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Hans Engelberts witnesses repression
PSI General Secretary, Hans Engelberts, personally witnessed the scale of government repression of trade union rights in Korea last month. In Seoul, at the invitation of the Korean Government Employees Union (KGEU) to speak at its inaugural conference on 23rd March, Hans was with 268 KGEU delegates. Shortly after the opening, more than 1000 riot police attacked the meeting and arrested most of those present. Later Hans witnessed similar brutality where massed police attacked striking electricity workers. Subsequently PSI has requested the International Soccer Federation (FIFA) to reconsider the Seoul venue for the World Cup, due late May. The ILO has also been informed of the latest violations. See the PSI website for details and how to protest to the Korean government.

Japan ILO complaint
Later in the same mission, Hans met Japanese affiliates in Tokyo to discuss their ILO complaint on public service reform. He also met with the Japan Labour Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

The message that gets respect
A recent mission to Thailand by PSI's David Boys and Chris Jackson underlined the that there is one message that governments always respect - money. One union leader at the PSI-KNS seminar on dealing with privatisation said that the Thai government had sent a ministerial delegation to visit CalPERS. CalPERS, the US\$150 billion pension fund that now includes respect for labour standards as an investment condition, had threatened to withdraw investment on grounds of Thailand's labour record. Other developments since the CalPERS success (see PSI World News #5) include

PSI facilitation of a meeting between US unions and the Dutch pension fund ABP in New York recently. At the meeting it was agreed that PSI and its affiliates would help ABP to monitor labour conditions in companies that it invests in. ABP has already stated that it will not condone violation of labour standards. Pension funds are also a lever in a campaign to challenge the operation of US oil company Unocal in Burma. Affiliates with pension fund responsibilities should contact David to discuss this. Contact david.boys@world-psi.org.

Making GATS transparent

PSI wants to make the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) process more transparent. National governments have until the end of June to make their requests of other WTO member states on commitments to liberalise trade in services. Responses are due by March 2003. Negotiations are to be finalised in 2004. However getting information on what the requests actually are is proving difficult. The French government has yet to make the information available, and the US is resisting. As part of agreements with non-government organisations (NGOs), PSI has undertaken to consolidate information on government-to-government GATS requests. This will be part of NGO campaigns to make the information public. Affiliates are asked to seek the details of their country's GATS requests, and send them to PSI for the NGO network. Please contact alice.carl@world-psi.org. The WTO itself is holding a public symposium 29 April-1 May on the post-Doha opportunities and challenges. See www.wto.org.

Request to affiliates on Korea

PSI has an urgent request for affiliates in OECD countries. It is likely that the Korean government will again attempt to have monitoring of its labour law reform process lifted at the 18 April meeting of the OECD Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee. Korea has already asked that it become a member of the Committee Bureau. If either request is approved, the Korean government will use it to show that their labour laws are in line with ILO standards. This is clearly not the case as is demonstrated by the KGEU incident, the ILO report on freedom of association, and by the ICFTU mission to Seoul. PSI asks that affiliates tell their national governments that such Korean proposals at the meeting are completely unacceptable. The Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) will meet with the Committee separately. Affiliates are asked to keep John Evans at TUAC informed. Contact evans@tuac.org.

PSI signs World Cup petition

PSI has signed on to the World Cup Campaign 2002 organised by the Global March against Child Labour. The petition points out the link between low adult pay and child labour, especially in the sporting goods industry. Access is through the PSI Website. Contact nora.wintour@world-psi.org.

PSIRU puts the case to the World Bank

The head of the PSI Research Unit, Dave Hall, put the case for public sector water development directly to the World Bank in Washington on 19 March. Dave reports that Bank staff are concerned due to the impact of PSIRU and PSI on their operations. His 45-minute presentation was followed by discussion. His core theme was that public sector options should always be considered. Contact d.j.hall@gre.ac.uk.

PSI meets Vivendi

PSI's Hans Engelberts and David Boys, along with other global union representatives met with the water and communications multi-national

Vivendi in Paris last month. Negotiations centred on worker rights in Vivendi's global operations, including post-privatisation rights. Contact david.boys@world-psi.org.

ILO meets on globalisation for ordinary people

The first meeting of the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation was held on 24-26 March in Geneva. The Commission is to study how globalisation can benefit ordinary people. It will look at such issues as decent work, employment and poverty reduction. It will report to the ILO Director-General in 2003. The Presidents of Tanzania and Finland are chairing the inquiry. See www.ilo.org.

UN Monterrey Conference split

The UN Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico 18-22 March developed a final consensus on development, but there was a clear split in its approach. The US promoted trade liberalisation as the key to development, whilst the EU pushed for increased aid. However, following criticism of the consensus by unions and NGOs, some governments made more specific public commitments. The EU has pledged to increase aid to .39% of GNP (or US\$7 billion) by 2006. The US pledged US\$5 billion yearly from 2006, subject to a range of conditions. Several European countries already meet or are pledged to meet the .7% UN target. Norway tops the global list. It will increase aid to 1% GNP by 2005, forgive all debt, and apply zero tariffs on products from least developed countries.

HIV-AIDS focus for 28 April

This year's International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers on 28 April includes a theme on tackling HIV/AIDS through workplace actions for public health.

What's new on the PSI Extranet

The PSI Extranet contains new education material on unions and diversity, campaigning, and the merger handbook. The Extranet also has all Focus magazine articles, Research Network News #3 on the Doha development agenda, and direct access to the PSI Research Unit website. Log in at the PSI Website.

Union guide to globalisation

A Trade Union Guide to Globalisation is a 140-page booklet produced by the ICFTU, global union federations and TUAC with the support of the ILO. It contains both practical and theoretical sections including campaigning techniques, resources and case studies. According to the Guide, globalisation is a degree of interdependence that goes far beyond a simple expansion of international trade. It is available in English, Spanish and French from the ICFTU Website (www.icftu.org/pubs/globalisation).

Barefoot research

A new manual on organising and researching better work security (safety and health issues) is now available from the ILO at www.ilo.org/ses, or fax +41 227997123. The title is Barefoot Research. PSI's Alan Leather helped with the manual. It will be reviewed in the next edition of Focus magazine.

Beyond organising versus servicing

New discussion papers from the International Institute for Labour Studies look at trade union renewal in three countries. Reviving the American Labour Movement, Unions in Germany: groping to regain the initiative, and Union revitalisation in the UK are available from the Institute (email INST@ilo.org).

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