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Philippines Urgent Action update: TESDA Director General dismissed

On 14 March the TESDA Director General, Dante Liban was dismissed from office by the President of the Philippines, Gloria Arroyo. Due to the persistence and courage of Annie Geron, General Secretary of PSLINK, supported by national and international solidarity, the government moved and sacked Mr. Liban. Since the union raised the corruption charges, Annie Geron has been the target of continuous harassment. I cannot thank you enough, PSI and all the affiliates who sent petition letters. More than ever, I know what international union solidarity means, said Annie Geron in an email informing PSI of the victory. The next stage is to ensure that Dante Liban is prosecuted for embezzlement.

Union development and international solidarity updates

Christine Roos and Jenny Luck, who joined PSI headquarter staff in January, represented PSI at a meeting of Global Unions Education Officers on 27 February and at a joint GUF/Nordic/Dutch sponsors meeting on 28 February in Helsinki. The meetings discussed and amended the 'Logical Framework Approach (LFA) Handbook' that is to be finalised by September and made available electronically.

An LFA training workshop was held in Chile attended by Global Unions' project and education coordinators in the region. Participants agreed that the skills and information gained at the workshop were relevant and useful for the future.

QPS campaign meets positive responses from PUMA

PSI officers Mike Waghorne and Wendy Caird report some very positive responses from OECD's Public Management (PUMA) staff to PSI's Quality Public Services Campaign and other PSI initiatives. While PUMA has generally been accessible to PSI, a series of meetings in Paris on 6 March were more than usually positive. Not only was the QPS campaign welcomed as a valuable PSI initiative but also an offer was made to hold a conference in 2004 on Public Sector Modernisation. Co-operation in a number of areas was discussed e.g. Wendy's participation in the upcoming meeting of the

Anti-corruption Network for Transitional Economies. Mike and Wendy both identified an interest from PUMA staff in new ideas, and believe this interest in part comes from the results of current policies, now being acknowledged as failures by many organisations that may have previously promoted them. An example of a new approach, the use of public/public partnerships in the

water sector, attracted considerable interest from the PUMA staff.

United against corruption

UNICORN, the anti-corruption network, is a joint initiative of the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC), ICFTU and PSI is managed by Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU). The PSIRU website, UNICORN section, lists reports, corruption info, sources, multinationals etc. The new 'March Corruption Posting' is recommended reading for affiliates following corruption issues and meetings. The posting includes, among other articles, the 11th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) to be held in Seoul, South Korea, 25-28 May, where Annie Geron, PSLINK, is scheduled to speak. See www.psiru.org/reports/UNICORNPostingsMARCH 03.htm.

Letter to Pascal Lamy

On 10 March PSI/EPSU sent a letter to EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy to thank him for the meeting on 17 February, to sum up some of the points raised at that meeting, and to raise some issues which had not been covered in detail due to time constraints. The letter requests Lamy to seek withdrawal of the EU requests to developing countries to open public services such as waste water treatment, postal services and others. It is further noted that whereas the union movement do not dispute that governments can continue to regulate, they may find that a challenge from other member states may result in their legitimate regulation being ruled to be 'more burdensome to trade than is necessary'. The risk here is that they may be required to change/drop the regulation or else face retributive action from the complaining states. The letter also points out that the impact of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) on local and regional authorities should be further explored, and that evidence appears to be accumulating that there is a great porosity between temporary and permanent movement of people. The full text of the six-page letter, including the attached research paper 'Public Services and the Scope of the General Agreement on Trade in Services', is available from PSI. Contact mike.waghorne@world-psi.org.

PSI media release on water

On 11 March PSI dispatched a press release stating that corporate control of water resources and services is not the way to solve the global water crisis, and that it will not give the poor access to water. At the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan, PSI will present models of appropriate public finance and solid public governance, and lay out an alternative public/public programme. The Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU) will present the latest research. Union members from Japan, Sweden, South Africa, Brazil, UK, Argentina, Fiji, Philippines, Thailand, Honduras, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Belgium will participate. Arrangements are also made for a union panel on 19 March in the Grand Cube in Osaka. See www.world-psi.org for details and material. Affiliates may also wish to look at the new 'Water Info Briefs' at www.corporateeurope.org with whom PSI is cooperating, notably through the Our World is Not For Sale network.

Save Emcali - update

PSI affiliate, SINTRAEMCALI, in cooperation with community organisations in the city of Cali, Colombia, has fought for years to prevent privatisation of water, electricity and telecommunications services provided by the EMCALI municipal corporation. EMCALI has been forced into debt by two ill-conceived projects. One is the modern PTAR wastewater plant, where costs escalated from US\$50 million to US\$160 million. The other project is TermoCali, which supplies EMCALI with electricity at prices higher than market rates (over US\$4 million/month). The government has now moved to liquidate EMCALI,

preparing it for privatisation. Armoured police surround EMCALI's plants while workers inside maintain a 24-hour guard to prevent forceful entry. The union activists and their families are being filmed and raided by security police, and paramilitary death squads have declared SINTRAEMCALI's leaders as targets. Eight SINTRAEMCALI members have been assassinated. PSI sent a mission to Colombia in December 2002 and has been following up with urgent actions – see www.world-psi.org. Colombia is also high on the list of labour concerns at the 59th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, taking place in Geneva 17 March – 23 April.

Equality through pay equity

ICFTU's new 'Trade Union World Briefing' No.2 (March) contains a detailed description of PSI's work on equity and equality. Nora Wintour, PSI Equality and Rights Officer delivered most of the material and was interviewed by ICFTU two days prior to the International Women's Day. The interview is available from psi@world-psi.org, and the 'Trade Union World Briefing' from www.icftu.org.

May Day material

Affiliates planning for 1 May activities may wish to consult the Global Union's Action Guide now available from www.global-unions.org. The site lists ideas, possible slogans and ways in which affiliated unions can get involved. It also carries the suggested logo in different languages.

Don't forget the aboriginals

James Clancy, National President of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), recently wrote the Prime Minister of Canada pointing out that aboriginal peoples are excluded, ignored and dismissed when it comes to delivery of health services. James Clancy suggests money for a new long-term Aboriginal Health Partnership Fund and a National Roundtable discussion with the National Aboriginal Leaders to determine the use of the resources. See more healthcare coverage at www.nupge.ca.

Comments

Please email comments on PSI World News to psi@world-psi.org

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