to win pay equity gains. It provides recommendations on how unions can further their work. Women can earn anything between 10%-50% less than men. Yet equal pay is a fundamental right, recognised in many international instruments, including the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998). PSI is coordinating a major campaign on this issue. The report, entitled "Pay Equity Now!" is written by Dr. Jane Pillinger. Contact [nora.wintour@world-psi.org](mailto:nora.wintour@world-psi.org).

#### Fiji democracy appeal

Following the Fiji Labour Party's successful case in the Court of Appeal last month, the government has appealed the decision in the Supreme Court. At issue is the entitlement of the Labour Party to eight Cabinet seats. Contesting the appeal in the Supreme Court will require funds that are not available in Fiji. Affiliates are asked to support a fund to enable the appeal to be adequately contested. Contact Mahendra Chaudhry, email [mahendrachaudhry@hotmail.com](mailto:mahendrachaudhry@hotmail.com).

#### Invitation to OECD consultation 20 March

Affiliates are invited to attend OECD consultations in Paris on 20 March involving PUMA (the Public Management Committee) and a delegation from TUAC (Trade Union Advisory Committee) and PSI. Affiliates, especially from OECD countries, are invited to attend subject to liaison with their national centers, and availability of places. The meeting is conducted in only English and French. PSI pays no travel or accommodation costs but is happy to make hotel bookings for affiliates that wish to attend. Those interested should notify Mike Waghorne ([mike.waghorne@world-psi.org](mailto:mike.waghorne@world-psi.org))

#### Toxic technology trash

The global export of electronics waste, including computer monitors and circuit boards, is creating environmental and health problems in developing countries according to a new US report. The report says that up to 80 percent of electronics waste collected for recycling in the United States is shipped to China, India, Pakistan and other developing countries, where it is recycled under largely unregulated conditions, often with toxic results. Millions of tons of such waste are involved each year. The report, "Exporting

Harm: The Techno-Trashing of Asia," focuses on electronics recycling in Guangdong province in China. One casualty of the recycling boom in the region is drinking water which shows toxic materials 190 times the levels recommended by the World Health Organisation. Investigators said the recycling operations often involve children, many of whom are unaware of the hazards. The operations include burning of plastics and wires, riverbank acid works to extract gold, the burning of soldered circuit boards and the cracking and dumping of cathode ray tubes laden with lead. Similar operations occur in Pakistan and India. See [www.nytimes.com/2002/02/25/technology](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/25/technology).

#### Canada (British Columbia) protest

Following the PSI notification of an urgent action last month, letters of protest were sent to the British Columbian government by: SAMWU, South Africa, GPSU, Guyana, ASU Australia, FIPSU, Finnish Public Sector Unions, SKTF Sweden, NZPSA, New Zealand and AFSCME, USA. The government proposes massive job and service cuts to fund a 25% reduction of personal income taxes. See the PSI Website for details.

#### Global Network links unions with civil society

PSI supports a new initiative called the Global Network that aims to build links between civil society and trade unions. The Network has already supported seminars at the Doha WTO meeting, at the World Social Forum in Brazil and at regional venues in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Follow up national seminars in these regions are scheduled over the next 4 months. See [www.solidar.org](http://www.solidar.org).

#### Privatisation, globalisation and labour

A new book released in Australia outlines several case studies including privatisation of employment services, local government and of utilities. It contrasts issues of economics, of community suspicions and of the impact on workers themselves in assessing implications for management, unions and government. Privatisation, globalisation and labour is edited by Fairbrother, Paddon and Teicher and is available at [www.federationpress.com.au](http://www.federationpress.com.au).

We guarantee your comments on PSI World News will be listened to. Send to [psi@world-psi.org](mailto:psi@world-psi.org).

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