

## PSI World News 12/04

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### PSI PAY EQUITY ACTION WEEK

PSI affiliates are encouraged to contact their sub-regional office with information about their plans for the pay equity action week, 4-8 October 2004. Background information is now available in Spanish, French and English on the PSI website ([www.world-psi.org](http://www.world-psi.org)), with more to come soon, including training materials, art work for stickers and posters and news about what affiliates are planning around the world. Contact [equality@world-psi.org](mailto:equality@world-psi.org) for further information.

### HIV/AIDS IN THE WORLD OF WORK

An estimated 36.5 million people of working age have HIV and by next year the global labour force will have lost as many as 28 million workers. A new ILO study analyses the impact of HIV/AIDS on the world of work in 50 countries. It provides the most comprehensive data to date on the impact of AIDS in the working world, with extensive data and analysis for the most affected regions of the world. The report: "HIV/AIDS and work: global estimates, impact and response" was presented at the 15th International Conference on AIDS in Bangkok, Thailand, on 11-17 July and appears in French, Spanish and English on the ILO website (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/pr/2004/35.htm>).

### UNIONISM'S BIRTHDAY?

Thousands of UK trade unionists joined a weekend festival on July 19th in honour of the Tolpuddle martyrs, whose arrest in 1834 is often seen as the birth of trade unionism. In 1833 six men formed a branch of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers to protest against their meagre pay of six shillings a week. They were arrested on a trumped-up charge of administering oaths, cited as illegal under the 1797 Mutiny Act, and were sentenced to seven years' transportation to Australia. There was a huge public outcry over the case and mass meetings were held across the country. In 1836 the Prime Minister announced to Parliament that pardons had been granted to all six men, and they returned home the following year as heroes. Their suffering has become a symbol of the struggle for workers' rights. Among the speakers this year was 11 year-old Mayra Kelita Chiroy de Paz from Guatemala, who has been a domestic servant since she was eight. Guatemala has the highest proportion of child workers in Latin America. Two out of five must work so they can buy food. Mayra is now being educated thanks to a sister organisation of War on Want.

### "EFFECTIVE OBSTACLES" UNITE!

The June 2004 edition of the IMF's glossy quarterly magazine "Finance & Development" includes an opinion piece by International Monetary Fund chief economist Raghuram Rajan entitled "Why Are Structural Reforms So Difficult?". A substantial part of the article deals with labour reforms. Rajan says that opposition from potential losers - "possibly a majority of workers" - can be an effective obstacle to structural reform, and that labour market reforms are particularly difficult: "because the costs fall disproportionately on some". He notes with apparent disapproval that proportional voting systems require elected governments to pay attention to the wishes of interest groups, and makes a number of practical suggestions for governments who encounter difficulties in carrying out structural reforms, including the advice: "signing an international agreement ... can provide the external discipline that will force the pace of reforms". The article can be downloaded in English here: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2004/06/pdf/straight.pdf>, and will soon be available on the IMF's web site ([www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org)) in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.

### CANADIAN STUDY LOOKS AT HOME CARE

The context for home care is changing and working conditions are deteriorating. A new Canadian study confirms PSI fears that the general trend to privatise home care is simply worsening already poor conditions in the sector. As populations age, home care is often considered a low-cost option. Advances in medical technology and pharmacology have made this possible in more cases. Using demographic projections to 2046, the study predicts that increased demand in the sector will mean the number of home care workers must increase by about 200%. It also highlights major differences between unionised and non-unionised workers. Unionised workers report higher satisfaction with their pay than non-unionised workers, along with fewer unpaid hours and longer tenure. Non-unionised workers in the private sector are more likely to consider themselves underemployed. Different recommendations to improve the situation are proposed. The survey can be downloaded in English here. Other material, including a French version, can be found here.

#### DEALING WITH HOMOPHOBIA IN THE WORKPLACE

PSI and Education International (EI) have launched the first Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Forum in Brazil. Starting on July 19th, more than 120 trade unions delegates and experts in policy and programme development are meeting to discuss the impact of homophobia in the workplace and the situation for GLBT workers. The forum provides guidance to PSI and EI on activities proposed by member unions prior to the Congress of each international body. Together PSI and EI represent almost 50 million workers in over 150 countries.

#### DEVELOPING WOMEN LEADERS AND EDUCATORS IN THE ANDEAN REGION

For several years now the PSI has been running a solidarity programme in five countries in the Andean region. The goal is to train women in leadership roles and to provide them with the skills base they need to develop educational training programmes for unions. The programme has also included gender awareness of top male leaders of PSI affiliates in the subregion. The 'train-the-trainers' phase was finalised this year, and in June a sub-regional team of women trainers was set up. From now on they will be delivering union education across all five countries. For more information contact [veronicamontufar@andinanet.net](mailto:veronicamontufar@andinanet.net).

#### KGEU LEADERS GIVEN SUSPENDED SENTENCES

The President of the Korean Government Employees Union, Jung Soo Kim has been given a 12 month suspended prison sentence and the Vice President, Jung Soo Kim and General Secretary, Byung Soon Ahn, were given 10 month suspended sentences for alleged offences against the Election Laws and Public Officials Act by a Seoul Court on June 8th. The union had issued a declaration of support for the KDLP (Workers' Party) prior to the recent general elections and a number of union leaders were then arrested. PSI has written to protest at these harsh sentences and called on the government to establish full bargaining rights for government employees. Young Gil Kim has personally thanked PSI for its continuing support and solidarity and stated "the KGEU will not retreat from the struggle for full guarantees for basic labour rights". The case will be taken to appeal at the Supreme Court.

#### SINTRAEMCALI PRESIDENT AND FAMILY FORCED INTO HIDING IN COLOMBIA

Luis Hernandez, President of the PSI affiliate SINTRAEMCALI, has again been subjected to death threats. On the most recent of three occasions in June, an unidentified person on a motorbike carrying a communications radio (often used by the Colombian security forces) drove up to his mother's house and told a relative: "Tell Luis that if we can't do it to him, we are going to take you all away." The number of kidnappings of family members of key trade union leaders has increased over the last year. SINTRAEMCALI is the union that organises the municipal electricity, water and telecommunication company workers in Colombia's second largest city, Cali. The union has consistently opposed attempts to privatise the company. Luis, his wife and children have had to move to another location - for the fourth time this year. PSI has written calling for guarantees for the life and physical integrity of Luis and his relatives.

#### GENERAL STRIKE IN PERU

At least 76 people were arrested in Peru during a 24-hour strike against the free market economic policies of President Alejandro Toledo. Two trade union centres, the CGTP and the CUT, called a national civic stoppage to protest at the severe economic and social crisis in the country and the lack of political will to negotiate with the union movement. The government is insisting on pressing ahead with retrogressive social security reforms and privatisation plans in the water industry and other sectors. PSI has written to the government calling for social dialogue and the adoption of appropriate labour legislation. Police used tear-gas to disperse protesters who tried to block roads with tyres and logs. The strike was declared a success by Peru's largest union, the CGTP. Although Peru has one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America, half the population lives on \$1.25 a day. More than 150 unions - from teachers to construction workers - had signed up for the protest. Some 93,000 police were deployed across Peru to deal with the unrest.

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